

The Snow Bunny

By Brandy Golden

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Chapter One

Danni's heart was racing and her adrenaline flowing as she raced along on her Pantera. How she *loved* snowmobiling! The smooth growl of the engine and the swish of the runners on snow sounded in her ears as she glided along. She was filled with the sheer joy of riding this morning as she headed for the 3-foot drop off made by the snowplows on the mountain road.

She glanced behind her to see where Darrell was. She was disgusted as she noted him several hundred feet behind her. Why Eva wanted to set her up with him for the weekend she didn't know. The man had no sense of adventure. Dismissing him from her mind, she concentrated on the jump coming up.

"Whooooooooaaaaa," she sang out as she became airborne for several breath stopping seconds before the Pantera hit the ground, still flying.

She came up quickly on the narrowed curve and gasped as the cross-country skier suddenly loomed in front of her. Applying her brakes and turning hard to the left, she sprayed out a wide curtain of snow and ice bits that covered the skier in a shower of white debris. As she skillfully pulled the Pantera on around in a wide arc, she came back full circle and stopped in front of the snow giant, her heart beating fast.

"Are you okay?" She was breathless from the thrill of the close call and struck by a sudden desire to laugh as the man literally shook like a big dog, sending snow flying everywhere. As he pulled off his ski mask and goggles, Danni had a sudden sense of impending danger. When a pair of deep blue eyes pinned her in an icy stare, she could tell she was facing one immensely ticked off male!

"Do you make a habit of riding hell bent for leather on that thing?" he ground out, tamping down the overwhelming urge turn her over the seat

of that Pantera and apply his hand to the bottom outlined in the tight little ski pants she wore.

Just then, Darrell pulled up beside Danni, a concerned look on his face as he noted the blond giant glaring at his "date" for the weekend.

Immediately, Sanders's gaze swung to the man who had just driven up. "You need to take your little snow bunny in hand before she hurts herself or somebody else," he snapped out at Darrell.

Danni bristled at his words. He couldn't talk about her like that! "You need to mind your own business," she declared saucily, her chin defiantly in the air. "What business is it of yours how I drive?" How dare he insinuate she was nothing but fluff!

"You shouldn't have been going that fast coming up on a blind curve. You're just lucky you had enough room to pull out or you could have caused a serious accident. And it's my business because I just bought into this resort, and you almost ran me over as well."

Danni knew he was right but she wasn't going to admit it. This must be Sanders Linson, the new owner her father had spoken about. Well, she didn't care who he was, his whole attitude grated on her nerves. As if Darrell could take her in hand! Humph! It had taken all of two minutes to figure out that Darrell was a wimp in the first degree.

"I was in complete control the whole time," she sassed back, ignoring the storm clouds in the blue eyes. Throwing Darrell a contemptuous glance, she slammed the Pantera into reverse and went backwards at a furious clip, then cutting back to the right to spin around. After a quick backward glance, she gunned it and took off, the snowmobile whining as the rpms accelerated at a heavy pace.

"You better get after her before she hurts herself," instructed Sanders to the embarrassed young man in front of him.

"No one tells Danni Oaks what to do," complained the petulant young man. "She is too spoiled to her own way and her father lets her do

whatever she wants." But, he obediently turned his snowmobile around and headed after the disappearing Pantera.

Tears began to trickle down Danni's cheeks as reaction to the close call set in. Feeling her anger burn out after a few minutes, she guided the snowmobile into one of her favorite glades, winter or summer. As Danni took off her helmet, her long platinum hair cascaded down her back, looking beautiful on her maroon parka.

She got off the snowmobile and walked to the summit. From there, she looked out over valleys and mountain peaks, all covered in snow. It was a beautiful view in the summer as well and she never tired of it.

Danni sighed and smoothed her hair back behind her small ear. She remembered the fury she had seen in that pair of blue eyes a few moments ago. She thought about her reaction to it. Her stomach had curled and her heart leapt in her throat as she recognized his desire to mete out some type of retribution. And then there were his words to Darrell about taking her in hand. As if he were a man who would do exactly that in a heartbeat! Question is, what would he do, she asked herself? How would it be to have someone want to straighten her out and be worried about her she wondered? Sighing again, she looked out over the summit, her heart feeling heavy in her chest.

The closest she had come was her best friend's husband, Dale. He was the nearest thing to a male with a backbone that Danni had come across yet. Eva was lucky, she decided. Dale really loved her, and he showed it in every way possible, and Eva certainly seemed to pay attention when he told her something. She seemed hesitant to disobey him, even when Danni was cajoling her to come and play with her.

Danni smiled to herself as she recalled the scene a few nights ago. Danni had invited Eva to go with her to the club where a new male dancer was

supposed to be appearing. Dale had chimed in and said no, Eva would not be going. And, she shouldn't be going either! Her stomach had done a queer little flipping sensation at the commanding look on his face. She knew he felt somewhat protective of her, but she attributed it to being Eva's friend.

She had laughed at him, but she had respected him for Eva's sake. Eva had started to say something, but he had arched his eyebrow and looked at her with a stern look and she had caved. Danni wondered why.

Usually the only emotion she inspired in men was lust, or frustration because she wouldn't respond to their lust. Restlessly she kicked the snow in front of her. She knew she was beautiful. She had been very blessed in that department but sometimes she wished she wasn't. Between her looks and her father's money, men came on to her constantly. Or if they didn't have the guts to approach her, they just lusted from afar. No one ever saw who she really was underneath. How she longed for someone who wanted to get to know her, not just get her into bed.

Danni broke a branch off a nearby scrub oak and started hitting the bush with it, knocking snow onto the ground. She had heard Darrell's snowmobile pass on by the glade without turning in a few moments ago. Another one bites the dust she thought, knowing after the little scene that had played out, he would not be around when she returned to the lodge. She kicked out at a small rock, dislodging it and sending it flying. Brushing a stray tear from her cheek, she renewed her attack on the helpless bush.

"I can think of a far better use for that switch than beating a bush with it," drawled a sardonic voice from behind her.

Danni whirled around to face Sanders Linson, the man she had covered in snow a short time ago. She stared in astonishment when he released the catch on his skis and stepped out of them. He took

off his goggles and ski mask as well. He obviously skied a lot because he had those white circles around his piercing blue eyes.

"W-what are you doing here?" she stammered, her heart beating fast. She looked around her but there was no one else in sight. She glanced behind him where her snowmobile was sitting. She would have to get around him to get out of there. Maybe she could brazen this out. After all, he was just another man. The blonde giant certainly did not look enamored of her, though. Even though Danni was not used to that, she was used to getting her way. She stared insolently at him.

Sanders appraised the defiant girl before him. He had seen the guy on the snowmobile pass the glade, obviously ignoring the fact that Miss Oaks had pulled in here. That meant he had left the girl on her own. As much as he did not want to stop, it went against his grain to leave a woman alone. He figured for all her bravado, she was probably shaken up by the close call they had both encountered. She needed a good spanking as far as he was concerned and if she had been his date, that's precisely what she would have gotten!

He walked over to her and took the branch out of her hand. "This would be much better applied directly to your little bottom." He swished the branch experimentally through the air. He was amused to see her back up, some of the defiance fading to be replaced by a wary pout.

"I don't know what you want," she said in a sulky voice, "but you better not even think it."

"I can do more than just think it," he replied evenly. He saw the tear trail on her cheeks and knew he had been right. He could see without her helmet that she was a very lovely girl, but he had seen many beautiful women and most of them were spoiled and vain. He hoped to find someone with more to offer than a lovely face and body, and certainly something more than just a spoiled brat.

"What I want is an apology for starters. Then we'll go from there depending on your attitude." He smacked the switch lightly against his palm, testing its strength.

Danni stared at him suspiciously. Surely he didn't mean...no...he wouldn't...would he? She inspected his face carefully. His smooth brown face was set in a stern look not unlike Dale's had been a few days ago, and the square jaw looked very uncompromising. She glanced at the switch he was tapping against his palm and shivered.

Danni had seen her Aunt Mindy use a switch on her cousin once, years ago, and it had not been a pretty sight. Heidi had yelped and danced like it was killing her as her mother had laid stripes across the shorts clad bottom and the backs of her thighs, leaving ugly red welts on the bare skin. Danni had run like a rat, deserting her cousin to her Aunt's ministrations. She knew Aunt Mindy had called her mother, but nothing had ever come of it.

She bristled at his action and drew herself up to her full 5ft 3in stature. Well, he was not going to intimidate her! He had no right to even begin to think about touching her with that thing and the sooner he was informed of that, the better. Her blue eyes flashed with anger and her mouth went into full throttle.

"I don't have to apologize to you or anyone else, and you have no right to threaten me! I don't scare easily," she stormed at him, her chin jutting out. "So you can just take a hike Mister Linson, and the sooner the better!"

Sanders' eyes narrowed as he took in her insolent words. This young lady really needed a good lesson in manners he decided. She was virtually asking for it! He hadn't really planned on spanking her when he came in here, but he could make time for it if she didn't straighten up.

"I'm the guy you nearly ran over and that's all the right I need," he ground out, his temper rising at her disrespectful attitude. "And you've got about

three seconds to start apologizing, or you and I are going to have a much more serious talk!"

"In a pig's eye," she spat at him.

"We'll just see about that," retorted Sanders and he started towards Danni. He had been so intent on their argument that he didn't notice that his ski had slid sidewise. As he stepped out towards Danni, he stepped onto the loose ski and it went sliding out taking him down as he lost his footing.

Danni took advantage of his predicament and headed for the snowmobile. She jumped astride it and turned the key. As the engine roared into life, she felt herself lifted bodily off the seat.

"Let go of me," she shrieked as he dumped her face down over the seat of her Pantera. There was no way this was happening to her! It appeared this man intended to make good his threat and there didn't seem to be anything she could do to stop him. She fought wildly, but she was no match for his strength.

She couldn't get up with the weight of his hand and body on her back. Her arms flailed uselessly, unable to grab anything that would pull her upright. Suddenly she felt a hot streak burn across her butt. Then another and another and she yelled in pain as the switch continued to blaze across her wriggling bottom. Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

"Let me know when you're ready to start apologizing," instructed Sanders grimly as he brought the switch down again and again on her rounded cheeks and the back of her thighs. He knew the thin synthetic material of her tightly fitting ski suit would be scant protection against the sting of the switch. And he was pretty sure he could last longer than her stubbornness would.

"Damn you," yelled Danni. "Stop it.... now! You have no r-right to do this." Her voice was starting to break as the relentless crack of the switch turned her buttocks to fire. A sob caught in her throat and she tried desperately not to give in. Crack! Crack! Crack!

She is a very stubborn young lady decided Sanders grimly. Maybe he needed to up the ante a little. Her parka had slid up her back enough for Sanders to realize that her ski pants were not a jumpsuit...that meant they could come down. Putting the switch in his teeth, he grabbed the back of the spandex waistband and whipped them down in one smooth motion. Her legs flailed helplessly, her toes not even touching the ground as she protested this new development.

"What are you doing? Stoooooopp...no! You can't do that..." Danni was horrified when she felt her pants sliding down her thighs. But he was doing it, and again, she was powerless to stop him. Swish...Crack!

"Yeowwww," howled Danni as the switch once again lashed into the seat of her panties. Crack! Crack! Crack! She couldn't stand anymore. Her bottom and thighs were on fire and the sobs tore at her chest, unable to stay down any longer.

"I'm sorrrrrrrrry," she finally wailed, the admission grudgingly given. "Please stop!"

"It's about time," replied Sanders, surveying the job he had done on the hapless girl. "You've just missed losing those panties too."

"Let me up....p...please." Danni was crying, the sobs shaking her slender shoulders.

"Not just yet," stated Sanders firmly. "We need to have a little discussion first."

Danni had to bite her tongue to keep from lashing back at him. She knew she was in no position to argue at the moment and that threat about the panties was not lost on her.

"Now, about this snowmobile...you were riding it entirely too fast for existing conditions. And your manners were atrocious." Sanders lectured her for a couple of minutes, letting his message with the switch sink in. He knew it was humiliating for her to be in this position, which is why he left her in it! He intended that she would remember this lesson for a while.

Danni sobbed softly as she listened to his words. She really had been reckless and rude but no one had ever challenged her right to do so before. Men let her get away with anything because of her looks. And she had taken advantage of it.

"And this is just to make sure you have a reminder for the next few days whenever you ride this thing, to behave yourself on it." Sanders brought his hard palm down over and over at the base of her buttocks and upper thighs, burning his message into her sitting space.

Danni finally lost it completely as his merciless hand slapped the message into her sore cheeks and thighs. Nothing in her life had ever hurt so much as this spanking. She vowed she would never cross this man again, if she survived. Shamelessly, Danni begged to be let up, all thoughts of defiance totally gone.

Satisfied at last that he had made his point, Sanders lifted the sobbing girl. He slid her pants back up and took her in his arms. He held her close until her sobs quieted and she relaxed against him.

As Danni's hiccupping sobs melted away, she felt strangely at peace and thoroughly comfortable there in his arms. So this is what it's like when a man finally stands up to you she thought in amazement. She began to get an inkling of what Eva and Dale's relationship must be like. She sighed wistfully, feeling connected to this man in a way she did not understand. She had finally inspired something besides lust this time she mused to herself.

"Now then little snow bunny," said Sanders as he held her against his broad chest. "Are you going to behave yourself? Or am I going to have to turn that white tail red every time I see you?"

Shyly she looked up at him and saw the tenderness in his eyes and the smile on his chiseled lips. "Am I going to be seeing you?" she asked, a catch in her voice.

"That's a promise Miss Oaks," he said firmly. "I'm here to stay now that I just became part owner in this ski lodge. And if you're going to ride here, you will have to follow my rules." He looked into her shining eyes and saw something more, something special, hidden away like a treasure glimmering inside a beautiful box, waiting to be opened.

He bent his head and claimed her lips, sealing his promise with a kiss.

"I'm afraid I'm not very good at following rules," she whispered, breathless when he released her.

"That's okay," he grinned wickedly, "I'm a very good enforcer." His hand slid warningly down the swells of her buttocks, massaging and exploring.

He certainly was, Danni reflected, her bottom still burning and aching. She grinned mischievously. With a quick action, she placed both her palms against his chest and shoved. The unexpectedness of the attack took Sanders off guard and he fell backwards, losing his balance and landing in the snow once again. Like a flash Danni was on the already running snowmobile and gunning it to leap forward and away.

Laughing, she slowed down several feet away and looked back. He was just getting up, a wry grin on his face.

"You'll have to catch me first," she giggled, feeling totally vindicated at the moment.

"Oh, I always catch bunnies, no matter how fast they hop," he promised, his eyes glinting with intent. He began to put his gear back on and snapped his feet into the skis. Taking the ski poles, he began sluicing towards her.

She laughed again in sheer delight and gunned the snowmobile, heading for the lodge. She winced as her bottom bounced on the seat of the Pantera, and she knew she would be too sore to ride tomorrow. But she felt excited with the promise of the future. Time to hit the hot tub and get ready for the next meeting with Sanders. Her eyes glistened in anticipation.

Behind her, Sanders watched as she flew along, her pale hair flowing behind her. She had forgotten to put her helmet on. He would have to address that he decided as he smiled in wicked delight.

Chapter Two

Back at the ski resort Dale and Eva watched as Darrell checked out and left in a huff.

"Dammit Eva, Danni can't keep treating people this way!" he remarked angrily as he looked at his pretty young wife. "Darrell was not a bad young man for her to date, why does she have to be so wild and irresponsible?"

Dale opened the door to the ski lodge and stood to the side while Eva walked through before him, a courtesy she thoroughly enjoyed.

"Now Dale," Eva soothed as they walked towards the condo that they shared with Danni on one side of it and them on the other. "You just don't understand her. You know she is very suspicious of men, and her father hasn't helped any with the awful way he has treated her mother. Their marriage is just convenience only and always has been. He just wants to use Danni to sweeten his business deals for him, and I for one agree with her."

Eva's blue eyes flashed fire as she defended her long time friend. She was far more aware of what John Oaks wanted Danni to do for him than Dale was. But it was Danni's business and not something that Eva felt she could divulge, even to her husband.

Dale stared at Eva in consternation. "Are you saying she was right to treat Darrell this way?"

"No, of course not!" Eva hastily replied as she saw the storm clouds gathering in Dale's brown eyes. "I'm just saying I understand where she is coming from a little better than you do, that's all."

"Well why don't you enlighten me then," replied Dale, his eyes narrowing as he opened the condo door for her and ushered her inside.

"I really can't say honey," protested Eva, her heart sinking as she saw the stern set of Dale's jaw. "You know I can't tell you anything about Danni that

she doesn't want anyone to know. Surely you can understand that?"

"Are you keeping secrets from me, Vee?" asked Dale smoothly as he sat down on the sofa and pulled her between his knees.

Nervously, Eva bit her lip and shook her head vigorously back and forth in a negative gesture. She slipped her hands into the back pockets of her jeans in an unconscious gesture of covering her bottom.

She looked down at her handsome husband, her heart beating fast. His big brown eyes were fastened on her face, searching for signs of duplicity. She always had the desire to brush that stray lock of blonde hair back from his forehead every time she looked at it.

At 28, Dale Granger was a young successful stockbroker on his way up. He owned a ranch just outside Park City, and he loved being able to run his business from his ranch and he loved to ski. At six foot three inches, his outdoor heritage was quite obvious. He was strong in body and strong in mind and very much in charge of his young wife. They had been married for two years now and he loved her more everyday.

But he was also very strict with her and deplored deceit. It had been the first thing he had ever spanked her for, and she had been clearly shocked. He remembered back to the night she and Danni had deceived him.

Eva and he had been dating for several months and had set a wedding date. He had fallen for the beautiful young girl the first time he saw her. He had old-fashioned ideas about the man being the head of the house and he found out quickly that Eva had been brought up in a Christian environment and as such had been taught that the man was the head of his home. Which he fully intended to be! But for him, that included turning his wife over his knee

and soundly spanking her bare bottom when he thought it necessary.

But Eva had not realized how serious he was until she and Danni had taken off to Reno for the weekend without telling him they were going. He had flown to Los Angeles on a business trip on Friday morning and had not planned on being back until the following Tuesday.

Danni was always planning some harebrained scheme and usually drug Eva along with her. And this was just such a case! She had decided she needed some excitement and had made on the spur arrangements to go by car from Salt Lake City to Reno. She had quickly rushed Eva into coming with her, protesting all the way. At Danni's urging, Eva had not seen fit to tell her fiancé about it!

As luck would have it, his meetings had been shortened, and the conference was over on Saturday, so he had flown home on Sunday morning. When he arrived and went to the apartment, the girls were not home. He had expected Eva to call him on Saturday but she hadn't. He had checked their answering machine and his message had not been picked up.

After calling the girl's families and finding that neither set of parents knew where the girls were, he had proceeded to pace the floor with worry and anxiety. He had gone home and kept checking back by phone every hour to see if they had come in.

Danni's mother had assured him that it was not unusual for her to not hear from Danni for week's at a time and that she would turn up.

Eva's mother was a little more worried than that but also knew how Danni was, and the girls had been best friends for years, so she was not inclined to be desperate yet.

But, Dale was furious! When he finally got a call from Eva at 11:00pm Sunday evening, he was

deadly calm and determined to see that his errant fiancée understood the error of her ways!

He had driven immediately to their apartment and picked her up and brought her to his ranch home.

She had been very quiet and said little all the way to his house and inside. Once in, he took her coat and hung it in the closet.

When he turned to face her, he could see the apprehension and worry in her blue eyes and her brown curly cap of hair framed an anxious face. She was totally adorable as she twisted her fingers and bit at her lip.

Taking her firmly by the elbow, he had marched her into his living room and sat down on the sofa and pulled her onto his lap. When she was settled comfortably, he began to talk.

"Now then young lady, would you like to tell me just what you were doing leaving town without calling me and not even letting your family know?"

"Well," she had hedged, "Danni wanted to go to Reno at the last minute, and she didn't want to go alone, and I didn't want to let her go alone, so I just grabbed a bag and went with her. I figured we would be back before you got home and my Mom is used to Danni and me taking off sometimes so I just went." She shrugged her shoulders helplessly as if some demon imp had taken possession of her, and she had no control over her actions.

"Yet you knew I'd be calling with the name of my hotel room and such so you could get me if you needed to, and you just blew that off?" Dale's eyebrows had risen to his hairline. "You didn't think that I, as your fiancée, had any need to know where you were going to be for two days?"

"Ummm...I.... I was going to take my cell phone so I could check my answering machine and get your message," she explained, "but...I forgot it at the last minute."

It had been then that Dale realized she had not intended to let him know she had gone to Reno at all.

"You weren't going to tell me were you?" he had guessed shrewdly. Her guilty look confirmed his question. "And, you thought this was okay?" He looked at her bent head. Tucking his hand under her chin, he brought her head up to look him in the face.

"No," she admitted in a whisper.

"Why not, Eva?"

Something about the tone of his voice made her look up at him. It was in that instant that he knew he was going to spank her. From the guilty look on her face, she knew she had done wrong, even in her own mind.

Eva had licked her lips and looked pleadingly at him as if he could understand without her having to say anything. But, Dale was having none of that. He intended that she should explain her actions so she herself could fully understand why he was upset with her.

"I'm waiting, Eva," his implacable tone telling her she was not going to get away without explaining.

When the tears began to pool in her eyes and her soft bottom lip to quiver, his heart softened, but he did not relent. He had waited for her to begin, and when she finally admitted that she had known it was wrong, that she had intended to not tell him, and that she should have let someone know where they were, he knew he was ready for phase two.

'So what do you think I should do about this, Eva?" he had asked gently.

Startled at his choice of words, she had looked up at him, her blue eyes full of questions.

"Do about it?" she had replied doubtfully.

"Yes, Eva, do about it. You know, as in consequences for your actions. To hold you responsible for willfully doing something you knew was wrong from the beginning."

From the look that flashed across her face, Dale had a feeling she was remembering her childhood when her Father had held her accountable for her actions over his broad lap. Watching the fleeting expressions dancing across her features, as she turned pink, he knew that was exactly what she was remembering!

"I...I don't know Dale," she had whispered nervously. "Were you thinking of punishing me in some way?"

"I think you know the answer to that don't you darling?"

"You surely can't mean...you aren't thinking.... you're not wanting to...to...to spank me are you," she finished in a doubtful rush.

Dale had picked up her hand and rubbed his thumb back and forth across the smooth palm.

"Actually, that's exactly what I intend to do."

"You can't be serious, Dale," she had protested. "I'm not a child you know. I do have a right to make my own decisions."

"Hmmm...yes, I can see how terribly adult you and Danni were being my dear. Running off by yourselves without telling anyone, least of all your fiancée, and then planning on hiding it from me. An eight-hour road trip alone, and no one to even know where you were or when you would be back. Yes, very mature."

Eva had blushed again as his mocking tone had reduced her to the status of an irresponsible child.

"Do you have any idea how worried I was when I got back into town Saturday night and neither of your families knew where you were? You hadn't left me a message on my home phone either, or on your answering machine." His brown eyes had reflected the concern he had felt and Eva had had the grace to look ashamed, as he lectured her.

"Do you know what can happen to two beautiful young girls on their own?" He had looked suspicious at her guilty start. "What happened Eva?" he had demanded to know.

"Well...uh...you see it was like this." And she had quickly described a scene that had made the hair on the back of his neck raise!

A flat tire along the Salt Flats and 6 bikers had stopped to help! He had been even more furious then as he realized all the things that could have gone wrong. Eva had left her cell phone at home, Danni had let her road coverage expire, and the charger for her cell phone at home, and neither one of them knew how to change a flat! On top of that, no one they knew even knew where they were! He knew his face must have looked like a thundercloud, for she had quickly assured him that all the men had been very nice and had even shared a cold beer with them. It hadn't helped!

He had stood up and taken his reluctant fiancée to the corner of the room and pressed her up against the wall. He was too angry to deal with her just then, and he wanted to cool down for a few minutes.

Eva had tried to twist away and protest this foreign action, but he had quickly swatted her on her jeans clad bottom and turned her back into the corner.

"You will stay there, or I will keep swatting you until you do!" he had gritted out between clenched teeth.

Eva had quickly turned back into the corner, a tear sliding down her pale cheek.

Dale had walked to the window, folded his arms, and brought his temper in check. He was watching Eva out of the corner of his eye. She was wiping her face with the back of her hand, but she did not turn around again.

His thoughts were chasing each other in his head. They had never really covered this ground yet, even though he had hinted that this might come some day. He knew that Eva had answered to her father's corporal discipline as a child, but had not really known how she would take it with him. He

had swatted her now and then and although she had lightly protested, she hadn't seemed outraged.

He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. Well, if there was ever a time to put his foot down, this had to be it! She might as well know right up front that this kind of reckless behavior and deceit would not be acceptable. His mind made up, he had walked into the kitchen and removed a chair from the table, bringing it back to the middle of the living room. Then he had sat down on it.

"Come here, Eva," he gruffly requested.

Eva had walked hesitantly over to him.

He pulled her between his knees, reaching for the snap on her jeans. But, her small hands caught his, resisting his efforts.

"Please, Dale," she had begged, her eyes filling again with tears of embarrassment as she realized he meant to lower her pants. Her cheeks were flushed, and her bottom lip quivered. "I don't want you to spank me!"

"I wish I didn't have to do this, Eva," he had responded quietly. "But, I love you and anytime you put yourself in danger or attempt to deceive or lie to me, this will be the consequences."

He waited, his hands still on the snap. This would be a defining moment in their relationship. Would she submit to his authority? He quietly watched her as she chewed her bottom lip, her eyes big in her pale face.

Almost imperceptively, she nodded, and her hands slowly fell away from his, and she allowed him to unsnap the jeans and gently slide them down to her knees.

"Bend over my left knee, Eva," he had instructed calmly.

Again, her eyes plead mutely with him for a few seconds, and then she had slowly complied.

He could feel her body trembling against his thigh, and he rested his hand on the lacy panties. He rubbed her bottom slightly, savoring the texture

of skin and lace. There wasn't much to these panties, but they would come down soon anyway.

He began to spank her then, light firm swats. Smack! Smack! Smack! Over and over he brought his hand down, warming her bottom. It wasn't long before she began to wiggle and squirm as the swats became harder.

"Oh please, Dale," she had gasped. "This is really hurting me! I don't think I can do this after all!"

He had ignored her as her cries became louder and she began to "owwww" in long drawn out wails. Smack! Smack! Smack! His palm continued its painful onslaught, covering her rounded bottom very thoroughly. When he shifted her forward and began to spank the tender area at the bottom of her cheeks, she howled and began kicking. Quickly he placed his right leg over both of hers, effectively pinning her in place.

"Aaiiiieee!" she had squealed. "Oh please please...I'm so sorrrrrryyyyyyy! Please, Dale, please stooooooooop!"

He did stop then, gripping her hip in his left hand as his right hand began to unbuckle his belt. She was slumped over his knee sobbing and apologizing.

"I'm not going to be that hard on you this time, Eva, because it's your first spanking. But from now on, anytime you put yourself in danger, you will be spanked with a paddle as well as a hand spanking, or any other implement I choose. Do you understand this?"

She had nodded her head up and down, tears still streaming down her cheeks as she sobbed.

"Now, I'm going to punish you for your deceit." He pulled her panties down to join her jeans at her knees, ignoring her gasps and protests. He then pulled his belt out of his pants, and she had turned her head in time to see him double it over. She had begun immediately to wiggle and protest, her eyes growing even rounder if that was possible.

"You can't be serious, Dale, oh god you can't be serious!"

"I'm very serious, Eva," he had replied sternly. "I'm going to give you 10 swats with my belt. But if this happens again, you will bend over the back of the couch for a lot more!" He raised his arm and brought it down, the belt making a resounding spank on her bright red bottom. Whap! Whap! Whap! Whap! Whap! Whap!

Eva had exploded into frantic wiggling and pleading that she would never ever do it again, her sobs and cries filling the room. Five more times he brought the belt down, leaving crimson welts across her bottom and sit spot.

Eva had slumped across his knee, and he had quickly lifted her up. Scooping her up in his arms, he returned to the sofa and cradled her in his lap and held her as she sobbed into the crook of his neck. She had wiggled uncomfortably as she tried to find an easier position than flat on her bottom.

They had done a lot of talking that night, he remembered fondly. And they had come a long way in two years. But, back to the present!

Chapter Three

Danni pounded on the door of Eva's side of the condo, her heart racing with excitement. She couldn't wait to tell her friend about Sanders. Maybe Eva could help explain the feelings that were conflicting inside her.

When Dale opened the door, the scowl on his face took her aback.

"Come in Danni," he said evenly. "We were just talking about you."

Something about the tone of his voice made her feel like sidling past him. She had experienced that feeling a few times over the past three years with Dale, but never quite understood it.

Remembering the look in Sander's eyes when he was scolding her made some things suddenly click into place.

Her bottom tingled slightly as she moved cautiously past him, refusing to give in to the sidling urge.

"Hi Danni," chirped Eva as she greeted her friend. "Come in and sit down!"

"Hi Eva," responded Danni, crossing the room and flopping down into the overstuffed chair. She winced slightly as her sore bottom made contact with the chair.

"Damn, I forgot about that bruise on my hip," she lied quickly, noting the surprised look on Dale and Eva's faces. She shifted her weight slightly to the right and tucked her long legs up under her.

She flushed as she saw the questioning look that passed between Eva and Dale.

"So why were you talking about me?" she asked them carefully, already knowing the answer.

Frowning, Dale stood before Danni, his arms folded as he watched her guarded expression.

"Darrell told us all about your reckless behavior, Danni," began Dale without preamble. "Not to mention the fact that you left him behind and treated him shabbily in front of another man.

Darrell is a friend of mine, and he's a nice guy. He took the weekend off to come here and be with you."

Danni stared up at Dale in outraged amazement. This guy might be Eva's husband, but she'd be darned if he had a right to talk to her like that. She'd never asked him to set her up. She had only agreed to meet Darrell here as a favor to Eva. It wasn't her fault if the man was a wuss and couldn't stand up for himself!

Seeing the impending danger signs of Danni's temper, Eva quickly interrupted. "Obviously, Danni and Darrell just weren't suited to each other," she said soothingly, trying to calm the waters.

"I'll say we weren't," agreed Danni standing up to face Dale. She still had to look up but at least it wasn't as far as when she was sitting.

"The man doesn't even know how to ride a snowmobile!"

"And maybe you were leaving him behind on purpose!" bit out Dale, his brown eyes snapping.

"Maybe I was! So what? The guy was a drag!"

"Sit down!" commanded Dale, stepping closer to Danni.

It was on the tip of Danni's tongue to tell him where to stick his command, but she saw the pleading look on Eva's face, and she held it back.

She stared at Dale's angry face for a few seconds and defiantly flopped back down again.

"Fine! I'm down, you happy?"

For just a few seconds Dale had an image of Danni over his lap, kicking and wailing as his broad hand explained how happy he was.

He raked his hand through his blonde hair as he reined in the urge to yank her up and find the nearest hard chair to fulfill that thought.

Exasperated with her, he nevertheless sat down on the couch by Eva and leaned forward, his elbows on his knees.

"Look Danni, you and I have known each other for a long time and whether you believe me or not,

I do care about you," he said quietly. "Your behavior on that snowmobile was reckless, and you could have hurt that skier or yourself. As for Darrell...okay, maybe you two didn't hit it off, but that was no reason to treat him so rudely."

Danni turned her head away from Dale. She could have withstood his anger. She could have stood toe to toe with him and matched him word for word. She could have flounced out, ignoring his scolding and recriminations. But finding herself the object of a male's concern made her uncomfortable.

Danni's father had been an only child, and her mother had only one brother. And, Danni herself was alone and had spent many years at boarding schools. Between her father and her Uncle, she had learned what beautiful women were for. Her dealings with men since then hadn't changed anything. At the age of twenty-three, she was self contained, reserved to a fault and only Eva really knew anything about her. She had unconsciously resisted all Dale's efforts to get to know her and confined her relationship with the couple to Eva only. She rarely went anywhere with the two of them together...and if she did...it was usually a public outing with no room for personal conversation.

Deep down inside her, she didn't trust even Dale, and a tiny part of her was afraid of destroying Eva if Dale should turn fickle and begin to desire her. She never brought the little niggle out to acknowledge it, but it was there, just the same.

She shivered slightly as the lustful face of her Uncle flashed through her mind, his mocking words reverberating once again in her thoughts.

"Beautiful women are to be used, Danni," his cruel voice mocked. "My father insisted that Carolyn marry your father, or he would have cut her off. Of course, Carolyn was a sensible girl and did as she was told, and so will you when the time comes." He had eyed her nubile sixteen-year-old figure and reached out to run his hand down her hip. When

she had tried to slap him away, he had grabbed her arm in a painful grasp.

He had thrown his head back and laughed at her, ignoring her struggles to free herself. Pulling her in closer, he had run his free hand over her breast, pinching and fondling her. When she tried to slap him with her other hand, he had grabbed that too and rammed her back against her father's desk, effectively pinning her. Shoving his hateful face into hers, he had hissed, "This is what men want from beautiful women. We don't care what you think, in fact; we don't want you to think! We only care how well you perform. Obviously, your mother performs well, since your father is still married to her. Let's see what you have my dear."

He had ruthlessly grabbed her hair, forced her head back, and ground his disgusting mouth against hers so hard she had tasted blood. She had felt like she was suffocating as his other hand had roamed at will over her bottom and breasts, ignoring her ineffectual efforts to slap and push him away. Revulsion had broiled up inside Danni as he had ruthlessly destroyed her budding interest in her own sexuality and her young tender feelings for the opposite sex. She had panicked and tried to scream, and he had deepened the kiss, forcing his tongue down her throat and she felt her head spinning as darkness had begun to close in on her.

Suddenly, she was free, and she sagged onto the desk, her chest heaving as her trembling legs refused to hold her. She put her shaking fingers to her ravaged mouth and was shocked as she noted the blood on them. Dazed, she had looked up, confused as she saw her father dragging her Uncle across the room.

"How dare you!" her father had blazed at the other man. "Keep your filthy hands off my daughter!"

"Oh come on, John, I was just showing Danni here what we men expect from beautiful women. You and I have talked about this before. You've told

me yourself about your future plans for Danni. You might as well not go all sanctimonious on me now, I know you better."

"Get out!" John Oaks had shoved the sneering man through the open door and turned to face his daughter. The guilty look on his face had convinced Danni then and there that her Uncle had been correct.

"Are you all right?" her father had asked, coming over and trying to take her in his arms.

Danni had pushed him away, hurt to the core. "Is he right Dad?" she had asked, looking into his face.

His eyes had slid away from hers and his face had flushed. "He had no right to do that to you, Danni, but I suppose he is right in that beautiful women do have their purpose in the business world. Try to understand honey, mergers and corporations are sometimes made or broken with a woman. I had hoped one day that you would marry someone who would be a benefit to the corporation, I'll admit that."

"What about love?" Danni had asked quietly, her childhood illusions slipping away one by one.

"Love? What's love?" her father had barked with a painful laugh. "As long as a woman has all the diamonds and jewels she wants and a man to support her, what else does she need? We give you all what you want and in return, you give us what we want. Simple exchange of supply and demand. You are a little young for this conversation yet, but since its here, there is no use in mincing words. You are beautiful, Danni, and men are going to want you. If you play your cards right, you can get all life has to offer by crooking your little finger at the right man."

Shaking off her thoughts, Danni turned back to Dale, her expression guarded. "Okay, maybe I was a little reckless. But you were wrong about Darrell. He isn't a nice guy, he is just like all the rest, out for what he can get." She flushed as she

remembered Darrell's hands seeming to accidentally brush her breasts as he had helped her with her ski parka. When she had flinched back, he had smiled knowingly at her. Disgust had boiled up inside her once again as she recognized lust in his eyes. Would she ever meet a man who didn't look at her like that right off the bat? Jerking away from him, she had jumped on her Pantera and took off, leaving the smirking idiot in the spray from her snowmobile.

Dale was surprised at the vehemence in Danni's voice. He looked closely at her face, trying to understand the cause of her agitation.

"What do you mean by that, Danni?" he asked softly.

"Nothing, never mind. I just didn't like him, that's all. There's no law against that is there?"

Dale studied Danni's profile. Her chin was set in that stubborn line he had become familiar with and he knew she was regretting even that little slip. Something had hurt this girl, he decided. He didn't know what it was, but he bet Eva did. Getting either one of them to tell him was another story!

He rubbed his chin appraisingly. "All right, Danni, I can see there are things you don't want to tell me. I'll respect your privacy. However, there are a few things you need to understand as well. Look at me please!"

Danni reluctantly turned to face Dale once again, noting the stern set to his jaw and the gleam in his eye.

"Eva has told me some of the escapades the two of you have been up to over the years, and I find it hard to believe that your father has never taken you in hand and given you a well deserved bottom warming." He was a bit taken aback at the furious expression that instantly transformed Danni's face to a mixture of disgust and anger. She did not say anything, but he could see the white line around her lip and knew she was biting back a comment.

Once again, he got the distinct impression of a deep hurt. He went on. "And you and Eva have

been into some scrapes that I don't approve of in the last three years as well. Eva learned how I felt about it each and every time, while you have gone on your merry way continuing to get in one harebrained situation after another."

Danni glanced at Eva and saw her friend's flush of embarrassment. She knew immediately what method Dale had chosen to express his displeasure. She turned her attention back to Dale, confused and irritated as she saw where he was going with this.

"Are you trying to say what I think you are?" she asked incredulously.

"What do YOU think I'm saying Danni?" He looked at her expectantly.

"That you...you...that...that...oh.... nothing!" She finished angrily, unable to put her fear into words and embarrassed to do so in case she might be wrong after all.

"You mean that I might spank you," he finished for her.

Again, she stared him, totally flummoxed by his sudden threats when he had been passive all this time towards her. Well, at least he hadn't threatened to spank her before, although she was beginning to see that the desire to do so had existed all along. He had just clenched his jaw and sent her along home.

"You can't spank me, you have no right. You are not my father or anyone else important."

"You are wrong there, and I'm beginning to see that I should have taken a stand a long time ago."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are my wife's best friend and that makes you my friend as well!"

"So what? We've known each other for three years, why are you suddenly wanting to be my friend?"

"I've always been your friend. Danni," he responded quietly. "You have never let me get to know you. You have always pushed me away and avoided me."

"Yeah, well...there's reasons for that," she retorted defensively.

"I'm listening."

Again, Danni stared at him in consternation. She had no desire to get close to Dale, but how to explain why? How do you say...sorry Charlie...I don't trust you? You might decide you want me to hop in bed with you and I won't?

She fidgeted and glanced over at Eva. Even Eva was looking at her hopefully, like she was expecting Danni to just blurt out everything about her past.

It was too much for Danni to handle, and she jumped to her feet. "I need to get going. I have things to get done."

Dale stood up and took her arm. "You are not going anywhere until we settle this, young lady!"

"Let go of me, Dale, I want to leave," she hissed through gritted teeth, trying to remove her arm from Dale's grasp.

"Sit down, Danni," warned Dale. "NOW!"

"No!" she exploded, jerking away from him.

Dale immediately grabbed her wrist again and twirled her around, landing a sharp SWAT...on the seat of her ski pants.

"Ouch!" Danni yelped as his hard palm made contact with her already sore cheeks. She grabbed her bottom with her free hand and tears of frustration and pain sprang to her eyes. She turned her head away, her bottom lip trembling as she refused to look at him.

"Will you sit down now?" asked Dale calmly. "Or do I need to convince you some more?"

Eva watched the scene, feeling deep sympathy for Danni. She knew how much she was hurting and how intensely private her friend was. She also knew that Dale was a very determined man once his mind was made up. It would be good for Danni to confide in someone, but she wasn't sure if she was ready for that.

The young girl had developed a deep rooted mistrust of men from her early years, and Eva believed that she had not even confided in herself all that had happened. She also knew that Danni yearned for romance, love, and respect. Her mistrust often took on the form of antagonism on Danni's part. Almost as if she were daring the men she met to prove she was wrong about them. As a result, she had driven away even the most promising of prospects.

Eva had often tried to maneuver Dale and Danni into becoming closer friends, but Danni had resisted all of both their efforts. She had a sneaking suspicion as to why, but she did not want to pressure her unduly, so it had never happened. But now, all Dale's protective instincts were in full swing and the man was like a dog with a bone when something got his attention. Poor Danni, she thought. She really didn't have a chance! She just didn't know it yet.

Once again, Danni sat gingerly in the chair tucking her legs up and away from Dale. She would not give him the satisfaction of looking at him she decided, pouting.

Dale got up, walked into the kitchen, and returned carrying a straight-backed chair. Eva's quick indrawn breath alerted Danni to a change, and she looked around in time to see Dale sit the chair down in front of her and seat himself on it.

She quickly put both hands on the overstuffed chair arms and tried to push herself back into it as far as she could.

"Now, young lady. We have a few things to discuss." He put his hands on his knees and watched her eyes open wide and the pout disappear.

"What things?" she asked warily, watching him carefully.

"Things, like endangering your life with reckless driving, endangering other people's lives, and temper fits and rudeness."

Danni glanced longingly at the door. If she were fast enough, maybe she could scramble over the chair arm. She hated lectures with a passion! That was one good thing about not having anyone at least. It had been all she could do to sit through Eva's occasional lectures. She totally hated the idea of being made to feel guilty!

Dale caught her pensive glance at the door and grinned to himself. She wasn't getting off that easy!

"Don't you realize what could have happened out there Danni?" You or this skier could have suffered a serious injury or death. How many times have you ridden in this manner? I bet it's been more than just today!"

Feeling defensive, Danni folded her arms and refused to look at him. "I knew what I was doing," she replied sulkily. "I am a very experienced rider."

"Even the most experienced riders can have accidents. Especially when they get careless! I'm not going to address your rudeness to Darrell except to say that it should not have happened either. And, I suspect you got angry with him and that's what started the whole mess to begin with!" He noted her guilty look as her eyes slid up and back down, refusing to acknowledge his statement verbally.

"Darrell also told us how rudely you treated the other man when he tried to correct your behavior, as well as racing off and leaving him behind for the second time."

"Yes, well...Mr. Linson was being rude to me," she retorted hotly. "He called me a Snow Bunny! Like I have no brains!"

Dale's eyes began to snap sparks again as Danni refused to act the least bit penitent.

"Well, Danni, I can see I'm not getting anywhere this way. I had hoped for some contrition on your part, or an acknowledgement of guilt to some degree. I'm afraid you leave me no choice but to act on my instincts." Having said that, Dale reached out

and took Danni's hands and pulled her forward out of the chair and smoothly over his left knee.

Danni's arms flailed in mid air as she found herself hauled over Dale's thigh. This can't be happening she thought dazedly. Has the world turned upside down today or what?

But it was Danni that was upside down and that fact was confirmed when a hard spank landed on her tender bottom, then another and another.

That galvanized her into action, and she began to struggle and squirm desperately, her squeaks of pain and surprise turning quickly into pleading cries.

"Owww!...oh nooooo!...Dale stop! Please stop, that hurts!" The firm spanks continued to rain down on her softly rounded cheeks, igniting pain and fire once again.

It wasn't very long before the tears began to stream down her face as she sobbed that she was sorry over and over and to please stop!

Helping her to a sitting position, Dale put his arm around the weeping girl and drew her into his shoulder. He really didn't understand why she was crying so much. He hadn't spanked her that hard, just enough to get his message across that her behavior was unacceptable and he was calling her on it. There must be more here than met the eye he decided.

"Hush, Danni," he soothed. "Eva and I care about you very much and we don't want you to be unhappy." He smoothed the hair back behind her ear and rubbed her back.

"In case you haven't guessed by now, this is what happens to Eva when she misbehaves. I feel responsible for you, Danni, and I want you to learn to trust me. Do you think you can do that?" He tipped her chin back so he could look into her tear-filled eyes.

"Can I go now please?" she sobbed softly. She refused to meet Dale's eyes.

"I don't want you to go like this, Danni," responded Dale with a troubled tone to his voice.

"Just let me go, Dale...please...I need to be alone." She had stiffened in his arms and Dale was at a loss as how to respond to her.

He enveloped her stiff body in a big bear hug and let her go. She swiftly crossed the room and let herself out, the door closing with a soft snick.

He stared at the closed door, then down at Eva who had come up beside him and put her arms around his waist. "Did I do the wrong thing, Eva?" he asked her, very troubled by the whole incident.

"I don't think so, darling," Eva responded soothingly. "Just give her time. Danni has a lot of hurt to get over. I think she needs you but is afraid to admit it for several reasons. I'll go talk to her."

"Okay, sweetheart. I'll see you later then." He watched as she left and then turned to get himself a drink from the liquor cabinet.

Something was seriously wrong with Danni, he mused to himself as he looked out the window sipping his scotch and water. I wonder if she'll ever trust me enough to explain. He hoped he hadn't done any further damage by taking the responsibility of correcting her. No, that wouldn't be true, he decided. She had needed the correction; it had been long overdue.

Chapter Four

Danni let herself into her side of the condo, her light blue eyes still awash in tears. Her emotions were clashing with one another, causing intense confusion. She threw herself down onto the stuffed sofa and sobbed into the cushions, her arms above her head, her fists clenched.

Eva knocked lightly on Danni's door. Getting no answer, she turned the knob and peeked into the room. When she saw Danni distraught on the couch, she quickly entered and closed the door.

Danni did not even realize Eva was there until she felt her hand on her back. "Hey come on, hon, Dale didn't spank that hard did he?"

She lifted her head and upon seeing Eva through her tears, she sat up and embraced her friend.

"You know, Danni, Dale really is concerned about you. Are you angry with him for spanking you?" She picked up the Kleenex box next to the couch and handed it to the young woman.

Danni took a couple of Kleenexes from the box and wiped her eyes and blew her nose, trying to bring herself under control.

"Oh, Eva," she sobbed. "I don't know what I feel. I'm confused."

"Want to tell me about it?"

So, Danni poured out all that had happened to her from the time the hateful experience with Darrell had happened to the time she had knocked on Eva's door.

"Wow," agreed Eva. "This Sanders Linson must be quite a guy. I have never seen you excited over any man before."

"Yes, it was a painful experience, but it made me feel...I don't know...safe somehow. Does that make sense? Like he wasn't just out to get me into bed. I mean he almost bared my butt and still did not act lustful or ...or...crude! You know?" She shrugged helplessly as she tried to find words to describe Sanders' actions.

She frowned as Eva dissolved into helpless giggles. "And then, Dale puts you over his knee and spanks you on top the spanking you just got! No wonder you squealed and cried so hard! The poor man was beside himself wondering if he had really hurt you."

"That's not funny Eva," pronounced Danni indignantly, her face flaming as she gingerly felt her buttocks. "What the heck's gotten into Dale anyway? Since when did he decide he needed to play the father figure?" She scowled as her friend continued to laugh at her consternation. She perused Eva's face closely to detect the slightest hint of jealousy.

Seeing none, she relaxed and chuckled a little at her friend's merriment at her expense.

"Ummm...Eva...does it bother you that Dale did that?" Danni again watched closely for any sign of displeasure from Eva. The last thing she wanted was to come between Eva and Dale.

"Of course not, Danni!" laughed Eva. "I think he should have done it a long time ago and so does he!"

"Oh come on now, Eva," scoffed Danni.

"You aren't the one that's been getting in trouble lady!" accused Eva. "Remember the time we let those guys keep buying us drinks at the White Lady, and they convinced us to join in a game of strip poker in the back room?"

Danni giggled as she remembered that night with the fraternity boys. It had been just plain fun as she recalled. They had looked adoringly at her and waited on her hand and foot and she hadn't felt threatened at all.

"Yes," she pouted. "Dale came in and drug us out of there just as we were starting to play."

"Yes, well...you got taken home that night and dropped inside the door. I got taken home, put to bed, and soundly spanked the next morning after the effects of the hangover wore off. It was a very rude awakening let me tell you."

"You never told me that!"

"Well," blushed Eva. "Some things you just don't talk about!"

"Amen to that," muttered Danni, suddenly uncomfortable.

"Well, you know you really can talk to Dale, if you need someone to talk too. He senses that things are not right with you, hon, and he wants to help."

"I don't know, Eva, I don't like to talk about it. You know that. It's been hard enough to tell you about it." She walked to the window and stared out at the snowy landscape. "I just want to put it all behind me and not have to think about it."

"You have let it effect the way you view every man who is interested in you, Danni," replied Eva, concern for her friend very evident in her voice. "Not all men are like your father and your Uncle."

"I know that, Eva, on the surface," agreed Danni, disgruntled. "But I don't know if I can ever really trust any man. How will I ever know if he loves me for who I am? Or for my face and my father's money?"

"It will happen for you someday, just give it a chance. Who knows, maybe Sanders is the guy for you. It certainly sounds like he knows how to make you behave!" Her blue eyes twinkled at Danni's discomfort. "In the meantime, if you want to talk about it with Dale, feel free to ask his advice. He wants to help."

Danni looked guardedly at Eva's open friendly face. She knew Eva wanted her and Dale to be friends, but Danni was afraid. And how could she express that fear to her friend?

She shook her head as if to clear it. No, it was better to remain aloof with Dale. No room for hurting Eva there. Course, it could be hard to remain aloof if he planned on paddling her for indiscretions in the future. She would have to make sure she steered way clear of him.

She really didn't know why he figured he had a right, even though he had explained it to her. There was a small part of her that felt flattered that he had extended his concern and caring to include her. And there was another small part that resented his highhandedness. She sighed heavily. All in all, it made for a confusing jumble of thoughts that was sure!

Suddenly, the phone rang in the stillness of the condo, making the girls jump. Danni walked over and picked it up.

"Hello?"

"Hello Danni, this is Sanders," a familiar male voice rumbled through the line. Just the sounds of his voice made Danni's insides do a queer little flip.

"Well, hello there Sanders," she replied softly, smiling at Eva's excited expression. "Are you just getting in?" she barbed delicately.

He growled though the lines, laughter in his voice, "You, Miss Oaks, are a little brat. And you took off without your helmet. That's a spankable offense in my book."

"It is?" she squeaked in dismay as her hand flew to her extremely tender bottom. She gave Eva a withering glance as her long time friend laughed at her action.

"Yes it is my dear, but I'll let you off this time if you'll have dinner with me tonight. How about it?"

"In that case, I accept," giggled Danni, feeling relieved.

"Don't go getting the idea that I let things slide as a regular rule," he warned. "It's only because I know your bottom is pretty sore right now and it's probably your first spanking that I am being lenient."

"Uh...okay," agreed Danni, thinking maybe she might just be amiss in wanting a strong man after all. What was that old saying...be careful what you wish for, you just might get it!

"I'll pick you up at 6:30. Our reservations are for 7:00 in The Stardust Lounge."

"Pretty sure of yourself huh?" teased Danni.

"No, just careful. I like to be prepared," he returned silkily.

The line went dead and Danni dropped the remote back on its stand.

"Date tonight?" questioned Eva, her eyes twinkling.

"Yes, that was Sanders; he's taking me to dinner at the Stardust tonight."

"Dale and I are going there too. We were going to invite you and Darrell to come with us, but I guess that's out of the picture now. Would you like to double with Sanders?"

"Thanks for the invite Eva, but I think I'll just keep Sanders to myself for the first date. At the rate Dale's going, he'll be asking him all kinds of questions and what his intentions are!" Danni rolled her eyes as she answered Eva's question.

"Would that be so bad?" rejoined Eva, closely watching Danni's face.

Danni fidgeted uncomfortably as she looked away from Eva. "I'm used to taking care of myself, Eva. You know that. I'm too old to start answering to anyone now." She walked to the window, a hint of sadness on her face as she stared blankly out.

"Yes, I do know, Danni," replied Eva quietly. "Its time you had someone to look after you, though, and I think deep down inside, you wish for that to happen. Dale just wants to help until you find your own special guy."

"Well," answered Danni wryly, "it doesn't look like he is giving me much choice does it?"

"Nope, when Dale makes his mind up, you might as well give in."

Dale is not the only one who can be stubborn thought Danni, refusing to argue with Eva.

He would soon find that keeping tabs on her was a full time job, and he might soon regret his decision. She smiled wickedly at the thought.

"What are you thinking now?" asked Eva dryly, seeing the smirk on Danni's face.

"Oh nothing," replied Danni airily. "Just thinking I'm off to the hot tub to soak for an hour or so. Want to come?" she tossed over her shoulder as she went to get her bikini and a towel.

"No thanks. I think I'll go see what Dale is doing."

"Okay, see you later," Danni called from the bedroom as Eva let herself out.

Three hours later, the doorbell to Danni's condo rang. Checking her watch, she saw that it was 6:30 on the dot. It looks like Sanders is a punctual man she grinned to herself as she opened the door.

As the door opened, Sanders Linson drew in a small breath of surprise at the vision that stood before him. She was breathtakingly beautiful, and the light from the windows behind her almost made her seem ethereal.

He had known who she was, of course, the instant the young man with her had blurted out her name. John Oaks had made it plain he would like him to meet his daughter, but Sanders had been disgusted that Oaks would try to bribe him with a woman, especially his own daughter. But, he supposed Oaks was getting rather desperate as venture after venture failed for him in the business world. If it hadn't been for the fact that he wanted this resort and fully intended to own the whole thing soon, he would have told him where he could put his deal.

The first impression he had gotten of Danni was that she was a spoiled brat used to having her own way. But when he saw her staring pensively at the scenery from the crest of the mountain and beating the bush with the stick she had broken off of it, he had gotten a different impression.

When she had not been impressed at hearing who he was, he realized that she could not have been in on her father's nefarious schemes.

Danni had been so indignant and defended herself so regally, like a spitting kitten, that he had been entranced in spite of himself. Of course, he

couldn't let her get away with that behavior and he had let her know that by using that switch on her hapless rear, but he had admired her spirit just the same. He had loved the heart shape of her beautiful cheeks and almost wished she had given him reason to slide her panties down so he could admire the twin crests of her creamy buttocks while he continued to turn them crimson.

It was refreshing to not have a woman look at him as if they would like to drape themselves all over him.

When Danni had snuggled into his shoulder like a trusting, well-spanked child, he had felt a stirring of protectiveness that he was unfamiliar with. Then, he had lifted her chin and looked into her innocent tear filled eyes and he was lost. The trembling lower lip and trusting expression that he was sure she was unaware of stole his heart in one breathtaking sweep. He had seen a depth to Danni Oaks that he wished to plummet and explore and see where it led. When he had sealed his promise with a kiss to those sweet rosy lips, he had felt a drowning sensation that was totally new to him, and he had been instantly aroused.

When the little imp had shoved him down and jumped on the snowmobile, he had been delighted. She was indeed a spirited brat, and he would enjoy taming her. Yes, the bunny can hop all around the fox and tease and taunt, but the fox would win in the end, and the bunny would be caught.... and devoured, morsel by tasty morsel. And she would belong to him.

Sanders took in her curvy figure in the silky evening dress. Her platinum hair hung to her waist in waves and full curls and the pink mouth was curved in a welcoming smile, her small pearly teeth gleaming in her tanned face. The light blue spaghetti strap gown matched her eyes, and it hugged her curves and ended in a swirl around her calves. The thin strappy sandals had a modest 2-inch heel on them, bringing the top of her head

level to his chin. All in all, a most breathtaking figure of the feminine persuasion, and he could feel a certain part of his anatomy responding to the charming picture.

"Good evening, Danni," he growled, his voice husky. "Are you ready for dinner?"

Danni drank in the site of Sanders in his casual, yet elegant attire. He had on a fawn colored long sleeved shirt, open at the collar, tucked into a darker brown pair of brushed suede slacks with a matching jacket slung over one shoulder. He had a rakish air as he leaned casually against the door jam, his blonde hair gleaming as his piercing blue eyes took in her attire as well. She saw admiration, interest, and appreciation in his perusal, but not the one thing she dreaded most...lust.

She relaxed when she realized that, and her bottom tingled with the memory of those big hands holding her and spanking her over just her silken panties. She felt a strange stirring in her abdomen and she felt a little breathless as she replied cheekily, "Yes, I'm starved! I hope you have plenty of cash to feed me with because I love the lobster at the Stardust!"

He laughed as he helped her with her coat and closed the door behind her. "Just what I need, a woman who plans on breaking me!"

A few minutes later, the waiter showed them to a table by the window. It overlooked the valley and the lights along the ski slopes twinkled when you looked up. It was a beautiful full moon evening, and the snow sparkled outside the windows, creating a romantic scene.

At a table along the back, a man watched the couple as they made their way to the table and were seated. He lifted his glass in a silent toast to the beautiful young woman. Perhaps she would be of use to him yet, he thought pensively. John Oaks stared at the golden liquid in his goblet and brooded. He had certainly paid enough for all those finishing schools he thought. It was time she did

something for him in return, even if she wasn't aware of it.

He sipped his drink. He knew she didn't feel much for him but disgust and anger. He guessed he couldn't blame her. Making money was all he knew. She had made it plain she would never help him, but maybe she would be willing to help her mother if it came to that. He felt a small twinge of hatred for himself and what he had become through the years. Shrugging his shoulders, he threw off the guilt. No point in wallowing in self-pity he decided. What was done was done. A man had to look to the future. And his future was wrapped up in Sanders Linson.

Signaling the waiter for a refill, he continued to think. No, Danni would never agree to trying to snare Sanders Linson, but it looked like Linson was interested in his little girl all on his own. And that meant he had a bargaining chip.

He smiled sadly for all the things that might have been between him and his daughter then drew himself up and threw out any last wayward thoughts. After all, business was business, and a beautiful daughter was an asset. Even if they didn't know they were being used.

Dale and Eva sat at a table in the corner and watched as Danni and Sanders came in.

"So this is the man that Danni almost ran over today," remarked Dale, perusing the man with a keen eye. He made a mental note to have Sanders Linson checked out.

"Yes, that's the one," replied Eva, speaking softly. "Danni said he is now part owner in the ski lodge."

Dale put his hand over his wife's small one on the table. "Thank you for telling me about him spanking her darling. I was worried about her reaction, and that explained a lot."

"I know you were," smiled Eva, looking up into Dale's handsome face. "I wish I could tell you other things about Danni, but that is her private business."

I hope she will come to you someday and confide in you. I think it would do her good to talk about it. She lets it fester inside her, and it makes her bitter."

Eva had noticed John Oaks sitting alone at a table in the back, but had not said anything to Dale. He was watching Danni and Sanders like a hawk after its prey. She shivered and prayed fervently that Danni's father had nothing to do with Sander's interest in her friend.

"I bet I could beat you in a snow mobile race," teased Danni, her blue eyes sparkling.

Sanders watched as Danni's animated face lit up with laughter. She was totally charming he thought, and he was enjoying himself in way he never had with a woman before.

"I highly doubt that my little snow bunny," he teased back. "You've never seem me on a snow mobile. I'd leave you in the dust, or my snow trail anyway."

"Oh, I have my ways of chea... or rather of winning," she smiled mysteriously.

"Would you like to finish that?" he asked smoothly. "I believe you were going to say cheating weren't you?" He raised a sardonic eyebrow. "You know what happens to cheaters don't you?"

Danni felt a quick surge of excitement in the pit of her stomach. She had a pretty good idea, but she wasn't going to say so. She laughed and shook her head.

He leaned over to her and whispered in her ear, "They get turned bare bottomed over a knee and soundly spanked."

Danni's stomach flipped and her voice squeaked, as she replied, "No way! All's fair in racing you know!" Her lip turned down in a delightful pout.

"I guess you'll just have to come riding with me tomorrow then, and we'll see what you've got in your bag of tricks," he chuckled.

Danni wiggled uncomfortably as her bottom protested this suggestion. "Ummmm....I think I'll

have to pass on that offer for a few days," she said ruefully. She glowered at him when he flashed her a knowing smile.

"Pretty sore huh?"

"Especially after Dale added his two cents," she blurted out, unthinkingly.

"Who is Dale?" he demanded, instantly alert. A small spark of jealousy stabbed him at the thought of another man spanking this woman his body had claimed.

Blushing, she replied, "Dale is my best friend's husband. Eva had asked me to be Darrell's date for the weekend, and he is Dale's friend." She glanced at his scowling face, secretly delighted at the small display of possessiveness.

Sanders relaxed slightly. "And does this Dale make a habit of spanking you?"

"Actually, he never has before," she admitted. "But, he was upset when Darrell told him what happened, and he thought I was rude to you and Darrell and irresponsible on my snowmobile."

"You were!" agreed Sanders instantly.

"Humph," snorted Danni indelicately. "You men all stick together don't you?"

"Didn't you tell him I had already spanked you for it?"

Danni flushed and looked away. "I...we...I have always avoided getting close to Dale and he has never challenged me before," she admitted grudgingly. "But it seems he has decided he feels responsible for me since Eva and I are best friends. Besides, I didn't know he was going to. It just sort of.... happened unexpectedly." She waved her hand helplessly.

"What about your father? Doesn't he handle your discipline?"

The coldly furious look on Danni's face kindled his interest immediately. Obviously, Danni and her father did not get on. That thought gave him a feeling of immense satisfaction.

"I don't need anyone to handle me, least of all my...father," she stated tightly. "I've been taking care of myself for years, and I'll continue to do so without *anyone's* interference."

She stared at him in mute confrontation, her fists clenched unconsciously on the table, the knuckles white with tension.

Sanders sensed that something was wrong here that was beyond the normal objections any young woman voiced when her bottom was threatened.

Reaching out, he put a warm hand over her cold clenched fist and gently soothed the knuckles with his thumb.

"That's a subject best left to a private setting my little snow bunny," he warned softly, accepting her confrontation and refusing to back down. His eyes glinted dangerously in the soft lighting as he awaited her reaction. He had not meant to upset her, but he also did not intend to let her intimidate him either.

Danni recognized his challenge, immediately, and knew the ball was in her court. She could choose to defy him, but something instinctively told her this man was different than the men she had previously scorned and ridiculed so easily. Her first impulse was to stalk off in high dudgeon, a trick she had used before. But something told her Sanders would just come after her, and she might find herself the recipient of yet another assault to her poor bottom cheeks for creating a public spectacle. And she might find herself being embarrassed this time, like the hapless young men she had mocked before.

Taking a deep breath, Danni relented grudgingly, allowing him to soothe her fingers into relaxing and nodded her head. "By all means," she stated coolly, "I'll be happy to straighten you out later on the matter."

Nonplussed he stared at her and then chuckled. It was obvious this young lady was not going to be boring. She was a delightful combination of fire and

submission when the situation warranted it, and she instinctively knew she couldn't win. But she made it quite clear she was not rolling over and playing dead either. Yes, Danni Oaks may be a lot of things he mused; watching the arrogant smile play around the corners of her mouth, but boring was not one of them!

Chapter Five

Sanders watched in amazement as Danni waved her fingers at him and shut the door. He could not believe what just happened. They had returned from the Stardust after a delightful evening of dinner and dancing, and Sanders was anticipating an invitation for coffee when he dropped Danni off at her door.

Her sensuous body had been pressed against his all night, and he had felt her response to his hardness against her abdomen. His hand had wandered down along the crest of her buttocks several times in the dim lighting, and her breathing had quickened in response.

He could not quite match the innocence in her eyes with the signals her body sent to his, but he had not anticipated this!

Danni had been laughing and teasing with him all night long, as lovers often do, but he was no callow youth. He sensed she was unaware on a surface level of many things, but her body had a mind of its own that he could read well and he knew she was attracted to him.

While he had not anticipated actually making love to her this night, he had expected an invitation inside her home and some late evening talk interspersed with the familiar game of cat and mouse that couples play when getting to know one another.

He had unlocked her door for her and handed her the key. Danni had taken the key and with a quick kiss to his lips and her thanks for a wonderful evening, she had stepped inside the door, waggled her fingers goodnight at him, and closed it!

Recovering from his astonishment, he knocked lightly on the door. When she opened it he growled, "What was that all about?"

"W...w...what?" she stammered, her blue eyes a bit hesitant. "I just gave you a thank you kiss. Was

there something wrong with that?" She blushed slightly.

Folding his arms across his broad chest and leaning against the doorjamb he drawled, "I was hoping you would invite me in and we could get to know one another." His eyes glinted dangerously in the moonlight.

Licking her lips, Danni nervously replied, "Uh...well...I'm kind of tired, and it's been a long day. Maybe another time." She looked up into his eyes and smiled, a bit uncertain of herself. She really liked Sanders, but she was afraid too. She didn't want to discourage his attentions, but at the same time, no one ever pressed her before. Usually they were easily dissuaded.

Sanders' eyes narrowed as he took in her seeming nervousness. Was she just toying with him? Did she enjoy being the teasing seductive enchantress one minute and the shy virginal maiden the next? If so, he did not like games!

Standing up straight, he stared into her eyes, gauging her reactions. "Okay, sweetheart," he answered her mildly, "but that wasn't a kiss." Pulling her firmly into his embrace, he murmured against her mouth, "I'll take my thank you myself."

Sliding his hand beneath her hair and the other around her waist, he gently pulled her head back and took her lips.

Danni felt helpless to resist, as his eyes pinned hers and his mouth dropped gently to the waiting petals. She groaned with pleasure and melted into him. She could feel her breasts pressed against his hard chest, his hand gently massaging the swell of her rounded bottom.

Suddenly, he groaned and his hand splayed across her soft rear, pressing her up and into him while his tongue probed for entrance beyond her sweet lips, the hand in her hair pressing her more fully into his mouth.

Suddenly, she couldn't breathe, and she gasped for air! She was drowning again, drowning, and she

was being held against her will, she had to get free! Wildly, she fought, her hands beating against his chest, and she jerked back as the arms holding her released her and grabbed her shoulders.

"What the hell," bit out Sanders, taking in the panic in her wide eyes as she fought for control, her breasts heaving.

"Are you all right," he asked, his voice suddenly laced with concern as he recognized her genuine distress.

"I'm f...fine," she stuttered out, her face pale. "R...really, I'm just fine. Just a bit.... surprised, that's all."

"You're a long way from fine, sweetheart," he murmured as he drew her trembling body into his embrace. She stood stiffly within his arms, her knees shaking. Sanders bent down and slipped his arm under the back of her legs and swept her up against his chest.

Walking inside, he kicked the door shut with his foot and walked over to the sofa with Danni protesting all the way.

"Put me down, Sanders, I said I was fine!"

"I'll decide when to put you down," he said firmly, as he sat down with her on his lap.

Danni immediately tried to scramble off his hard thighs, but he held onto her.

"Let me up, Sanders!" she demanded, not wanting to be this close to him when she felt so vulnerable. She pushed away from the broad chest he was endeavoring to hold her against. She didn't want his comfort. She was too confused inside, and she didn't want him to ask questions she wasn't ready to answer.

"If you don't settle down, young lady, I'm going to turn you over and give you a real reason to be upset!"

"You wouldn't!" She glared at him indignantly.

"Don't try me!" he warned, his blue eyes glittering with determination.

Huffing, Danni stopped fighting and allowed him to hold her against his chest and tuck her head under his chin.

Gently he stroked her long slender arms with his right hand and held her close with his left arm until he could feel her body relax and stop shaking. Finally, she sighed a last tremulous sigh as she fully relented.

"Talk to me, Danni," he ordered softly. "Tell me what just happened." He placed a gentle kiss in the top of her head, loving the clean scent of her hair.

Danni gave a deep sigh and shook her head. "It was nothing, Sanders, really. I'm sorry, I just overreacted, that's all."

"That was not a mere over reaction, honey," stated Sanders evenly. "You were in downright panic, and I want you to tell me why."

"I was *not* in panic," she denied. "It's just been a long day, and you are right, I've never been spanked until today, and I'm sore and tired and I just..... over reacted! That's all there is to it!"

"You lying to me, Danni," came the warning voice in her ear.

Reacting in typical flight or fight fashion, Danni rounded on him. "Do you think I go around kissing every Tom, Dick, or Harry that wants in my door?" she stormed at him. "Is that what you think? That I'm a loose woman? Well let me tell you a thing or two, mister! I'm NOT! So just quit trying to make more out of this than there is!"

When he looked slightly amused at her tactics, it made her furious. "Maybe I just didn't want to kiss YOU.... ever think of that?" she challenged, her eyes spitting sparks. She jumped off his lap before he could stop her this time and strode to the door. Yanking it open, she turned to him, "Good night, Mr. Linson."

Getting slowly up, Sanders walked over to the angry girl. "All right, Danni, we'll play it your way for now. But I WILL have my explanation.... and soon young lady." Looking into her stormy eyes, he

tamped down the urge to either spank her or kiss her again. He walked out the door, and Danni shut it behind him, breathing a big sigh of relief as she slumped against it.

On the other side of the condo, Eva sighed with pleasure as she slipped into the hot tub Dale had put into the condo for her. He really did spoil her rotten...and she loved it! They too had spent the evening dancing after dinner, keeping an eye on Danni and Sanders without interfering.

They had approached the couple once during the evening and introductions had been made. Danni had a glow about her that Eva had never seen before. She bit her lip, thinking of John Oaks again.

"Worried about something, Vee?" asked Dale as he slipped in beside her.

"Just kind of worried about Danni," she admitted, resting her head on his shoulder.

"Why? Sanders seems like a good man. Looks like Danni finally found someone who can handle her." He trailed his arm around her shoulders, his fingers sliding down to play lightly with the rosy crest of her breast.

"It wasn't Sanders I was thinking of," confessed Eva.

"Then who?"

"It was her father I was worried about. He was sitting in the back, watching Danni and Sanders."

"Look honey, I know that Danni's father is first and foremost a business man, and I'm sure that has had an effect on Danni through her childhood. But both of you have been very evasive about him, and I can't understand if she won't confide in me.... or you either!" He scowled down at her in mock anger.

"Give her time," responded Eva, giggling at his expression. "You know I can't say anything other than they have never gotten along."

"You think it's funny when I'm angry?" he growled, nibbling on her neck. "I think a certain young lady needs a lesson in intimidation!"

"Is that so?" replied Eva wickedly slipping her hand below the water to grasp his fully alert manhood. "Is this supposed to intimidate me? Cause if it is, its not working." She laughed at his ferocious expression.

Standing up, he put his hands beneath her arms and pulled her up. "Well, if that doesn't, maybe this will!" He bent her over the padded edging he had installed in a four-foot width completely around the hot tub, just for this purpose! Putting his hand in the small of her back, he pressed her down, her legs dangling down the side of the tub while her upper body rested on the pad.

Giggling she protested and put her hands back, knowing where this was headed.

He smiled at the twin mounds of her delightful derrière wiggling and squirming as she kicked her legs. He grabbed both her wrists in a firm grip and moved them out of the target zone. He paused as she looked back at him; her blue eyes alight with laughter and just a bit of alarm as his arm went above his shoulder. Grinning wickedly, he brought his palm down with a resounding... SPLAT...on one wet cheek!

Eva jumped and squealed as his hard palm cracked down on first one cheek and then the other. "Ouch! Dale!" she squeaked, still laughing. He promptly gave each wet cheek another firm swat...and then another. By the time he had delivered 5 stinging blows to each cheek, she was squealing in earnest, "I'm intimidated, I'm intimidated!"

"That's better, woman," he growled, gently rubbing the sting out of the pink globes. "Now, who's in charge around here?"

"You are," giggled Eva, feeling heat spread through her loins as Dale continued to massage and knead her stinging cheeks.

Two more swift smacks landed on her rear. "You are.... who?" came the question.

"Ohhh..." squealed Eva. " You are...sir!" She relaxed again as once more the sting was rubbed out of her throbbing bottom.

"Now, you are getting the picture," came the satisfied smirk. Leaning over her, he whispered into her ear, you might even get a reward for good behavior, would you like that?"

"Yes," whispered Eva huskily. "Oh yessss....!"

His hands were doing wonderful things, as they slid up and down her inner thighs, gently moving them apart and lightly slipping up the moist slit between her legs. Pausing to rub the tender bud gently between his fingers, he smiled as she arched her back and pushed into his hand.

He moved on up and squeezed her buttocks gently, releasing her hands and leaning over to press nibbling kisses along her spine.

He began to spank her again, light firm swats. She was resting on her elbows, head back and eyes closed, the tension in her body causing her hips to raise and meet his hand as the swats became harder.

"What do you want, Vee?" he teased her lightly, breathing into her ear and planting small kisses on her neck.

Eva groaned and spread her legs so he could lightly spank her throbbing clit, the sensations nearly driving her wild as he alternated his pattern with hard spanks of her writhing cheeks and the back of her thighs.

"I need you to release me," she panted, the tension at a fever pitch.

His fingers trailed down the cleft in her buttocks and lightly across the aching bud and he husked, "Say please."

Very slowly, he began to enter her with his finger, and she pushed frantically back against him.

"Oh god pleassssee....."she moaned as molten fire raced up her abdomen. When his thumb found the swollen bud once again, she gyrated and twisted against him and her body exploded in

sensations. She rode the orgasm as his magic fingers kept their sweet punishment going, milking her to the last drop of pleasure.

Ripe with need, Dale stood up and pulled her hips up to him, burying his swollen shaft to the hilt in her wet hot femininity. Plunging in and out, he rode the waves of passion, the tension building until at last, they both came to a screaming release, their bodies sated with each other. He collapsed on top of her, their heavy breathing testament of the pleasure they had found.

"Now who's boss?" he asked with a very satisfied masculine smile. He patted her buttocks gently.

"Umm...that would be me," she replied, and then laughed at the outraged look on his face. When his hand left her buttocks she quickly turned over and grabbed his arm.

"Okay, okay," she giggled, her eyes twinkling. "You're the boss." Planting a quick kiss on his lips she asked, "You happy now?"

He arched a sardonic eyebrow at her. "I'm thinking I might be a lot happier if I haul you over my lap and really spank your bottom until it's bright red and you are apologizing sincerely without the giggles."

Eva wormed her way onto his lap as he sat down on the edge of the hot tub and planted little kisses along his chin, her arms around his neck. "Nooo...you don't want to do that," she whispered into his chin. "That would make me cry and be unhappy, and you don't want that do you?" She looked up at him, her big eyes pleading as a smile played around her lips.

"Oh, I won't make you cry, just make sure your apology is sincere," he promised, grinning wickedly at her.

"No, Dale," she protested, rather loudly this time. "I don't want you to!"

"Who's the boss here?" he asked, his eyebrows reaching to his hairline. "You are telling me no?"

Hastily, Eva tried to backtrack, realizing she was treading on dangerous ground. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to tell you no. I just don't want you to really spank me."

"I think you need a lesson in discipline darling. Turn over and lay across my lap."

Eva pouted for real this time. It had been a long time since Dale had insisted on a "training session" as he called them. She rarely disobeyed him outright, even in jest.

She hesitated.

"Now, Eva," insisted Dale, looking sternly at her.

Tears welled up in her eyes, and she looked beseechingly up at him. "Please, Dale, I won't say no next time, I promise."

"Do I need to send you for the paddle, Vee?" he asked firmly.

Reluctantly, she turned over and stretched her body out over his lap. She sniffled as she waited for him to begin.

Dale ran his hand over her smooth buttocks, still slightly pink from their play. He hated to do this, but Eva had disobeyed him, and she had been pushing a bit lately.

"If you had obeyed me immediately, Eva, I would not have spanked you. I wanted you to show your trust in me by lying over my lap when I first told you. Yes, we were teasing and I was playing with you, but then you disobeyed me when I became serious. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir," sniffed Eva, tensing as she waited for his hand to fall.

She was given no quarter when Dale landed his hard palm on her tender bottom. The spanks came hard and fast and she gasped, trying to catch her breath as she burst into tears.

She squealed and kicked, her howls filling the room as she sobbed her very real apologies. "I'm so sorryyyyyy! Please stop, Dale, pleaaaaaassssseee....! She cried hard as he paddled her very soundly,

reddening her cheeks and igniting a fire in her bottom.

At last, he stopped and gently rubbed and soothed her flaming backside as she sobbed over his lap.

"I love you, Vee," he said tenderly as he caressed the lovely globes he had just punished so thoroughly. "But, I won't have you telling me no. Especially, in a discipline situation. If I let you by with that, you would never know where you stood with me and would always be thinking you could worm your way out. So, I am consistent for both our sakes. Do you understand, darling?" He scooped her up and settled her on his hard thighs, feeling her hot naked cheeks against them. He could feel himself growing hard again at the contact. "It's important you understand this because it will eliminate having to punish you very often." He hugged her close and rocked a bit as her sobs wound down.

"I really don't like having to punish you," he said, tipping her chin up so he could look into her tear filled eyes. With his thumb, he gently brushed away the tears on her smooth cheeks and kissed the tip of her nose. "I would much rather make love to you," he murmured, moving down to her tender mouth.

Like a child seeking comfort, Eva melted into him, her rosy mouth eagerly seeking his firm lips, her breasts pressed against his bare chest. "I'm so sorry darling," she whispered as their lips met and lingered, tantalizing one another. She felt an intense desire to please this man and could not get close enough to him. She was always amazed at the strength of her desires to draw close to Dale in every way after a spanking. She thoroughly hated the punishment, but the feelings of forgiveness and love were so intense it was a heady feeling.

With a feral growl, Dale stood up and pulled Eva up with him. He picked her up and drew her tight

against his chest and his mouth swooped down to claim her waiting lips again.

Turning, he headed towards the bedroom with his willing captive.

Danni tossed and turned, her moans filling the bedroom, her head flipping back and forth as she writhed in the grips of the nightmare. Gasping for air, she sat straight up in bed, staring wildly into the darkness, trying to focus.

Looking around, she saw the familiar furniture of her condo and realized the dream had come again. Lifting a shaking hand, she combed her hair back through her fingers and took a few deep breaths, trying to relax.

She looked at the clock on her bedside table. Four in the morning. Quietly she slipped out of the bed and padded to the refrigerator. Grabbing the milk, she poured herself a cup and popped it into the microwave. Adding the hot chocolate, she stirred it in and seated herself at the table. She took a sip, letting the hot liquid soothe her nerves as it began to take the chill from her body.

She had not had the dream for a long time now. Almost 3 years. It had taken a long time for that dream to stop recurring. But eventually, she had been able to put the horrible incident behind her and bury it deep where she had hoped it would never surface again.

Apparently, the moments in Sanders arms tonight had triggered it. She dropped her head to her arms and moaned in embarrassment. How could she ever face him again? Had she brushed it off enough for him not to probe? Should she agree to see him again? For some foolish reason, she had thought maybe her intense attraction to Sanders might actually overcome her problem. Apparently, it was not to be.

She pictured his handsome face and those searching blue eyes. She knew he would never

allow her to make up excuses for long. He was far too sharp. Eventually, she would have to tell him, or break up with him.

Sighing, she carried her cup to the sink. Was she forever destined to lose love before it really began she wondered? She had never felt this stabbing sensation in her heart before at the thought of breaking up with someone. But how could she ever tell him what had happened? If she did, the disgust in his eyes would cut her to the core.

Maybe she could squeeze out a few more dates before she had to face the music. When that time came, she already had her plan mapped out. It had worked before... it would work again.

Only one small problem...the idea of losing Sanders hurt more after one date with him, then all the others combined. Could she really do it? When she considered the alternative, she knew she could. Better to lose him than to see his interest turn to disgust and loathing.

She sat down and put in a movie. Might as well watch a love story that had a happy ending. She would never know what that was like...and she would not sleep again tonight.

Chapter Six

Sanders took a deep breath of the crisp mountain air as he walked towards Danni's condo. It was a beautiful clear morning in the Rockies and the snow crunched beneath his boots and the sun sparkling off the fresh snow made dancing flashes of light everywhere he looked.

It would be a great morning to take Danni out for a cross-country ski run and he smiled as he pictured her blue eyes brimming with impish mischief.

He thought again about the strange incident the evening before. Had she just over reacted he wondered? He was pretty sure that wasn't the case. His instincts were working overtime, and he had not brought his father's business back from the brink of destruction without developing insight into people's character.

She was a strange mixture of innocence and a come hither smile all at the same time, and he was darned if he understood why he was so instantly drawn to her. But drawn he was, and Sanders was a man who reached out and took what he wanted.

It complicated things that John Oaks was her father, but the underground ear road had it that she and her father didn't get along anyway. Not that it would have mattered.

Sanders's business with John Oaks would happen one way or the other, regardless of any obstacles that got in the way.

Oak's was also a man who took what he wanted, but without regard for those he destroyed in the process. If he thought Danni would influence their business dealings, he couldn't be more wrong.

He shook his head in disgust as he remembered Oak's obvious attempts to interest him in the girl before he had even met her. He wasn't sure why it was so important for Oaks to push Danni on him, but he would ferret out the reason.

In the meantime, Danni was a delightful handful he fully intended to get to know better.

He crunched up to her door and knocked. No reply. Frowning he supposed he should have called first, but he was hoping to catch Danni for breakfast and ask her to spend the day with him. He knocked again, louder this time.... still no answer.

He heard the sound of the door on the other side open and Eva's lilting laugh as she and Dale walked out.

"Oh, hey, Sanders," called Eva, walking towards him. "If you are looking for Danni, she has gone back to her apartment in the city. Didn't she tell you?" She eyed him curiously.

"Actually...no," he replied carefully watching Eva's expression. She didn't appear to be hiding anything.

Suddenly, the cell phone in his parka pocket played the familiar tune of Eye of the Tiger as it alerted him of an incoming call.

"Excuse me," he remarked, nodding to the couple and striding away. After a few exchanges with the caller, he headed for the lodge offices. They were sure to have Danni's address and phone in the files, and since he was part owner, he was sure access would not be denied him.

"Well, I wonder what Danni's up to now?" mused Dale as he watched Sanders move away with every bit of the grace of a panther.

"You know Danni," responded Eva cheerfully. "She is always up to something, and she must have had a reason for leaving early. She never goes home until she has to when she has the opportunity to snowmobile.

"True, but perhaps riding would have been a might...uncomfortable?" questioned Dale delicately, his eyes twinkling.

"Oh you...you are no gentleman!" accused Eva, slapping him on the arm.

"Gentleman!" scoffed Dale. "Who's got time to be a gentleman with brats like you and Danni? Its all we can do to keep up with you!"

"You'll pay for that!" declared Eva as she started gathering snow for snowballs to throw at his smirking face.

"Better hang onto one of those snowballs darling...for later. I'm sure you'll need it before the day is out!" He started menacingly towards her as a big burst of snow hit him square in the chest.

Laughing at the scowl on his face, she took off running.

Danni let herself into the apartment and heaved a sigh of relief as she closed the door. She had been half scared that Sanders would be out early and come looking for her. She wasn't ready to face him yet. She needed time to regroup and get her walls firmly back in place.

"Hey Morris," she crooned to the big orange tabby cat brushing up against her legs. She reached down to pick him up.

"What have you been eating boy," she groaned as she hefted the big animal. He responded by putting his paws around her neck and ducked his head under her chin, rubbing along her face. A large purr rumbled under her hand as she stroked his side.

Morris was her confidante, and he knew everything about her. And judged nothing, she grinned to herself. "You are the perfect man, Morris," she crooned as she opened some cat food for him. "You are always here, always listen, never talk back, and you love me unconditionally." Morris blinked, his big golden eyes never leaving her face and his knowing cat grin smiling up at her.

An hour later, she was dressed and ready to go. It was the first week of December and she was headed for Damien's apartment. She had been doing this for the last three years, and a smile curved her rosy lips as she fondly pictured Damien's face in her mind.

As she navigated the heavy city traffic, she thought back to the first time she had met him. Feeling blue and depressed, she had seen an ad in the paper for volunteers to help at the blind school. So she had called and been given Damien's name and address and told to go help him with whatever he might need.

When he had opened the door, she hadn't quite known what to say, but when he said hello, her heart had melted at his soft hesitant tone. His big brown eyes had looked sightlessly at her, and his pale face had a worried look.

"Hi, Damien, I'm Danni. The blind school sent me over to help you with reading or whatever you might need."

At the sound of her soft melodic voice, he had brightened perceptibly and moved to the side and motioned her in with a sweep of his white walking cane.

She looked curiously around her as she entered. The apartment was small and a bit stuffy and dark. The lights suddenly flipped on as Damien flicked the wall switch.

"Thought you might need the light, even though I don't!" he had joked with her.

"Well, maybe you'll just have to keep it dark sometimes so I can understand what you are going through," she had answered teasingly, half serious.

He had been surprised at her thoughtful gesture, and a firm friendship had begun. From the first time Danni had walked him along the snowy streets to do his Christmas shopping and described the world to him through her eyes, he had been loyal to her and always asked for her when he needed help.

After awhile, he didn't have to ask anymore, she just came. They discussed everything together from the state of the world to religion, politics and beyond. He was extremely well learned and had been blind since an accident at the age of ten. He was 15 years older than Danni and had seen a lot of hard times and lived on a meager income.

Danni would have helped him financially if he would let her, but his pride would not allow it. He insisted on making his own way so she settled for doing things for him that he couldn't do for himself, like reading to him, taking him shopping, cleaning his apartment and being a friendly companion now and then.

Only Eva knew about her volunteer work and her friendship with Damien...she preferred it that way.

Damien answered her knock and when Danni said hello, he knew instantly that something was wrong. He knew every nuance to her voice, how she breathed, and how her emotions came through in her words. She had not been able to hide anything from him for a long time. He knew she had things she had never discussed with him, but no amount of gentle probing had gotten her to open up to him. Likewise, he had issues he had never discussed with her. They had respected each other's privacy and remained friends just the same.

"Hello, Danni, what's wrong?" he answered, the concern showing in his brown eyes.

"Nothing, why would you think there is something wrong?" she asked, troubled at the depth of his perception.

"One of these days, I'm going to paddle that little butt of yours darlin'," he responded cheerfully as he stepped aside to let her in.

"You and what army?" grumbled Danni, disgruntled at the mention of spanking. She knew he was more than capable of carrying out his threat should he choose too. He was a big man with hard muscles built up from years of weight lifting and working out. She walked into the apartment and flopped down in the recliner and promptly winced.

Damien had been threatening her forever, but she knew she had nothing to worry about from him. He would never carry out his threats because he couldn't see.

Damien, however, had caught the small intake of breath as Danni reacted to the pain of her sore bottom.

"You're hurt," he exclaimed extending the cane in front of him and walking confidently to stand in front of her. "What's wrong, Danni? Where does it hurt? Is there something I can do to help you? Let me see it!" He reached out a hand to her and gently stroked her face with his fingers.

"Uuhh.... no Damien, that's okay," she hastily replied, taking his hand. "I'm fine, really. Don't worry about it."

For such a gentle man it had always surprised her how stern Damien could look at times.

"I want you to show me where it hurts Danni! I know you...you could have a broken rib and you wouldn't go to the Doctor's. Now I insist! Take my hand and show me where you are hurting!"

"Damien," protested Danni, her face flushing. "I can't do that! Believe me, I'm fine...really!"

Damien tugged on her hand and pulled her up from the chair. "You are stalling, young lady! I've never given you a spanking but I'm sure I could figure out how to get you over my lap if I have to! Now answer me!"

"Okay, okay"...she sighed. Biting her lip, she looked up at him while he waited, his eyebrows drawn together in a scowl. What the heck was she supposed to do now? She knew he would be able to tell if she was lying to him. Dang man seemed to have an overdeveloped sixth sense and didn't mind using it at times, much to her discomfort!

"Actually...uh...well, it's...umm...sheesh! This was getting harder by the minute!"

Damien folded his arms and waited patiently, not letting her get past him to move away from him.

"Okay fine!" she snapped out suddenly. "My bottom hurts, okay? And no, you can't do anything to help, but thanks for asking," she said sarcastically. She flounced back down into the chair

and gasped again. She really had to stop doing that she decided. It was not worth the pain to indulge in the flounce!

Hearing a snicker, she glanced up to see the humor twinkling in a pair of brown eyes. "Is this what I think it is?" he asked curiously. "Or did you fall off your snowmobile, or maybe fall on your rear and bruise it?" He moved to the chair behind him and sat down to face her as he waited for her explanation.

When she didn't answer right away, he began to laugh. "It is what I think it is, isn't it?"

Danni knew exactly what he was thinking and she shifted uncomfortably in her seat, remembering Damien's words on more than one occasion, "One of these days darlin, you're going to meet a man who won't put up with that arrogant attitude of yours and he's gonna paddle your ass good."

When she didn't answer, he leaned forward on his knees, sensing her embarrassment. "Come on, darlin, give over to Uncle Damien now. Tell me what happened."

Sighing, she grudgingly told him what happened with Sanders, leaving out the kiss. "And what's worse," she grouched, "Dale has suddenly decided to play father figure and he spanked me to!"

Damien threw back his head and laughed. He couldn't help it! She sounded just like a spitting spoiled kitten that just had its catnip taken away.

"Being held accountable is hell isn't it darlin?" he chuckled. Then, with an insight that surprised Danni, he asked, "So what are you doing down here with me instead of still at the lodge with Sanders?"

It was a good thing Damien could not see her face she decided. His question had caught her off guard and she knew the guilty flush on her face would give her away had he been able to see it.

"I just needed some time to myself today, and I thought I'd drop by and take you shopping as well," she fibbed brightly, hoping he would buy it.

He didn't, but wisely, Damien decided not to probe. When it came to men, Danni would only tell him so much and then a brick wall slammed firmly into place that he could not get past.

When he didn't answer, Danni asked lightly, "How's Marnie?" Might as well direct some heat his way she decided.

"She's fine, sassy as ever," replied Damien carefully. This was an ongoing argument between him and Danni. She wanted him to go through a battery of tests to see if his eye condition was one that could be treated with the modern technology that existed today, but he refused. It was not possible on his meager income and he refused to let her foot the bill, as she wanted to. He had already had a diagnosis made by a specialist and learned that it might be possible to restore his vision, but the cost would be prohibitive and there were no guarantees in any case. Well over a hundred thousand dollars would be wasted if it didn't work, not to mention the dashing of Marnie's high hopes, and he refused to take the risk.

Marnie, on the other hand, wanted him to accept Danni's generous offer because she was in love with the rascally man and he refused to marry her because he thought he would be a burden to her. But she couldn't stop pestering Damien about it, and it was the cause of a lot of contention between them.

"I don't know why you are being so stubborn, Damien," sighed Danni dramatically. "I can well afford it, and I want to help you two. Besides, once your vision is restored, you could go back to school and get a degree and then pay me back if you wanted to."

"We've been through this before, young lady, and I refuse to discuss it again! Now, are we going shopping or not?" he grouched.

Danni knew that fear was also behind Damien's refusal to accept her offer. He was afraid it might not work and also fearful he might not be able to

make it after all in the sighted world. He had been in the dark so long, it had become comfortable, and he was intimidated by what lay beyond the comfort zone.

Well, he hadn't reckoned with Danni Oaks, she reflected smugly. The wheels she had set in motion were already turning.

"Let's go shopping!" she exclaimed cheerily.

Arm in arm, they headed out the door. Her spanking and his stubbornness.... both closed subjects.... for the meantime!

Several hours later, Danni walked up the steps to her apartment and as she unlocked the door, her neighbor walked out. She was obviously excited and in one arm she carried a big box and in the other, a vase of red roses.

"These came for you Danni, but you weren't home so the delivery man left them with me."

"Well, thank you," replied Danni, blushing as Macie looked curiously at her.

"A new man in your life, hon?"

Danni opened the door and turned to take the parcel and the flowers from Macie. "Kind of I guess," she murmured. She had no idea if they were from Sanders, and if they were, how he knew her address. Mumbling her thanks, she closed the door in Macie's disappointed face. If she invited her in now, she would be there for two hours and Danni wasn't in the mood to listen to the neighborhood gossip tonight.

Walking into the kitchen, she set the flowers down on the table. She stared at the gaily-wrapped box for a few minutes and then took the card from the flowers.

Thank you for an enchanted evening last night...the card was simply signed, Sanders.

She got a knife and slit the tape on the box and moved the tissue paper aside. She gasped in delight as she pulled out a snowy white stuffed rabbit. The fur was soft and velvety, just like a real rabbit. She burst out laughing when she noticed the tail. The

cottony white tail had been died a distinct shade of red.

Picking up the envelope inside the box, she opened it and took out the card tucked inside.

It read...to my little snow bunny, just a reminder to behave yourself while I'm gone. I don't know why you ran off on me, but I am going to be tied up in business meetings for the next few days and we'll have to discuss it when I get back. I'll pick you up for dinner Wednesday evening at 7:00pm. Will you please be waiting for me?

There was no signature...but then none was needed.

Bemused, Danni wandered into the living room and sank into the overstuffed chair. Morris hopped up onto her lap and she stroked his velvety fur absent-mindedly. She had mixed feelings, disappointment that she wouldn't see him sooner, and relief that she had a few days to get her defenses firmly back in place.

Chapter Seven

"It's all I'm prepared to offer, Mr. Oaks, take it or leave it!" Sanders appraised the man across the conference table. John Oaks had a light sheen of sweat on his forehead, and his eyes darted back and forth between his partners and himself.

"You know that ski lodge is worth twice that," blustered John Oaks, pulling his shirt collar away from his neck a bit.

"I'm already giving you well above the appraisal price in a gesture of good faith. The offer is more than fair. You have one week to decide. After that, I may just look into something else and withdraw my offer as well as sell my shares at market value."

This statement brought a chorus of whispers among the other 4 partners and they signaled Oaks for a private conference.

"Will you excuse us for a moment Mr. Sanders while my partners and I discuss this?" asked John Oaks, his jaw grimly set.

He got up and escorted Sanders to the door and instructed his secretary to make Mr. Linson comfortable.

When he closed the door and turned around, the other men stared at him in consternation.

"What are you thinking, John?" hissed Byron Hedges. Byron was Oak's brother in law and Danni's Uncle. "You know Linson is right, what are you waiting for?"

The other three nodded in agreement.

"You know what will happen if he sells those shares on the open market," grumbled Lars Peterson.

"Gentlemen, I know your concerns," declared Oaks. "But, have I ever steered you wrong before?" His steely glare pinned them and dared them to name one single time.

They all shifted uneasily and looked at one another. They knew that OakHedges Corporation had suffered some setbacks over the last few years.

But Oaks had a nose for business that had built the corporation and they still had faith in him. The source of the setbacks could not be traced to any one person or situation. It just seemed a series of bad luck had plagued the corporation unmercilessly. If they did not receive a major influx of monies...and soon, they stood to lose several more ventures.

"We think you should take the offer," volunteered Peter Whitson, wiping his bald pate. "It is above appraisal value as he stated, and it's money we need to invest."

"Yes, John," agreed Lars. "The ski lodge has been losing money for the last three years because we have not had the funds to invest and make the updates needed to move it into the 21st century. It's become a white elephant for us, and we need to get rid of it."

Striding around to his chair, Oaks picked up the folder in front of him. "Gentlemen, I've had a little research done. I have a hunch Linson is bluffing. He wants this lodge badly, although I haven't been able to determine the reason as yet. I suggest we make a counter offer at the end of the week and see what he says."

His eyes gleamed as he looked around at the other men. "I predict he will make another offer raising the stakes once again."

"But what if he doesn't, John?" argued Byron.

"Then, we accept the offer he has made. But we will lose nothing by holding out except a little more time and putting him just slightly off balance. If he thinks we aren't in a major hurry to get rid of it, then he may be willing to up the ante if he wants it as badly as I think he does."

The others looked around at each other and then nodded. That was the John Oaks they knew, and his reasoning was sound.

A half hour later, Byron stood at the 10th story window looking out over the city. He turned as John came in and poured himself a scotch.

"What have you got in mind, John?" he asked without turning around.

Oaks appeared beside him at the window, swishing the drink around in his glass. "You know me too well, Byron," he replied, his laugh rumbling in his chest.

"Well?"

"I've been doing some research on our Mr. Linson. Seems he's worth a whole lot more than we gave him credit for."

Surprised, Byron stared at his brother in law. "Is that so?"

"Yes," mused Oaks, watching the scotch swirl in his glass. "And another thing, I think he is interested in Danni."

"Now that's something we can use," grinned Byron, his teeth gleaming as he smiled. "I thought you said he wasn't interested in meeting her and scorned the suggestion?"

"Seems he met her all on his own. I saw them at dinner Saturday night at the lodge. And I saw him go into her condo."

Byron's eyes narrowed. "You don't say? That's not Danni's usual behavior is it?"

"No, it certainly isn't," gloated John, a self-satisfied smirk on his lips. "Perhaps all we need to do is give a little push in the right direction." He threw his head back and swallowed the shot.

"So you are thinking if he marries Danni, he would invest in OakHedges as a future partner?" guessed Byron.

"Something like that," agreed Oaks. "At any rate, a rich son in law has all sorts of possibilities."

"It does indeed," murmured Byron, staring out the window again. "But you know Danni won't help you. In fact, she would run the other way if she thought you had something to do with it."

"Leave it to me," responded John. "I'll figure something out. This is too good an opportunity to miss. It's just what we've been waiting for, and I

intend to work it very carefully to achieve maximum benefit."

Byron grinned derisively at the smug smile on John's face. Yes, John was good at getting the most out of a situation. He had faith that he would this time as well.

"I'm so sorry, Danni," exclaimed the white haired woman just walking out of Danni's apartment. I know I'm late picking these up, but I do thank you my dear. The children do so enjoy homemade treats!"

Sanders put his arms out to stop the woman who was due to turn any second and run right into him.... which she did.

"Careful there," he warned, a smile curving his lips as she gasped and gripped the big bowl she held in her hands.

The jar caused the tin foil fold to open up a bit and the smell of chocolate chip cookies wafted up his nose.

He sniffed appreciatively as she stuttered, "I I'm so sorry, sir, I almost spilled these all over you!"

"That certainly is a delicious smell," he returned with a lazy grin. "I'll forgive you if you take pity on a bachelor and give me one of those."

"Of course," she blushed, charmed by his endearing smile.

"Never mind, Macie," interrupted Danni. "I'll give Mr. Linson one from the kitchen. Take those to the kids."

"This must be the young man who sent those beautiful roses last Sunday! How did you get someone to deliver on Sunday?" she asked curiously, her eyes bright with interest.

"Sanders Linson," he replied, chuckling. "I called in a favor."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Linson," she answered, smiling graciously. "I'm Macie, Danni's next door neighbor."

"Allow me to get the door for you, and the pleasure is all mine."

Danni watched in amusement as Sanders opened the door for her gushing neighbor.

Shaking her head and rolling her eyes, she turned away from the door and headed for the kitchen. The man positively oozed charm she murmured to herself.

Suddenly, she heard an expletive, "What the hell?"

Swiftly, she returned to the living room where a fat orange ball was wrapped around Sanders' leg, hissing and spitting while Sanders was trying in vain to shake it off.

"Down, Morris!" commanded Danni, clapping her hands.

"Good grief, what IS that thing?" Sanders demanded to know, watching Morris lick his paw and wash his ear.

Morris seemed to take exception to the tone of voice, and he stood on all four feet, tail twitching, and hair standing on end. His golden eyes impaled the upstart in a ferocious glare.

"Meet Morris, my attack cat," enjoined Danni smugly.

"Attack cat?" returned Sanders incredulously.

"Yes, doesn't everyone have one?" blinked Danni innocently.

"You've GOT to be kidding!"

"Oh no, I'm very serious. He's had lessons and everything. He won't allow you near me if he feels you're threatening me in any way until I give him the word that you're a friend."

"How did I threaten you by walking in the door?" queried Sanders skeptically.

"It's because you are new here," she explained. "He thought you were an intruder of course."

"It never occurred to you to lock him up knowing full well I was coming?"

"Actually...no. It's been so long since anyone new came in that I never thought about it." She giggled at the expression on his face.

"So, if I come over there and take a swing at your bottom, the orange demon here will attack me again?"

"That would be correct," supplied Danni impishly.

"Then, I suggest you give him whatever sign or words it takes to ward him off," replied Sanders smoothly.

"Give me one good reason why I should," she said cheekily, recognizing his look. The one that said I'd really like to spank you right now!

"Because if you don't, I will lock Morris in the bedroom, and then put you over my knee for a thorough butt warming."

"Oh all right, have it your way!!" Danni picked up the orange bundle and walked over to Sanders.

"Hold out your hand," she instructed, grinning at his sardonic look.

Sanders held out his hand and Danni placed one of Morris's large paws in the palm of it and said, "Friend, Morris, Sanders is a friend."

Morris ducked his head and sniffed Sander's hand.

"That's all there is to it?" asked Sanders.

"That's it. Care to test him?" she asked with a wicked grin.

"I believe I would," returned Sanders silkily.

Danni sat Morris on the floor. "I'm going into the kitchen, you go out and come back in," she called over her shoulder.

Sanders went out the door and reopened it cautiously.

Morris fixed Sanders in a golden stare as he walked in. Suddenly the big tabby took a flying leap and landed in Sanders arms, letting out a huge purr.

Startled, Sanders grabbed the big cat, and then stiffened as Morris put his paws around his neck and

ducked his head under his chin, purring and rubbing.

"Awww, he likes you," teased Danni. "He's never done that with anyone else before. You must be special."

She walked over and handed him the chocolate chip cookie she had promised. She dissolved in helpless giggles when Morris copped a bite out of it and Sanders looked totally flummoxed.

"I'm honored," said Sanders wryly, dropping Morris on the floor with the rest of the cookie.

"Are you ready for dinner finally?" he asked the laughing girl.

Two hours later, having finished dinner at a local Italian restaurant, Sanders and Danni were ensconced in a couple of seats at the movie theatre watching a horror flick. The man in front of them kept telling the girl beside him what was coming up next.

Danni grew increasingly annoyed, and she leaned forward and asked him, "Would you please be quiet? I would like to watch the movie without hearing what's going to happen if you don't mind!"

Aggravated at her tone the man replied snidely, "If I want to tell my fiancée what's happening, what business is it of yours?"

"You are ruining the surprise, that's what!" hissed Danni back at him. When Sanders put a warning hand on her knee, she glared at him. "Well, he is!" she huffed and folded her arms.

"I believe there is a no talking rule in the theatre...out of courtesy to those around you of course," Sanders told the irritated man.

At Sanders words, the man turned back around and dropped the conversation.

"Some women just like to be a bitch," muttered the girl in front of her, but Danni had caught the comment. Her ears burned as she saw the man smother a laugh at her expense. Few people laughed at Danni Oaks...and got away with it!

A little while later, Danni went up to the concession stand to get some popcorn and a drink and the man in front of them followed her.

"Aren't you the little prima Dona," he sneered as he walked up behind her in line.

"Excuse me?" queried Danni politely, looking down her nose. "I'm not the one with a big mouth in a theatre full of people who want to listen to the movie in peace and quiet."

The kid behind the counter handed Danni her large coke and bucket full of popcorn. She was fuming.

"What's the matter, honey? Been too long since you had a real man?"

That did it! Danni whirled around and threw her coke in the smirking face of the idiot behind her.

"You bitch," he yelled as the cold soda ran down his face and clung to the front of his shirt.

Then Danni dumped the popcorn on his head, just as Sanders walked up. He grabbed Danni by the arm. "What is going on here?"

"Your little girlfriend threw her coke all over me," screeched the outraged man, "and then dumped popcorn all over me as well!"

"If I was looking for a real man, it wouldn't be in your direction," hissed Danni, still furious. She drew her arm back to slap the irate man in the face but Sanders hooked an arm around her waist and jerked her back.

Incensed, she turned to face Sanders, "What did you do that for?"

The manager came running up and the indignant wet customer began complaining and pointing at Danni.

Sanders face was grim and foreboding as he spoke to her. "Just be quiet while I settle this."

Infuriated, Danni huffed and turned away. She intended to go outside and call a cab, but Sanders caught up to her as she reached the sidewalk. Taking her elbow, he began to march her toward the parking lot where he had left the car.

Still enraged, she began to dig her heels in and refuse to go.

Sanders stopped and whirled her to face him. "You've got a choice to make. You can either walk with me until we get to the car...or I can put you over my shoulder to carry you. But either way, you ARE going. And if I have to carry you, you will feel my hand on your rear every step of the way!"

Danni suddenly realized that Sanders was angry. Not just angry, coldly furious! She stared at him in consternation. "You are mad at me?"

"Mad? Mad doesn't describe what I feel for you at this moment," came his biting reply.

He began to walk her towards the car again and this time she did not fight with him. He was more than capable of carrying out his threat, and she did not want to antagonize him until she could explain her side of things. Besides, she had a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach that told her he might not care what she had to say. The image of the man and the coke and popcorn mess flashed into her mind.

She sneaked a peak at the stern profile Sanders presented. He glanced down at her, his blue eyes shooting sparks and she recognized that look. It was the same one he wore the day she almost ran over him and then refused to apologize.

Maybe it was time to do some damage control before she ended up in an untenable position again!

"Sanders..." began Danni as he opened the car door. She resisted when he tried to urge her inside. "Sanders...listen!"

But Sanders was in no mood to listen. He quickly landed a stinging blow on each of her buttocks and one especially hard one right in the middle of her rounded cheeks.

"Ow...ouch!" yelled Dannie as her hand snapped back to clutch her burning rear. She stared at him accusingly, her blue eyes misting, small chin quivering as she fought for control.

She opened her mouth to protest this unfair treatment, but he held up a silencing finger.

"Not one word. In the car...now!"

The hard look on his tanned features told her it would do no good to rile him further at this point, and a quick glance around told her they were alone. Not a good time to challenge a spanking man she decided, sniffing a bit.

Keeping her right hand over her bottom, she quickly slid into the car seat, trying to bring her emotions under control.

When Sanders got into the car, he turned to face her. He was obviously very angry and Danni shrank back in her seat, trying to become as small as possible.

"What was the meaning of that little exhibition?" he bit out finally, taking in the trembling chin and wide blue eyes. "That was the worst display of a childish temper tantrum I've seen since my nine year old niece pulled one on me at the zoo! She got taken into the bathroom and the seat of her britches dusted."

Again, Danni tried to speak, but he cut her off with a wave of his hand. "Don't say a word yet," he snapped. "Just save it until I get you home."

Danni knew without a doubt she was about to get her seat dusted like the aforementioned niece, but she knew her britches would be at her knees!

As the shock of the humiliating spanks she had received wore off, she began to get angry herself. This is SO unfair, she thought. He won't even let me defend myself!

Pouting, she crossed her arms and stared straight ahead. The man had deserved what he got for his hateful remark she decided. She had a small niggles of doubt, which she quickly squelched. She refused to consider that perhaps she might have over reacted a tad.

She was slowly working herself into a fine high dudgeon as the car ate up the streets.

Men, she thought disgustedly. They are all alike. They always stick together! Well, she'd show Mr. Linson!

As the car slowed for the upcoming red light, she put her right hand on the door handle and slipped to the seatbelt with her left. She would just get out and call herself a cab and the infuriating male beside her be damned!

"Don't try it," came the softly menacing voice of Sanders, his eyes never leaving the road.

Danni hesitated.

"You make me have to come after you, and you'll be over the back of your sofa with my belt being applied to your pretty little butt," he warned smoothly. "And that's AFTER the sound paddling I intend to give you over my lap."

He watched out of the corner of his eye as Danni's hands slowly slid back into her lap. Smart girl he decided, grinning to himself.

Sanders knew Danni was getting mad, but that was too damn bad. He needed the time to cool down before dealing with her.

Instinct had sent him after the man who followed Danni to the concession stand. When she had flung the coke in the fellow's face, he had been appalled. The popcorn had simply added insult to injury as far as he was concerned.

The manger had waved him on after he jammed a hundred dollar bill into his hand to cover any damages to the carpet. He didn't know what the fellow had said to Danni, but anything short of a body grope did not deserve this kind of response from her.

He thought about the lunch he had enjoyed with Oaks' secretary. The woman had a very loose tongue and had regaled him with several of Danni's temper tirades from the past and her escapades that had had her mother worried out of her mind.

Apparently, Danni had moved out of the house permanently after graduating the 12th grade of the girl's finishing school she had gone to, and no one

really knew why. She was independent and had an income from her grandmother's estate that allowed her to do as she pleased.

The general consensus was that Danni Oaks was a spoiled brat, used to having her own way. Frowning, Sanders thought about their relationship so far and though he admitted she was a brat, spoiled was not quite the right word for it. He sensed something else, something he could not put his finger on. He knew it had to do with her father and the fact that she wouldn't give him the time of day according to Anita.

She had melted sweetly into his arms after he spanked her last Saturday and been a delightful dinner companion that evening. She had seemed to enjoy his kiss, but then suddenly panicked. He had heard Macie thank Danni for the cookies for the children, so he knew she must enjoy helping others. Or at least had a soft spot for kids.

They had been having a great time tonight until this had happened. He really didn't want to spank her very bad, but he knew he had to keep his promise.

A few minutes later, Danni and Sanders walked through the door of her apartment. He took off his sheepskin jacket and laid it over the loveseat. Walking into the kitchen, he picked up a straight-backed chair and brought it into the living room. No sense in putting off the inevitable he thought grimly as he seated himself.

Morris ambled in and sat down, watching the antics of the humans with interest. His golden eyes snapped back and forth between his beloved master and the new guy he had just met tonight.

Sliding the long sleeves of his sweatshirt above the elbows, Sanders crooked his finger at Danni, beckoning her to him.

She had taken off her jacket as well and took her time hanging it in the closet. When she turned to finally face him, he was waiting for her.

Most of Danni's ire had burned out on the way home, and she looked rather dejected and forlorn standing there, her hands jammed into her back pockets, her eyes mutely begging him not to do this.

Sanders almost gave in to those wide pleading eyes, but pointed to the floor between his knees and spoke gruffly, "Come here, Danni."

Heaving a big sigh, Danni shuffled slowly over to him. "Don't I even get to explain?" she asked wistfully.

Pulling her onto his lap, he nodded. "By all means, I want to hear it."

Morris settled down on his tummy, his huge paws extended in front of him. This could be interesting.

Playing with her fingers, Danni explained what the man had said and she knew it sounded a bit feeble, even to her own ears. At the time, it had greatly infuriated her, but in retrospect, it wasn't all that bad. Not enough to warrant the stunt she had pulled and she knew it.

"You aren't really going to spank me are you, Sanders?" she asked hopefully, already knowing the answer.

Sanders looked thoughtfully at her, appraising the sincerity of her words and actions. "Yes, I am, Danni," he replied evenly. "But, since you appear to recognize your childish actions, I won't be too hard on you."

He stood her up between his knees. "Lower your jeans, Danni," he instructed her.

Her hands went to the snap of her pants, but she couldn't bring herself to undo them.

"Danni, how many times have you pulled something like this in the past? Made a public spectacle of yourself and humiliated someone else at the same time?" Sanders asked the question gently and waited for her reaction.

She hung her head as she recalled several times in the past when she had let her temper run away

with her and indulged herself in carelessly cutting someone to the quick with her sharp words and actions.

She had never felt guilty about it before, why now? With a start, she realized it was because Sanders was lecturing her and pointing out how totally juvenile her actions were, and how they must appear to others.

"Quite a few actually," she whispered, suddenly somewhat ashamed of herself.

"So I've heard," he responded dryly. "What usually happens to children when they behave like that?"

"They get grounded?" she asked, making a last ditch effort to get out of this.

"Sometimes they do," agreed Sanders, a bit amused. "But since I can't really ground you, I'm going to opt for the other punishment they usually get. A well-spanked bottom." He motioned again for her to lower her jeans.

Reluctantly, Danni unsnapped her pants and slowly pushed them to her knees. She wasn't sure why she was cooperating with him, but it seemed better than having him force her. She didn't question his right to spank her. A small part of her brain wanted to argue the point, but at the same time, she realized that she had been searching for something like this all along, that someone who would stand up to her and hold her accountable. This was the strength she had been seeking. She instinctively knew Sanders was a man of his word and it would do her no good to argue or whine. The end result would still be the same.

Sanders watched as she grudgingly obeyed him. He could force her, but he wanted her to acknowledge her wrongdoing by baring herself for him. It was an important step in their relationship and one he did not want to skip.

He pulled her to his right side and patted his legs for her to lower herself over them.

Danni gritted her teeth and leaned over his hard thighs. He helped her into position and her toes barely touched the floor while her hands went to the chair legs to support herself and give her something to grip.

She felt Sanders' warm hand caress her bottom and her breath quickened as her heart raced a bit faster. She gasped in surprise when she felt his hand slide beneath her black silkies and push them down to join her jeans at her knees. "No, Sanders, not bare," she pleaded, looking desperately back, her face flushing as she imagined the view he must be seeing.

"Yes, bare!" he stated firmly, hardening his heart against her plea.

"Oh nooo," she moaned, totally embarrassed. Her stomach clenched as she felt his hand leave her bottom and saw his arm go up in the air. She braced herself for the fiery smacks she knew were coming!

When Sanders began to pepper the pale globes with sharp stinging swats, she jerked and bucked, unprepared in spite of herself.

The satiny flesh flattened and sprang back beneath Sanders' hand as he applied it with firm even strokes. Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack!

"Oh...ow...owwwwww..." cried Danni as his hard palm bit into her tender buttocks. Over and over again, the spansks scalded her skin as he soundly paddled her.

Danni kicked her legs and thrashed her hips from side to side, as she sought relief from the painful onslaught. Her howls came in long drawn out wails, and the tears began to stream down her cheeks.

Frantically, she put her hand over her bottom, trying in vain to get some relief from the burning swats. Didn't the man ever get tired, she wondered frantically?

"Please, Sanders, pleeeeeease," she begged shamefully as he stopped and pinned her hand in the small of her back. "Please don't spank me any more, I'm sorryyyy!"

Sanders did not answer her, but lifted his knee so the skin beneath the lower buttocks was more fully exposed as her delightful derriere was elevated.

Realizing his intention, Danni sobbed frantically, "NO, NO...not THERE Sanders! Ahhhhhhooooowwwwww..." she wailed as his hard hand began to smack the tender sit spot.

Suddenly, the front door flew open and in rushed Macie, face white and brandishing a baseball bat in front of her. She stopped abruptly, and her mouth dropped open as she realized Danni's predicament.

"I was...I thought...I mean," she stammered, then lowered the baseball bat and heaved a sigh of relief. "Thank god," she pronounced. "I thought someone had broken in and was beating you up!"

Sanders had paused, his hand resting on Danni's flaming red bottom. He quirked a sardonic eyebrow at the woman, but said nothing.

"Ahem...well...carry on then," blushed Macie, backing out the door. She winked at the sobbing Danni still draped over Sanders knees and smiled. "Looks like you finally found someone to tame those wild ways of yours, my dear." On that note, she firmly shut the door.

"Now, where was I?" chuckled Sanders, running his hand over the hot flesh. "Aaah yes, now I remember...the reminder every time you sit for the next few days."

"I'll remember Sanders, please...no more!" sobbed Danni. Her butt felt like it was molten fire and her cheeks ached and throbbed.

Sanders decided to take pity on her, and he lifted her upright. Gently, he pulled her panties up over her sore rear and told her to step out of the jeans.

She obeyed him, the tears still streaming down her face as she sobbed. He stood up and led her to the sofa where he sat down and pulled her tenderly down onto his lap. She snuggled right into him, her face turned into his shoulder and her sore cheeks between his thighs to relieve some of the pressure against them.

He just held her as her sobs began to wind down to small hiccupping breaths as she rested against him.

Finally, he lifted her chin with his right hand and gazed into her tear washed eyes, his thumb outlining her lips. "Are you going to watch that temper, little snow bunny?" he asked softly.

Nodding, she watched as his mouth swooped gently down to claim hers in a soft kiss. She melted into him and reveled in his comfort.

Sanders pressed softly against her mouth, not rushing her, but keeping it light, teasing and beseeching. Little by little, he deepened the kiss. When he felt her stiffen, he drew back until she softened again and relaxed into him once more.

His hand swept up and down the outside of her bare thigh, moving up to tenderly soothe the fiery skin of her buttock beneath the silk panty.

She moaned in pleasure as the same hand that had lit such a flame in her bottom, now massaged some of the sting away.

Danni was experiencing a myriad of sensations as Sanders hand wandered freely over her body while his lips worked magic against hers. She was drowning again, but this time it was not in panic, but pleasure. She felt the rock hard length of him against her hip and the dampness between her thighs as he continued to drug her with soft sweet kisses, sometimes demanding, sometimes beseeching.

When his hand went to the back of her head, his hand gripping her hair and his tongue demanding entrance to the warm recesses of her mouth, she began to feel that drowning, panicky feeling more

strongly. Suddenly, she couldn't breathe, and she stiffened in his arms, preparing to fight. But then, she was free and he was the supplicating lover again, pressing soft little kisses along her chin and down her throat and she relaxed, letting her head fall back to allow him better access.

On and on they went, dancing the lover's dance, advancing and retreating until they were both breathing heavily and Sanders said hoarsely, "You better get some clothes on Danni, or I can't be responsible for what happens next."

Her eyes glazed with passion, she stared at him uncomprehendingly as he strove for control. Suddenly, she blushed. Realizing her predicament, she quickly got up and headed for the bedroom where she slipped into some loose sweats, hissing as she pulled them up over her tender nates.

When she returned to the living room, Sanders was putting his coat on, getting ready to leave. She was half disappointed, half relieved. She was still trembling slightly, and she knew she was exhausted.

"I'll call you tomorrow," Sanders murmured against her mouth as he pulled her into his arms for one last kiss. He released her and strode to the door. Pulling it open, he turned and smiled at her. She was still standing there, her fingers on her lips and her eyes wide as saucers.

"Aren't you going to say goodnight?" he questioned, smiling at her bemusement. She looked like he felt!

Flushing, she quickly replied. "Of course, thank you for a won...er...thank you for dinner and the movie...or rather the part we saw," she grinned impishly. "And, good night, Sanders."

Sighing dreamily, she walked over and locked the door. In a few minutes, the phone rang. Knowing it would be her nosy but well-meaning neighbor she ignored it. Letting the answering machine pick it up, she walked into her bedroom and flopped down on her stomach.

As the shrill voice of Macie came into the bedroom asking her if she was all right, she smiled and closed her eyes. Yes, she was more than all right.

Morris yawned and padded into the bedroom, hopping up and onto Danni's back. Turning around a couple of times, he laid down. Humans...who understood them?

Chapter Eight

"Oh no, you didn't!" exclaimed Eva, horrified at Danni's tale of the theatre mishap the previous night.

She collapsed onto Danni's bed in a state of helpless laughter at the incongruity of it all.

"I sure did," ginned the unrepentant Danni. It was a lot funnier today than it had been last night when she had paid for her indiscretions bare bottom up over Sander's hard thighs.

Her hands went back again to test the tenderness of her cheeks for the umpteenth time today. She scrunched up her little nose. Yep...still sore! She had checked in the mirror this morning and her smooth satiny buttocks were sporting a few small bruises. Combined with the bruises from the switching she had received last Saturday, her rear was beginning to look like a battle zone!

Her action did not go unnoticed by Eva. "I take it Sanders did not approve?" she queried, her eyes twinkling.

"Umm...you could say that," admitted Danni.

The girls stared at each other for a moment and burst out laughing again.

"Well, join the club, hon," said Eva with a smirk. "Now, you know what I've been going through for the last three years."

"I really had no idea, Eva," grinned Danni, "but, I doubt it would have changed anything for me. When I get ready to do something, I just do it. No man is going to tell me what to do!" she boasted.

"Is that so?" came a smooth drawl from the doorway.

Two heads snapped around to see Sanders leaning against the doorjamb, casually dressed in cords and a sweater. His arms were folded across his broad chest and he looked deceptively mild as he smiled disarmingly.

Dale's tall frame was outlined in the doorway, and his brown eyes lit up with mischief at Danni's startled look.

"You girls were so busy giggling; I took the liberty of answering the door for you, Danni." His smug look said it all as he jammed his hands in the back pockets of his jeans.

"You were saying?" came the sardonic drawl from Sanders.

Making a swift recovery, Danni walked over to Sanders, placed her hands on his arms and leaned up to peck him on the chin. "It was nothing," she answered breezily, waving her hand. "Just girl talk." She smiled cheekily at him, and he laughed in spite of himself.

"Danni was just telling me about the theatre last night," grinned Eva, coming to join Dale.

"I hope she was properly repentant," replied Sanders, knowing full well she probably wasn't by now.

There was a pause while Eva glanced at Danni and then she hastily replied, "Oh, of course, repentant...right!"

"What happened at the theatre?" asked Dale, lost now as to what they were discussing.

Sanders pulled Danni in to the circle of his arms and kissed her nose. "This little brat here poured soda and popcorn all over some man in the line at the concession stand."

The couples began to move back towards the living room as Dale's eyebrows snapped to his hairline.

"Now, Sanders, that's not fair," pouted Danni. "You know he was being a real pain in the...err...being a real pain," she amended as his hand settled on her backside.

"We discussed it," returned Sanders in response to Dale's questing look, "and Danni was brought to see the error of her ways."

"I'm glad to hear it," murmured Dale approvingly. "Do I need to reinforce it?"

Danni scowled at Dale in disbelief. The man sounded like a father, but was only 5 years her senior!

"I believe I covered the subject pretty well," responded Sanders, patting Danni's jean clad buttocks in satisfaction. "I think I can handle any reminders that come up as well."

The two men gazed at one another and Dale nodded. An understanding passed between them and Dale replied, "Very good. Knowing Danni, I'm sure she'll be needing many of them in the future."

"No doubt," drawled Sanders, amused at the sulky look on Danni's face.

Danni felt like a recalcitrant child that had been discussed and passed to Sanders for safekeeping. Humph, she thought to herself. These two exasperating males had a lot to learn about Danni Oaks. She had been doing as she pleased for 23 years, and she was not about to let 2 Neanderthals run her life now!

So, she's gotten spanked a couple of times, it was not the end of the world, she decided. She pushed aside the memory of how much those burning spanks had hurt while she was upside down, her bum nicely elevated high in the air.

Of course, I'll have to make sure it's something I really want to do, if I'm going to get spanked for it she added to herself, completely ignoring the fact she was already making compromises!

The two couples spent a pleasant afternoon getting to know one another, and Dale related to Sanders the saga of Eva and Danni going to Las Vegas and the car breaking down. When he got to the part about the bikers, Sanders choked on his drink and turned to glare at Danni.

Danni smiled beatifically up at him and spoke three words, "Statute of Limitations."

"Now, how is that fair," protested Eva laughing, "that was the first time Dale ever spanked me, and you got off scott free! Just like the time we got invited to play strip poker with the college boys and

got drunk. Dale came and pulled us out just as it was getting interesting!" Feeling Dale's glare, she quickly amended her words. "I mean, he came and rescued us before we really got into trouble."

Danni dissolved into helpless giggles at the bright smile Eva sent Dale.

Eva glared at Danni, then snorted, "Statute of Limitations huh? I'll have to remember that one. Ha ha, very funny," she scowled at Danni who was still laughing.

"It's not nice to laugh at your friends miss brat," growled Sanders, pinning Danni in a ferocious mock frown. "Eva gets spanked several times for your indiscretions and you laugh at her? I think that deserves some retribution. What do you think, Eva?"

Danni shrieked as Sanders grabbed her by the arms and hauled her over his lap on the couch. "No, that's not fair! That's all in the past, before I knew you!" She giggled as Sanders pinned her arm back to keep her from getting it in the way of his target zone.

"Not fair?" Sanders rested his hand on the seat of her jeans. "Well, I certainly want to be fair. I may not have known you, but Dale did. Maybe Dale needs to spank you. What do you think, Dale?" His blue eyes gleamed with mischief as Danni kicked her legs up and down in protest.

"I think I'll pass that right to you, Sanders, be my guest," smiled Dale, thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Don't you dare," protested Danni, still giggling and trying to squirm away.

It was the wrong word to use when it came to Sanders, and Danni realized her mistake right away when she looked back into his smiling face. The challenge had been issued, and Sander's was more than up to it. He landed a stinging spank on her sore left cheek, then another one on the right.

"Ouch! Ow!" yelped Danni. Her distress was real because her poor bottom was still pretty tender.

She threw her head back and cried, "Oh please, Sanders, that really hurts! I'm not kidding!" She looked accusingly back at him over her shoulder and, she tried to turn over and away from his hard palm.

But, Sanders was having none of that. He dropped another firm swat in the middle of her rear that sent Danni into a slow burn again. "Saaannderrrrs," wailed Danni, her eyes getting misty.

"Lay still, or you'll get some more," instructed Sanders calmly, rubbing some of the sting out.

Danni stilled immediately, praying he wasn't seriously going to paddle her again so soon after last night.

"Now then, young lady, if what I'm hearing is correct, you have been running amuck far too long. It's time you learned there are consequences to reckless endangerment of your life."

Danni sniffed a bit and stole a glance at Eva. She looked sympathetically at Danni, but Dale looked pleased.

"As you so smugly pointed out, these things are in the past. However, should anything like this occur in the future, you WILL have me to answer to. Is that clear miss brat?"

When Danni didn't answer him, he swatted her again, three times like before.

"Yeowch! Okay, it's clear!" Danni fought for control as her poor abused cheeks began to ache again. "Let me up, Sanders.... please?" She added that last bit for good measure. She certainly was in no position to stand on pride!

Sanders hauled her up and onto his lap. Her lower lip was trembling, and her eyes were damp. She was embarrassed and hid her face in his shoulder. He took her hand in his and played with her fingers as he talked to Dale.

Danni was thankful he was thoughtful enough to let her compose herself in front of her friends, and she soon heaved a tremulous sigh. She was

obviously going to have to be a lot more careful around this man she decided. He was unpredictable and that intrigued her.

Several hours later, the four of them were seated in the dining room of the Treasure Chest Inn. They were sharing a pleasant meal together when John Oaks approached their table.

Good evening, Sanders," spoke her father smoothly, addressing the man across from Danni. "I see you have met my beautiful daughter." Leaning down to plant a quick kiss on Danni's cheek, he grinned as she stiffened.

"Hello darling, nice to see you again. Are you enjoying your evening?" He nodded politely to Dale and Eva.

"Evening, Oaks," nodded Sanders, his eyes thoughtful as he watched the exchange between father and daughter. Dale too, watched with interest. He had never seen Danni around her father before.

"I was," retorted Danni tightly, her eyes spitting sparks at her father. How dare he act fatherly and kiss her cheek! "I'm not sure I'm hungry anymore. *Something* just ruined my appetite!"

"Danni," rebuked Sanders softly. "Is that any way to speak to your father?"

"I'll speak to my *...father...*however I choose," snapped Danni angrily. "And, it's none of your business, Sanders."

"Still the spitfire aren't you darling," her father snickered, amused at Sanders' remark to his headstrong daughter.

"We'll talk business again in a few days, Sanders," remarked her father. He turned to his daughter. "You best watch yourself, Danni, this man eats minnows like you for breakfast." He waved his hand in Danni's direction and chuckled as he walked off.

Danni's thoughts were chaotic as she watched her father walk away, and she swung around to stare at Sanders again. Could it possibly be that her

meeting Sanders was not an accident? Her heart lurched, and her mind raced furiously as she considered the implications. Having bought into the lodge, she would have met him sooner or later. But why did her father try to warn her off? Was he trying to drive them *together* by using reverse psychology? It was becoming obvious to Danni that Sanders was well off, but how well off? Why did she get the feeling she was becoming a pawn in the business world again?

She needed to get away.... she needed to think! She shoved her chair back from the table.

"Don't speak to me like that, Danni," warned Sanders, a muscle twitching along his jaw line. Something was not right here, but he was not going to allow her to treat him that way, especially not in public.

But, Danni was beyond the niceties of a public place. She felt a knot of cold fear in the pit of her stomach. "I'll speak to you however I please, Mr. Linson," she hissed, her anger and despair at her father ruling her tongue. She stood up. "I want to go home, I'm not hungry anymore."

"Sit down, Danni," commanded Sanders in a soft, yet clear tone. "You are making a scene."

"Go to hell," she responded furiously, her fear and fury ebbing over as the tears began to course down her cheeks. She turned away from Sanders and strode quickly to the door and out into the moonlight night without her coat. She didn't even hear the man behind her until her upper arm was grasped and she was twirled around and into a hard chest.

Sanders stared into her furious wet face, perplexed as to the source of her pain and rage.

"Let me go," she sobbed, beating her fists against his chest, her voice beginning to rise in panic. She tried desperately to pull away from him.

"What's going on, Sanders?" demanded Dale, coming up behind the couple. Eva hurried to Danni

and put her arms around her, gently extricating her from Sanders' grasp.

"Damned if I know," growled Sanders, running his hands through his hair in frustration as he watched Eva lead Danni away. He warred with himself...wanting to comfort her and make her talk to him at the same time. "What does she have against her father?" he asked, turning to Dale.

"I have to confess that I don't know what's going on with Danni," admitted Dale to the other man, "but I intend to find out."

"As do I," declared Sanders, looking in the direction of Danni and Eva.

"Let me talk to her first, Sanders," said Dale calmly. "I'll take her home, and you can get a cab to the apartment, okay?"

"All right, I will wait for a few hours. But I'm giving you fair warning. I am very much interested in Danni and I don't intend to let this go. I'll be coming by around 9:00 to check on her and I'll expect to see her then."

"Are you really interested in Danni, just for Danni??" asked Dale quietly, keenly observing his reaction. Dale felt very protective of Danni and he was pretty sure Sanders was in love with her, whether he knew it or not.

"If you were anyone else, I'd knock you out," growled Sanders as he returned Dale's clear gaze. "But since I know you are only concerned for her, I'll let that pass."

"Okay, fair enough," replied Dale, satisfied with the answer he received. I'll let her know you will be coming, Sanders, but she is very mistrustful of men and has been as long as I've known her. You're the only one I've ever seen her respond to. But whatever is between her and her father is obviously going to take patience to deal with."

"Agreed," nodded Sanders. "But I don't intend to let her shut me out now. Not when we've been doing so well. I'll be by later." With that, he turned and strode back into the restaurant.

"But what if it's true?" Danni asked, despair in her voice. "What if my father is just using me, Eva? You know what he and my Uncle said, that women are used as deal sweeteners in the corporate world. What if that's all Sanders is really interested in? Getting control of OakHedges as my husband would be a quite a coup for any man."

Eva didn't know quite what to say as she watched her friend pace up and down. She felt like Danni was over reacting, but from what her friend had told her about John Oaks, she could understand her concern.

Both girls looked up as the door opened, and Dale stepped inside.

He gave Eva a quick smile and walked over to Danni. Folding his arms across his broad chest, he looked sternly at her and ordered, "All right, young lady. You have some explaining to do. Let's have it."

Dale was not at all sure he was doing the right thing, but he knew Danni had avoided talking with anyone for far too long. Everyone she knew had allowed her to back them down and walk all over them. She had responded to his authority at the condo, maybe she needed a strong approach to guide her.

Eva gasped at Dale's words. She wasn't sure either if this was the correct approach to get Danni to confide in him. She trusted her husband's instincts though, and remained still.

Danni stared at him in credulous amazement. Dale had never treated her like this before, and she felt somewhat like a small child who had just thrown a temper tantrum. Her mouth gaped open as she attempted some small pattern of speech, but nothing came to mind.

"Is that the best you can do?" asked Dale slightly amused. "Because it's a long way from explaining why you created a scene in a public place and walked out on your dinner date. I know you have been used to acting as you please anywhere,

anytime, but that was very rude and unbecoming to a young woman of your status."

His censorious tone pricked Danni's ire and she flushed. Just who did he think he was anyway! She opened her mouth this time to flay him with her temper, her eyes snapping.

But Dale held up his hand in warning. "Before you lay into me, young lady, you better understand this. I will NOT allow you to unleash your temper on me without consequences. So, unless you want to find your sassy bottom getting spanked for the second time today, you had better start talking in a civil manner. Do I make myself clear?"

Danni's bottom tingled at his blatant threat to spank her and she knew he was serious. She could not quite bring herself to lash out at him, although she badly wanted to. Her temper had served her well in many a sticky situation and usually made people back off. But what was she supposed to say? Obviously, he was looking for an explanation and was not going to leave her alone until he got it. Feeling like he was closing in on her, she took a deep breath and walked to the window. Staring out at the snowy night scene, her chaotic thoughts tumbled around inside her head.

She felt Dale walk up behind her. He didn't touch her, but just stood there, silently waiting. "Talk to me, Danni," he commanded softly. "Tell me about your father."

Haltingly, Danni began. After the first few sentences, the words began to come easier. She explained as much as she felt she could to Dale, but she couldn't tell him or Eva either, everything. That was her secret alone, her own private demons to deal with. But she told him about her mother, her father, and her Uncle. The anguish and hurt of the betrayed innocent came through in her voice as she went on.

She hadn't even realized that tears were leaking down her face until she turned to face Dale and he reached out his thumb to brush them away.

"I'm sorry, Danni," Dale replied quietly, taking her in his arms and holding her trembling body. He didn't offer her any platitudes, just held her, his strong arms providing a safe haven from the painful memories. For the first time in her life, Danni felt unconditional acceptance from a male. It was a warm feeling to know that Dale wanted nothing from her but to protect her and help her. Danni felt some of the ice that had surrounded her heart for so long begin to melt away. She sobbed into his shoulder as he held her and let her cry her feelings out.

As the last few hiccupping sobs died away, Danni stepped back and smiled shyly up at him. "You have mascara all over your shirt," she joked feebly.

"It will wash," he replied his brown eyes reflecting his smile and his concern as he brushed the last few tears from her cheeks. "You might want to repair that, seeing as how a certain impatient man will be knocking on this door in about an hour."

"Oh no," gasped Danni as her hands flew to her cheeks. "I don't want to see Sanders."

"Danni..." began Dale, grabbing her arm as she turned towards the bathroom..."you need to give Sanders the benefit of the doubt. Just because he has dealings with your father, doesn't mean he is buying into your father's schemes concerning you. He seems a decent man, but I will have him checked out for you if it will make you feel better. It's your choice, but most men like to know that the women they are interested in trust them."

"I don't have any reason to trust him," responded Danni bitterly.

"And you don't have any reason not to either," reminded Dale calmly.

"Please, Dale, I can't take anymore tonight. I'm really tired and I don't want to see Sanders right now." Danni felt intensely drained at that moment and the thought of facing Sanders for an inquisition was exhausting.

"All right, Danni, when he comes, I will explain to him that you'll see him tomorrow, okay?"

"Thanks, Dale," responded Danni wearily. She dropped tiredly into the overstuffed chair and yawned.

Eva turned the television on, and she and Danni chatted for a few minutes, but Eva could tell the strain of her friend's emotional upheaval had taken a toll on her. Her eyes were drifting shut, and her head fell back against the cushion of the overstuffed chair and rolled gently to the side.

She was finishing the show she was watching when a soft knock sounded on the door.

She got up to answer it and found Sanders on the other side.

"Is Danni here?" he asked, his low voice slightly husky as he looked past her. His eyes lit up when he saw Danni asleep in the chair.

Eva smiled softly at him and replied, "Yes, but she's asleep."

"May I come in and see her?" asked Sanders politely.

"Well, Sanders, Danni has had quite an emotional upheaval and I'm afraid it's worn her out. I'll have to wake her soon enough so she can get to her own bed."

"She said she would meet with you tomorrow, Sanders," said Dale evenly, coming up behind his wife.

"Did you find out what was wrong?" asked Sanders, appraising Dale's sincerity. "Why won't she see me tonight?"

"We had quite a talk tonight," responded Dale. "It's been difficult for Danni to open up about her father and her past. Maybe now that she has finally told me some of her fears and concerns, it will be easier to tell you."

"Well, at least let me carry her to her room. That way she won't have to wake up completely if she's that exhausted," said Sanders softly.

Eva glanced at Dale to see if he approved of the request. After a brief hesitation, he nodded.

"I'll get Danni's door for you," responded Eva.

Sanders stepped past Dale into the apartment and swiftly crossed to the chair where Danni was curled up asleep. A surge of protectiveness swept through him as he saw the circles under her eyes and the tear trails still on her cheeks along with the ruined makeup. She was heartbreakingly beautiful, even in her sorrow. He didn't know for sure what was bothering her about her father, but he had a pretty good idea after meeting with the man several times.

Bending down, he couldn't resist placing a gentle kiss on her rosy lips as his arms slid under her to lift her out of the chair.

Suddenly, Danni began screaming and kicking and beating at him with her fists. "*Noooo...no don't...leave me alone...nooooooooooo!*"

Danni was smothering. She was in her bed again, his weight pressing her down as his mouth ravaged hers. His cruel hands were pushing her pajama t-shirt up and then his fingers roamed her breast freely, kneading and pinching. She screamed into his mouth and her scream was lost. He pressed himself between her thighs, his hardness digging into her feminine softness. Then he was tearing at her panties, ripping them..."nooooo!" she moaned.

"Danni!" A voice called her urgently...."Danni! Wake up sweetheart.... It's me, Sanders...wake up Danni!"

Suddenly, Danni surfaced from the horrible nightmare opening her eyes. Sanders' face swam before her as she gasped for air and tried to focus. She was shaking badly, and her eyes were huge in her pale face. She saw Dale and Eva staring at her, their faces full of concern. She glanced at Sanders again and saw the grim shocked look on his face.

She closed her eyes again and dropped her head in her hands. It was the second time in a week she

had had that dream. She thought she had buried it deep enough not to bother her again.

Suddenly, she was airborne as Sanders picked her up and sat down in the chair, holding her on his lap. His warm arms went around her and she felt his warmth penetrating the chill that had seemed to envelope her body.

Sanders glanced up at Dale and Eva, the expression on his face full of foreboding. Eva's face was pale and her blue eyes troubled as she watched Danni. Dale too, was puzzled and worried...realizing that perhaps Danni had not told him everything, or Eva either he thought, glancing at his wife.

Sanders rubbed his hand up and down Danni's arm, trying to warm her up and help her to stop trembling.... waiting for her to speak.

Finally, she lifted her head and heaved a big sigh. She had begun to feel better as Sanders' warmth permeated the coldness in her body and she began to feel slightly embarrassed. What must he think of her she thought? Sneaking a sideways glance at him, she saw only concern for her in those piercing blue eyes and a warm encouraging smile.

"Feeling better?" he asked softly, his smile gleaming in the soft light.

She nodded and smiled shyly up at him and then at Dale and Eva.

"I'm sorry to be so much trouble," she attempted to laugh lightly. "Just an old dream, I thought was long gone by now. But I'm fine, really, it's nothing important." She shivered slightly as she pushed the last remnants of the nightmare safely back into its little corner in her mind.

She got up from Sanders lap and turned to face him. "If you don't mind, I think I'll go to bed early tonight. I'm pretty tired, Sanders."

Sanders stood up and took her hands. "Of course, honey. I'll call you in the morning, okay?" He leaned over and placed a tender kiss on her rosy lips, then watched as she turned to Dale and Eva.

"Are you guys going home or staying here tonight?" she questioned.

"We're staying here, Danni," answered Eva gently. "We are all going to go Christmas shopping tomorrow, remember?"

"Oh, right," laughed Danni shakily. "I guess I forgot that. And then we were going to head back to the ski lodge tomorrow night so we could race these two in a snowmobile race on Saturday weren't we?" She grinned brightly at Eva. Her hand trembled as she ran her fingers through her hair and tucked it behind her ear. "I guess I'll see you all in the morning then." She turned and walked into her bedroom, closing the door.

Sanders looked at the closed door thoughtfully. He wondered if Dale and Eva had noticed Danni's past tense verbiage. As if that HAD been the plan...but it wasn't any longer.

Behind the locked bedroom door, Danni got her travel bag out of the closet and swiftly packed enough clothes to last a couple of days. Taking out her cell phone, she called the airport and then the hotel in Las Vegas for reservations. Her last call was to the car rental at the Vegas airport. Yes, they would have one waiting for her.

She then took out paper and pencil and wrote two notes to leave on her dresser. Finally, she set her alarm for 1:00am.

Four hours later, she was on the 2:00am flight from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas. At 4:00am, she checked into the hotel and went to her room. She immediately dropped everything on the floor, shed her coat, and plopped face down on the bed.

Within minutes, Danni Barrister was sound asleep.

Chapter Nine

Eva walked in to the bedroom and handed Dale the note, a worried look on her face.

Dale looked at her, a question in his brown eyes. "What's this?"

"It's a note from Danni. She's gone again. There's one for Sanders too."

Dale opened the note and frowned as he read the words.

Dear Eva and Dale,

I have to get away for a few days. So much has happened and I need to think. I know I'm not thinking straight right now and I need to take care of something before I can go on. I think I'm in love with Sanders, but I don't know if I can ever fully trust him and it wouldn't be fair to him to get any more deeply involved with me right now. Please don't worry about me; I'll be fine...I always am. Thanks for everything Eva and for last night Dale. I appreciate all you've done but I'm on my own for this one.

I'll be in touch,

Danni

Dale looked at Eva. "Do you know what she is talking about?"

"No, Dale, I don't. You know everything I know. Danni told you last night."

She went into his arms, and Dale hugged her in close, resting his chin on top of her head.

"I'm so worried, Dale," she whispered.

"I know darling, but Danni is strong. She will be back, and she knows her way around. She's been on her own for five years now."

"She shouldn't have to be. It's not right," returned, Eva, her voice filled with anguish for her friend.

"I know," soothed Dale. "I know, honey."

The doorbell rang, peeling loudly in the apartment.

Stepping around Morris, Eva opened it and saw Sander's worried face. "How is Danni this morning," he asked huskily, stepping inside.

"She's not here, Sanders," answered Eva.

"Not here? Where is she?"

Taking a note out of her shirt pocket, she handed it to him. "She left you this. And one for me and Dale as well."

Sanders opened the note.

Dear Sanders,

I am going away for a few days. I need time to think. If you wish, Dale has my permission to fill you in on what I told him last night. Eva already knows. There are some things I have to get straight in my head. Trust is a big issue for me and I can't do it blindly. I will be back if you still wish to see me then.

Danni

"What does she mean if I still wish to see her?" he scowled darkly. "I don't know what the hell she thinks she's doing running off again, but I think the three of us need to talk."

Soon, Eva had coffee ready and the three of them sat around the kitchen table while Dale went over all that Danni had told him.

"No wonder she has trust issues," mused Sanders. "She has nothing to worry about on that score from me, however. I do have business dealings with her father, but they have nothing to do with Danni."

Eva heaved a big sigh of relief and gave him a bright smile. "That's so good to know, Sanders, thank you for telling us that."

The telephone rang suddenly, and Eva got up to answer it. "Hello?"

"Is Danni there?" demanded a male voice on the other end of the line.

"No, she isn't here, may I take a message?" Eva hunted for a pen in the drawer of the telephone stand.

"Just tell her Damien called, and I want to hear from her as soon as she comes in!"

"She may not be able to get back to you for a few days, Damien," hedged Eva.

"Why, is she out of town?"

"Ummm.... yes, she is."

"That sneaky little..." came the mouthed expletive. "Just tell her to call me as soon as she gets back."

The line went dead and Eva stared at the phone, a troubled look on her face.

"Who was that?" asked Dale.

"Uh...it was a fellow named Damien, looking for Danni."

"Did he leave a number?" asked Sanders, getting up to look at the notepad.

"No, he didn't."

"What did he say?" questioned Dale, a bit testily.

"He said to tell her to call as soon as she comes in. He sounded upset," frowned Eva.

"Do you know him, Eva?" this from Sanders

"Oh...well...kinda...not really."

Dale looked at his wife in exasperation. "You either do or you don't, Vee, which is it?"

When she licked her lips, Dale said grimly, "I know, another one of Danni's secrets, right?"

Sanders scowled at Eva, "What's his relationship to Danni?"

"Look, I can't say..."

"EVA!" remonstrated Dale. "You don't have to tell the state secrets, just give us something to go on here!"

"Okay okay...he is a friend of hers, nothing more than that." She looked reassuringly at Sanders.

"How does she know him?" queried Sanders, not liking the sound of that.

"I can't tell you that!"

Dale stared at his exasperating wife. "One of these days, Eva," he warned in a menacing tone.

Eva lifted her small chin in defiance. "You should be thanking me for being so discrete," she protested. "It means I'm loyal to those I love."

Sanders ran his fingers through his blonde hair, sighing in frustration. "Look, Eva, sometimes you have to give up information in order to help someone." Clearing his throat, he went on. "I really care for Danni. In fact, I think I'm in love with her. Whatever demon she is facing, I want to be there for her. It hurts me to know she's out there alone somewhere with no one for support. If this Damien is close enough to her that she knows his phone number by heart, maybe he will know where she went. Besides, I don't like the sound of it." He frowned at that.

Eva perused his handsome features, realizing he was jealous and concerned both. "Look guys, Damien is blind. I highly doubt that Danni would tell him where she had gone, though, if she didn't tell me."

She went on, "Danni has been helping him for three years now, encouraging him to have surgery, offering to fund it. He won't have any part of it. Danni told me she has found a way around his objections to her paying for it without him knowing it."

She frowned then. "I suspect he either found out she's behind it or thinks she might be, and that's why he is so upset with her."

"How much is this surgery?" asked Dale curiously.

"Well over a hundred thousand dollars." She hesitated..."and then there are no guarantees it will work. That's his biggest objection to having the surgery. That the money would be wasted if it doesn't work."

She looked calmly at Sanders, "Look, I would not have told you this, except things are complicated enough without you thinking she's seeing another man, okay?"

"Fair enough," returned Sanders. "Pouring himself another cup of coffee, he sat back down at the kitchen table. " At least, I know what's behind the estrangement with her father," he mused, his dislike for John Oaks growing in leaps and bounds. The man deserved to be taken down, and he intended it to make it happen.

He scowled down into the coffee cup. "Something still doesn't add up, though. Her reactions seem disproportionate to the things you have told me."

"That's what we were thinking," replied Dale. "Vee and I both think there's more going on than what Danni has told us."

"I thought I knew everything," added Eva, "but I'm certainly thinking something's missing. Something she is trying to work through alone."

Just then, Sanders' cell phone rang. Taking it out of his pocket, he flipped the lid and said, "Yes?" There was a pause. "I'll be there in one hour." Decisively he flipped the phone closed and stood up. "I've got an important meeting to go to." He wrote something on a slip of paper from the notepad in his pocket and handed it to Eva.

"Here's my cell phone number. Call me the minute you hear from Danni."

"I will, Sanders," assured Eva. "But, I'm not likely to hear anytime soon." She took in the scowl on his face. "Don't worry," she said gently. "Danni is used to going off on her own. She'll be fine."

"She won't be when I catch up with her," growled Sanders. "I warned her about haring off on her own anymore. These escapades have got to stop."

"But...but..." spluttered Eva, shocked at his words.

"Yes," agreed Sanders. "You're quite right. The "butt" in question will certainly be in trouble. Running off in the middle of the night and leaving worried out of their minds people behind is

unacceptable in my book!" With that, he strode to the front door, opened it, and left.

"You're catching flies, dear," observed Dale, his eyes twinkling.

Eva's mouth snapped shut and she faced her husband, her blue eyes shooting daggers. "Danni is facing what's obviously a traumatic experience for her and he threatens her?"

Her voice squeaked with indignation of behalf of her friend.

"I'll grant you that something is obviously troubling Danni, and it may be very traumatic for her, but she also needs to understand that her actions hurt those that care about her. Danni is spoiled to her own way and expects everyone else to just let her do as she pleases. Maturity carries responsibility, something Danni has yet to learn."

"They've only been seeing each other less than a week!"

"True," responded Dale, "but they have both admitted they think they are in love with the other."

"Well, it's not like they are married or anything!" objected Eva.

"Neither were we, the first time you went over my knee."

"I still think it's unfair!" huffed Eva, glaring at Dale.

"I'm sure Sanders will do what he thinks is best when the time comes," remarked Dale evenly.

"But it's just not right Dale!" Eva continued to argue, her blue eyes stormy.

"Veeee..." warned Dale, his eyebrows drawing together.

"Well it's not!"

"This is between Sanders and Danni," he said firmly.

"I have a right to my opinion," declared Eva, refusing to back down.

"And, you've expressed it, six different ways now!" expostulated Dale. "I don't want to hear another word about it."

"I'll talk about it if I want to," insisted Eva, her small foot stamping a bit. She was so indignant and determined that Dale should agree with her that she wouldn't let it go.

"Fine, we'll talk about it," responded Dale as he grasped her arm and seated himself on the kitchen chair.

"No!" squeaked Eva, trying to backtrack. But, it was too late. Dale yanked her sweats and panties down in one fell swoop to her knees and pulled her over his lap.

"Wait, Dale," pleaded Eva, putting her hand back.

Dale grasped her hand and pinned it to the small of her back. "I let you... smack... have your...smack...say, Eva," smack smack smack... said Dale sternly, interspersing his words with stinging slaps to her smooth rounded buttocks, "yet you...smack smack...continue to argue...smack...smack...smack...for no real reason...smack smack...than to argue!"

"Owww...okay...ouch! You're right Dale...owwww...I'm sorry...ouch!"

Dale administered three more stinging swats to each cheek and then replied, "Are we through talking about it now?"

"Yeow...oww...yes!" exclaimed Eva, ready to admit defeat.

"I'm glad to hear it," answered Dale, pulling her upright and pulling up her panties and sweats. He watched as Eva rubbed her stinging behind and pouted at him.

"Look, honey," he said gently, pulling her down onto his knee. "I know you've been mother-henning Danni for a long time. But if she and Sanders are going to get together, you have to let him be the judge of what's best for her, okay?"

Sighing, she laid her head on his shoulder. "I know, I know. I'll try, I promise."

"Fair enough," he agreed. "Now, what were we going to do before all this commotion started?"

Smiling impishly up at him, she drawled, "Umm...something about a shower I think?"

"Ah yes," he grinned wickedly. "Care to share, darling?"

"I wouldn't have it any other way," she said smugly. "After all, we don't want to run Danni's water bill up do we?" Hand in hand, they headed for the bathroom.

Danni sat on the examining table in the doctor's office wearing nothing but a paper sheet from the waist down. Man, she hated waiting like this! These places were always cold and sterile anyway and they made you wait forever it seemed. Her nervous fingers crimped the edge of the paper.

Finally, unable to stand the inactivity any longer, she got down and paced around, holding the sheet together behind her back.

As she passed the mirror on the wall, she stopped and stared. Her own pale face stared back at her, eyes wide with worry and apprehension.

She looked like hell she decided, noting the shadows under her eyes and the lack of color in her cheeks.

After checking into the hotel at 4:00am that morning, she had slept until 7:00am. Her internal clock had waked her up and the memory of the night before had come crashing in on her.

The pain clawed at her chest as she recalled the look on their faces. They had been shocked and horrified. She shivered as the memories assailed her. Groaning, she resumed pacing.

I can't take this any longer, she had decided. She had to know the truth. But she had had to get away from Sanders to find it. It had been weighing on her mind for 5 years now and it was time to bring it into the open. She would either be free of her prison, or she would remain forever locked there. But either way, she had to know.

If there was a chance for her and Sanders, she had to pursue it...she owed them both that. She couldn't just walk away this time. He had sneaked

in and stolen her heart, and if he wasn't in league with her father, maybe she could learn to trust.

The door opened and Dr. Cajun strode into the room. He stopped short and stared at the beautiful young woman who stood before him. Usually, his patients were waiting on the table for him. He was struck by the haunted look in those lovely eyes.

He seated his lean frame on the swivel chair and bent his dark head to the notes his nurse had left him.

Then, clearing his throat, he pinned her with his steel gray eyes. "So, Miss Barrister is it?" He waited her acknowledgement and Danni nodded. "It says here you've been having extreme cramping and never had this problem before."

Danni swallowed and took in the well-shaped head with graying at the temples and the piercing stare of his eyes. He certainly looked every bit as discreet as the Physicians recommendation program had stated. He was a very attractive older man, and he sat patiently while he waited for her to speak.

Finally, Danni flushed and willed herself to tell him what she wanted. "Dr. Cajun, you can ignore everything your nurse wrote down. I had to tell her something in order to see you, so I did." She fidgeted nervously with the sheet again, her chin trembling a bit as she continued. "You can tell your nurse whatever you want to put in the file, or you can throw it away. It's not my real name, anyway, and I'll pay you cash for your time."

Intrigued by her words, Dr. Cajun said nothing, but waited for her to continue.

"All I want from you...is to know whether or not I'm a virgin," she stated baldly.

Willing his face to remain impassive, Dr. Cajun's internal eyebrows went sky high. If he had been a wagering man, he would have bet good money that such a beautiful girl would never have made it to the ripe old age of twenty-three in this day and age without being sexually active.

"You don't know?" he probed delicately, sensing her distress.

"No...I don't," she whispered painfully, the color flooding her face again.

Clearing his throat, he replied, "Care to tell me about it?"

Trembling, Danni looked away for a moment. Then she turned back to him. "I was...assaulted five years ago. In my own bed."

The young woman was trembling so badly Dr. Cajun was afraid she was going to fall down. Reaching down to open the bottom drawer, he pulled out a fleece blanket and put it around her shoulders. He pulled up the chair from the corner of the room and pushed her gently into it. Then he sat back down to face her.

"Go on," he said quietly.

"He...he came into my room." Danni took a deep breath, the memory of that night flooding her mind again. "I woke up to him pressing down on top of me, kissing me...and I couldn't breathe. He...he..." she swallowed as she fought for control.

"I understand Miss Barrister," enjoined Dr. Cajun gently, taking her cold hands in his. "Just tell me why you think he might not have succeeded in penetrating you." Inside, Dr. Cajun was furious that a young woman should be molested in her own bed. But things like this happened all the time. It was far too common...usually it was a most disgusting crime. Five years ago would have put this girl at the age of eighteen, probably still at home.

"I...I fainted. I couldn't breathe, couldn't get air, and I THINK I fainted." She gripped his huge warm hands like a lifeline. "When I woke up, I didn't know how much time had passed. It was still dark and I was...sticky and...damp." Her face flushed again and she looked away. "I got up and turned on the light. I checked my bed but I didn't see any blood and I didn't feel...hurting like I've always been led to expect from intercourse." She rushed on, wanting to get this over with. "But I've heard that there isn't

always blood and the bed was wet too." She swung back to face him again and swallowed convulsively. "I...I have to know Dr. Cajun, was I really r...raped? Or did he not succeed?"

Dr. Cajun cleared his throat again, feeling for this lovely young woman's pain. "Miss Barrister, before we do this, you have to know that some women don't have a hymen. Some are born without it, and the absence of blood does not necessarily mean there was no penetration or that the hymen was not broken. It's not common, I'll admit, but it does happen. Are you prepared for this possible scenario?"

Gulping, Danni shook her head affirmatively. "I've lived in this prison for five years Dr. Cajun. If there's any chance it didn't happen, I have to know. And if it did, then it's better to know than to go on wondering. It's keeping me from moving on."

"I take it you didn't report this to the authorities? Or your parents?" He knew if she had, a safe exam would have been done already, and she would know the truth by now.

Danni shook her head no. "Given the circumstances, I couldn't do that," she replied. "And I didn't want too. I just wanted to forget it ever happened," she whispered as she looked pleadingly up at him.

He looked considering at her for a moment, and then stood up. "All right, Miss Barrister, hop up on the table while I get ready, and we'll get your answers for you," he stated as matter of fact as he could be to put her at ease.

A few minutes later, it was all over. Dr. Cajun peeled off his gloves and helped her sit up. Danni held her breathe as she waited for him to speak.

He smiled at her, a warm and encouraging smile. "You are a virgin, Miss Barrister. No doubt about that."

"Oh, thank god," breathed Danni. She laughed as tears pooled in her eyes. "Thank you, Dr. Cajun, thank you so much!" She hugged her arms around

her middle as she felt the door to the prison she had incarcerated herself in swinging open. "Thank god!" She heaved a big tremulous sigh of relief.

"How much do I owe you?" she asked, her eyes shining with joy and relief.

"Nothing," replied Dr. Cajun, his white teeth gleaming as he laughed with her. "Nothing at all. It was my pleasure to help you gain peace of mind."

He turned to the door, the file in his hand.

"Thank you," she whispered again, her trembling fingers on her lips.

He turned to smile once more at her and nodded. Then he left, closing the door behind him.

Outside, he handed the file to his nurse. "File this Miss Prince. This was a consultation only, and no fees are involved."

Stepping out into the late afternoon sunshine, Sanders smiled with feral satisfaction. Not only had he completed the sale of the ski lodge, but also he now had a contract for 25 percent of OakHedges Corporation. All that remained was his signature to transfer the funds from his Sweden account. He was the only one who could break the deal, and it had not been hard to get that included in the contract. Oaks's greed and desperation had been a windfall.

He strode around the corner of the office building to the parking lot where he had left his BMW. He thought of Danni again. She had been at the back of his mind all day, and like a sore thumb, you are always aware of, the worry gnawed at him.

As he navigated the city traffic, his thoughts turned once more to the deal he had just been offered.

He had known OakHedges board of directors would accept his bid for the ski lodge; they really had no choice. And, he certainly did want it! He and his brother had plans to improve it and make it into the same kind of moneymaker their other resorts were.

He flipped open his cell phone and clicked on his brother's name. A few seconds later, Hagen Linson came on the line.

"What's up, Sanders?" came the cheery voice across the line.

"I just signed the ski lodge," replied Sanders, a chuckle in his voice.

"Hey, that's great," enthused Hagen. "When do we take over?"

"December 10th," answered Sanders. "That's the middle of next week. Funds should be transferred by then, and the first meeting with the current management staff will be that day. You need to get over here as soon as possible."

"Right," agreed his brother. "I'll fly in the first part of the week."

"Are you bringing Nita and the kids?"

"Oh, yes," laughed Hagen. "They've been looking forward to this. Just been waiting for you to say the word."

"I'm glad," returned Sanders thinking fondly of his niece and nephew. They were rascals but it would be good to see them again. "I'll make sure you have a condo reserved; besides, I have someone I want you all to meet."

Hagen's ear perked up. "Oh? Wouldn't happen to be female would it?"

"As a matter of fact, it is," replied Sanders amused.

"Who is this lucky lady?"

"Her name is Danni...Danni Oaks."

There was a silence on the other end of the line. Then Hagen asked quietly, "You mean John Oaks's daughter?"

"As a matter of fact...it is. But before you say anything, I want you to know I'm in love with her," Sanders stated evenly, knowing it was true as he put it into words.

"I...see," responded Hagen thoughtfully. "How does this fit in with our plans Sanders?"

"She has nothing to do with them," Sanders baldly stated.

"That would be debatable."

"There is something going on with Danni and her father," mused Sanders. "I don't know what all it is yet, but I do know there is no love lost between them."

"Not getting along with her father is a far cry from wanting to see him ruined," argued Hagen.

"I know that!" agreed Sanders testily. "Just let me work it out, okay?"

"All right little brother. But I want you to know, if you give up this idea of revenge, Nita would be very pleased with us. She's not happy about it anyway, and I've been losing my taste for it as well."

"How can you say that after the hell he put our parents through?" asked Sanders disbelievingly.

"I agree...it was bad. But, it wasn't the end of the world, and Mom had put it behind her. Sometimes, I think we should too."

"John Oaks has a lot to answer for, including his own daughter. I intend to make sure he pays," replied Sanders determinedly. "And, I think I've got it wrapped up now. That's the other thing I wanted to tell you. Oaks has tendered a contract giving us 25 percent of the company. All we have to do to validate it is pay for the shares by December 15th.

He doesn't have the option of withdrawing the offer now, but I have the option of canceling should I choose to."

"Why would he do that?" asked Hagen incredulously.

"I've had several meetings with him over the last few months. Seems a son-n-law with money would be to his taste. And my investment into the company with this as a possibility will insure his company gets back on its feet."

"Are you saying he is bribing you to marry his daughter?"

"He thinks he is," replied Sanders smugly.

"How does Danni feel about this?" asked Hagen, concerned now.

"Just let me handle Danni. She won't do anything willingly to help her father. She has made that plain."

"I don't know, Sanders, you may be getting in over your head and risking losing Danni altogether. Is it worth it?"

Sanders hesitated. "I don't want to lose Danni, but I don't want to let this opportunity pass by either. I think I've got it covered, Hagen, don't worry."

"Well, you better let Danni in on whatever you are doing as soon as possible," returned Hagen quietly. "It's been my experience with women that the less they know, the more they imagine they do. And its can cause great misunderstandings."

"I will, as soon as I find her," muttered Sanders.

Hagen's ears perked up. "Find her? Have you lost her?"

"She took off last night. Said she needed some time to think through some things."

"That doesn't sound good, Sanders," chuckled his brother. "Give a woman time to think, and they will invariably come to the wrong conclusions...ouch! Nita, you stop that you little brat!"

Sanders chuckled at Hagen's words. He could hear his sister-n-law in the background giving his brother fits.

"Show me again how you handle your woman," chortled Sanders in his brother's ear.

"If you were here, you'd soon see her going over my knee," laughed Hagen back, "cause that's exactly where she's headed when this phone call ends!"

"I'll hang up then and let you handle your domestic problems," laughed Sanders back.

"Right," replied Hagen. "We'll see you on Monday. I'll call you from the airport."

"Okay, see you then." Sanders flipped the phone closed as he chuckled in amusement.

Nita was a feisty little spitfire with deep auburn hair and a temper to match. She and Danni would get along great he decided.

Speaking of Danni, he pulled up in front of her apartment. It was time to start tracking down his little snow bunny.

Chapter Ten

"John, you know darn well Danni is going to have fits when she finds this out," exclaimed Carolyn Oaks. Usually a timid woman, Carolyn did not often challenge her aggressive husband. But this time she was adamant. She watched him as he swiftly prepared their drinks, wondering where things had gone so wrong with Danni.

She had not been in love with John Oaks when her father had insisted she marry him, but she had been too weak willed to resist. And, he had been a handsome and rich man, and she had been proud of the fact that he wanted her. He could have had his pick of women, but he had chosen her.

She had grown to love him, however, and had soon discovered a soft heart beneath the proud exterior he presented to the world. He never let anyone see it, though.

His derisive opinion of women and what they expected from men had always been a sore point with her. No matter how hard she had tried to convince him differently, he had never been able to forgive his own mother for leaving his father for a rich man. It had broken his father and the avarice he had seen among women ever since had done little to convince him any differently.

Her biggest regret had been that she allowed him to talk her into putting Danni into boarding schools. She often wished she had kept her at home and mothered her child herself, but John had been adamant. He said that Danni needing training and grooming to become the social wife she would need to be when she married well. And, he intended that she should marry well, that was plain. Besides, he had wanted Carolyn with him when they traveled, and a child would only be in the way.

"Now, Caroline, Sanders Linson is a good partner to have in the company, regardless of whether he marries Danni or not," scowled John. He was proud of the fact that Sanders had agreed to

buy the 25 percent, making him a third owner. Of course, the funds that would bring in would put OakHedges fully back on its feet again. Besides, he had done Danni a favor and warned her off Sanders. If it worked the way he thought it would, it would send Danni straight to him. And, he would love to see her marry him!

He had even added in a clause that said his own percentage would revert to Linson when he died, should he still be married to his daughter. He figured that incentive ought to induce Linson to validate the contract. It would give him 51 percent of the company, making him the controlling partner.

Of course, if they never married, he would still have a guarantee of funds from Linson's corporation in return for the 25 percent he would own. A nice deal all the way around; insurance for his daughter, and money to put OakHedges back on its feet. Yes, life was good at that moment in time for John Oaks!

In spite of their differences the last several years, he did love his daughter. But she was very headstrong and had never forgiven him for that incident in his study with Byron and their subsequent conversation.

It had been difficult for him to forgive Byron himself, but no real harm had been done and he had let it go with a strict warning to never get near her again. When Byron assured him that it had merely been an object lesson and that Danni had been curious as to what a kiss was like, he had finally let it go.

But, Danni never did. He refilled his scotch and water and made one for Carolyn while his thoughts played out in his mind. He still didn't know what made her go haring off in the middle of the night when she had come home from boarding school, but if the truth be known, he had not really minded that she chose to be on her own. He loved her, but he was not used to her being underfoot all the time. He was not an outwardly affectionate man and Danni's passionate temper and nature made him

uncomfortable with her. So, they had never communicated well, but that didn't mean he didn't want to make sure she was set for life after he was gone.

He wished that Carolyn and Danni were closer, but having Danni away from home so much seemed to have kept them from growing together. He felt a twinge of guilt, knowing Carolyn would have preferred to have her at home, but it was in the past now.

"I know that, John," argued Carolyn, her usually placid features set in a frown. "But, if Danni is actually interested in Sanders, this could make her very suspicious that she is being used."

"I imagine it will," replied John heavily. "But I have to do what's best for her and the company. And, if Sanders is the man I think he is, he should be able to convince her that their getting together has nothing to do with his buying into the company. Their marriage will be an advantage...I'll admit that. However, it would happen without her in any case. Surely, she is smart enough to realize it and get past it." He handed Carolyn her drink and crossed to the sofa, seating himself with the remote in one hand, and his scotch in the other.

"I hope you are right, John," sighed Carolyn, moving to the window that overlooked the city from their Capitol Hill home. The whole valley lay before her, and the lights were already twinkling in the dusk. But, Carolyn's mind was not on the spectacular view.

"I really want Danni to be happy, and she seems so driven at times. I always feel like there is something bothering her yet she has never confided in me."

Her expression was sad as she contemplated the distance between her and her lovely daughter. How she would love to change that, if only Danni would give her the chance.

Danni lay on the bed in the hotel, hugging her knowledge to herself like a secret prize. She had been ecstatic when she left Dr. Cajun's office.

She had felt so light, so tremendously full of joy that people stopped to stare at the exuberance of the beautiful girl that walked along the streets, seemingly on air.

The doctor's office had only been about three blocks from her hotel, so she had walked to and from it.

She checked her watch. Only 6:00pm...what was she going to do with the rest of the evening she wondered?

She had come back from the doctor's and crashed on the bed, out like a light in one minute flat. She had just woke up a few minutes ago and the room was dark, so she had thought it was later than it was.

And, now that she had slept for several hours, she was ready for action and something to eat.

She got up and turned on the light.

She thought of Sanders as she pulled the curtain back from the 3rd story window to look at the view. How she wished he were here! She pictured his teasing blue eyes and chiseled lips and felt a surge of desire lick through her abdomen. Shivering, she dropped the curtain and went to her suitcase.

The thought crossed her mind that if he were here, he might not be too pleased with her. He had warned her about her "escapades" as he called them. She was pretty sure that leaving in the middle of the night without telling anyone where she was going might fall into that category.

Still, she was used to making her own decisions without having to answer to anyone. She bit her lip as she pictured Eva's worried face...and Dale's. She looked at the phone. Should she call the airport and try to get back tonight?

No, she decided. But she would call Eva. She didn't have Sanders cell phone number, or she would call him too. Excited, she dialed the number.

When Eva answered the phone, she said, "Hi, it's me, Danni!"

"Danni!" squealed Eva, the relief evident in her voice. "Where are you? Are you all right?"

Suddenly Dale's deep voice came on the line before she could answer. "Danni, where are you, young lady? We've all been worried out of our minds all day!"

Danni felt a surge of warmth at his words. Funny, she should feel that way when she wanted to resent his questions.

"I'm in Las Vegas, Dale...and tell Eva yes, I'm fine." She could hear Eva in the background asking questions.

Ever the persistent male, Dale replied, "Tell me what hotel you are in and the room and phone number. Sanders will want to call you as soon as he hears from us."

Danni quickly complied with his request and told him she intended to fly home the next morning, as soon as she could make reservations.

"I'm glad to hear it," growled Dale. "You've got some explaining to do to a certain irate male."

Danni's bottom tingled in response to his statement, but she spoke with indignation. "Well, he can just be irate; he doesn't tell me what to do. Besides, like I explained in the notes, I had some things I needed to think through and something to take care of."

"I'm sure he'll have something to say about that," warned Dale with satisfaction. "But I'll let you chat with Eva. And Danni...I'm glad you're all right."

"Thanks Dale," whispered Danni, her voice a bit choked with emotion. Eva came on the line then, and they chatted for a few minutes and hung up. There would be time later to tell Eva and Dale both what had happened. For now, it would remain her secret until she shared it with Sanders first.

An hour later, a fresh shower under her belt, Danni glanced at her watch for the 15th time. Why hadn't Sanders called yet? It was almost 7:30. She

paced the floor restlessly, wishing she had remembered to bring her cell phone. She really had to stop doing that she decided. If she was going to keep taking off, she needed to have some communication handy at all times.

Finally, she decided to heck with this. I'm going to get something to eat and gamble for a while. It will give me something to do with this long evening.

Opening the door, she stepped out and headed for the hotel casino. She hadn't really brought any dress clothes, so the casual sweater and soft suede jeans would have to do.

She glanced in the mirror as she passed and realized how different she looked than she had in the doctor's mirror earlier in the day. Her face was flushed and the cranberry sweater looked bright against the white suede jeans and boots she wore. Her platinum hair tumbled about her shoulders and looked...carefree. Gold hoops in her ears and a gold bracelet completed the simple outfit, and she knew she looked good. Satisfied, she headed on in to find something to eat.

Four hours later, she was ensconced at a blackjack table, doubling down on a pair of queens and giggling at Lefty's jokes. She was the only woman player at the table, and she had an admiring crowd. She lifted her rum and coke and announced, "A toast gentlemen!" The other players good-naturedly lifted their glasses for the 5th toast Danni had performed in an hour. "To freedom!" So saying, she drank the rest of the drink and slammed the glass down on the table.

"To freedom," murmured the others and followed suit.

Lefty watched Danni casually, keeping an eye on her. She always drifted to his table when she would come down to Vegas and he had made it his job to look out for her whenever she came in on his shift. They were friends of a sort, even if only intermittent.

He had intervened about four years ago when she had been hassled by another customer, and she had been grateful.

When she came in for long weekends, sometimes they would do a show together if they happened to meet up and make arrangements or have a drink after his shift. He had become sort of a big brother protector figure for her. He had a girlfriend, and he had sensed that Danni was not interested in him, or he in her for that matter.

However, they had an understanding that if Danni felt like drinking, and she was alone, he would see that she got to her room safely without any "attachments" coming along. He really didn't know why she trusted him, but he was proud that she did, and it made him protective in return.

Lefty sensed something different about Danni tonight. She was more...open. Friendlier and less reserved. She seemed happy instead of driven to have a good time. But, she was drinking a lot. And the man to her left seemed happy to keep her drink well supplied.

Danni winked at Lefty's frown and downed another shot. She knew he would take care of her and she felt like celebrating! She had no idea how many shots she had toasted by now, but the cards were beginning to multiply in front of her. She blinked her eyes to clear them, but the blasted jack seemed to have three eyeballs.

Giggling, she pointed to the card. "Look at tha...Lefty, tha zhacks got thiree eyeballs." Her words were slurred, and she held up three fingers to show Lefty.

The swarthy-faced man to the left of Danni called for another drink refill but Lefty motioned the girl away. "She's had enough to drink tonight, mister," said Lefty evenly.

"Are you her keeper?" sneered the other man.

"Yes, I am," replied Lefty firmly, staring him down. "You need to move on because this little girl will be headed for bed soon, and you won't be in it."

Danni propped her chin on her hand as Lefty's face began to swim before her eyes. Lefty deftly signaled another dealer to come take his place at the table. Walking around to Danni's side, he picked up her chips and took her by the arm. "Time to cash it in, sweetheart. You need your beauty rest."

The man on Danni's left took her other arm and said to Lefty, "I've been buying the lady drinks all night. I'll take her to her room." His dark eyes spit their challenge.

"I said back off," replied Lefty quietly.

"And, I said no." The other man swung, but Lefty dodged and swung back, knocking the other man down with a blow to his chin. He had to release Danni to do so, and giggling, she slumped back onto the chair.

Lefty signaled the bouncer who quickly came and pulled the other man upright to take him out. Seeing Danni was not able to walk, he left the chips on the table and swung her over his shoulder, fireman's style and proceeded to take her out of the casino.

"Hold it right there," demanded a deep voice.

From her position over Lefty's broad shoulder, Danni looked up into the faces of two Sanders. Wagging her fingers at him and giggling she said, "Hullo thanderssss...whut are you doin here?"

"I'd appreciate it if you would kindly put my fiancée down," commanded Sanders as Lefty swung around.

"Fiancée?" questioned Lefty, his eyes narrowing.

"That's right, Danni belongs to me," answered Sanders evenly, returning Lefty's stare.

Lefty let Danni slide down his body and then turned her around, holding her so she wouldn't fall. "Do you know this man, Danni?"

"Of corth...thaats Thanders," slurred Danni, wagging her fingers at him again and blowing him a kiss.

"I'll take her," said Sanders sternly, reaching for Danni.

But Lefty was not ready to let her go. "Do you want to leave with this man, Danni?"

"Who...Thanders?" Danni peered closely at Sander's face. Seeing the stern set of his lips and the steely look in his brown eyes, she looked up at Lefty. "I don't know, Lefty, he looks like he wants to thump me."

Amused then, Lefty replied, "I don't think you'd feel much in the state you are in, sweetheart."

"Oh, okay...in that case, I'll go with him."

Lefty released her then as Sanders took her and swept her up into his arms. "I'll cash in her chips and have the money sent to her room."

"Thank you for taking care of her," replied Sanders, nodding at the other man.

"It's always been my pleasure," responded Lefty, his eyes twinkling now as he watched Danni snuggle into Sander's shoulder. "She is in room 312, keys in the pocket."

Sanders endured Danni patting his cheek and planting small kisses along his chin while he held her in the elevator. She was not making it easy for him to resist her, and he felt a certain part of his anatomy stiffen in response.

He swept her up in his arms again when they reached the third floor, and he carried her to her door. Setting her down, he held the giggling girl over his arm while he fished for the keys in her pocket.

Picking her up once more, he kicked the door shut and strode to the bed where he laid her gently down, then stood back, surveying her drunken state.

Shaking his head, he took off her white suede boots and his shoes. He didn't trust himself to undress her, so he lay down on the bed behind her and pulled her spoon fashion against his body.

She wiggled and giggled and kept trying to turn over until finally he swatted her buttocks several times and told her sternly to go to sleep. Pouting, she finally lay still, and like a small child that falls

asleep as soon as it's quiet for a few minutes, Danni did the same.

Sanders lay there holding her, savoring the experience of having her in his arms even if she was drunk on her delectable butt. Having her wiggle against him had only increased his desire for her, but he would never allow himself to take advantage of the inebriated state she was in.

By the time he had gotten to Danni's apartment, it had been after 6:00pm. When he knocked on the door, Eva had answered it, her eyes shining with excitement.

"We just heard from Danni and was getting ready to call you," she exclaimed.

"Is she all right?" He had asked, very relieved to hear it.

"Yes, she is in Las Vegas. I should have figured that," replied Eva. "She goes there a lot when she wants to get away."

Dale walked over and handed Sanders the note with Danni's hotel, room number, and phone number on it. "She said she is flying home in the morning."

"Well, I think I'll just go find her," returned Sanders smoothly. "Thanks for the information."

He had rented a small plane and made the flight himself. Grabbing a rental at the airport, he had checked Danni's room and she wasn't there. Backtracking to the casino, he had come in just in time to see Lefty deck the man who had apparently been hitting on her.

He rubbed her back silently as she stirred in her sleep. She was going to have one hell of a headache in the morning! She was going to have one hell of a butt ache when he got finished with the other end of her too!

Chapter Eleven

"Ohhhhhh...gawd!" Danni opened her eyes and quickly shut them as the morning light streamed in from the window. Her head was pounding, and she felt like crap!

Rolling onto her left side, she tried to get up to find the bathroom.

She finally navigated the floor space to the porcelain chair and a few minutes later, splashed some cold water on her face. She squinted at her reflection in the mirror, the bright fluorescent lights hurting her eyes.

Boy, she had really tied one on last night, she thought, trying to remember how she had gotten back to her room. Flipping the shower onto hot, she started peeling her clothes off and then stepped into the tub and under the hot spray. "Oh geez, that feels good," she groaned letting the spray hit her fully in the face.

She rubbed her temples and tried to think. It was funny, but she thought she had seen Sanders last night. And he had mentioned something about his being her fiancé. Must have been dreaming she decided, starting to come more fully awake now.

She was washing her hair, and she thought she heard the door open and close. Rinsing, she peeked out from the behind the shower curtain to stare out the open door of the bathroom. She cocked her head to listen, but heard nothing. Must have been her imagination, she decided.

She finished her shower and turned the water off, then stepped out to wrap her hair in a towel. Grabbing another towel, she wrapped it around her and went to find her suitcase for some clean clothes. Danni's head pounded like crazy, and she moved slowly, trying not to jar her body too much.

She rounded the corner of the bathroom and ground to a halt, a small scream escaping her lips. There on the bed, like a stern-faced Buddha, sat

Sanders! His arms were folded across his broad chest, and a scowl graced his handsome features.

"What are you doing here?" she squeaked, clutching her towel.

"You don't remember?"

"No! I mean...kind of...not really. I thought you were just my imagination. I didn't realize you were actually here," she stammered.

"How are you feeling?"

"Like I got hit by a gravel truck!" she admitted, going to her suitcase. "My head is killing me!"

"I brought up some coffee. Headaches are a common side effect of a major hangover." He gazed sternly at her. "And, there's some Tylenol tablets there too."

"Uh, thanks. I'll get them in a minute." She took her clothes out of her travel bag and slowly walked back to the bathroom. She would feel a whole lot better once she was dressed, she was sure of it. Then she could question his presence.

Having pulled on her black leggings and thigh length white cable knit sweater, she couldn't delay the inevitable any longer, so she finally left the bathroom. She didn't know where Sanders had come from, but she was suddenly very nervous. Where had he slept last night?

Sanders watched as Danni slowly crossed to the table and picked up the Tylenols and the cup of coffee. He glanced at his watch. Anytime she was ready, he would take her home. But if she didn't get something in her stomach, she would not make the flight from Vegas to Salt Lake without barfing all over the airplane.

"We need to get you some breakfast, Danni, before we take off," rumbled Sanders walking up behind her and turning her to face him. He looked down into her light blue eyes, seeing the apprehension there.

"Worried about something my little snow bunny?" murmured Sanders, running his thumb along her smooth jaw.

A delicate flush infused her cheeks at his statement, and he knew she hadn't missed the significance of that reference.

"Don't worry, I'm not going to spank you right now, but I am going to give you a down payment. You'll get the rest when I get you home and you are feeling better." With that, he slid his hands into the back of her tights and beneath the silk panties, sliding them down just below her bottom cheeks.

Danni's breath quickened, and she looked up at him, her eyes pleading. "No, please don't Sanders," she whimpered.

"Oh yes," he replied. "That little white tail needs to be at least pink." He caressed the tail in question, his hands roaming and cupping the rounded cheeks. "Put your arms around my neck please."

Danni's arms slowly crept up around Sanders neck, and then he bent and grasped her around the waist with his left arm. When he straightened up, her feet left the floor and just the tips of her toes grazed the carpet.

"Oh," she gasped realizing how vulnerable she was suddenly. When the first swat cracked across her left cheek, she squealed. "Ouch! Ow! Oh!" she continued to cry out as he cracked his palm across the right cheek and then the middle of both buttocks evenly.

She hung on for dear life as the painful swats rained down on her unprotected bottom, her feet kicking as she tried to pull her rear in and away from the stinging assault.

Left, right and middle came the cadence of Sanders' hand against her tender globes as she squealed and kicked helplessly.

"Owwwww!" She wailed into his shoulder, the tears very near the surface.

Finally, after 30 stinging smacks, he set her on her feet, caressing the warm surface of her deep

pink bottom before he bent and slid her panties and leggings back into place.

"That's for taking off alone again," he murmured into her ear as he held her close.

She pouted up at him, her wide eyes misty, and he dropped a kiss on the upturned lips.

"The spanking for scaring me half to death and getting drunk on your butt in a casino is still coming."

Between her aching head and her stinging bottom, Danni had no inclination to argue. She would straighten him out on the matter of her right to go where she pleased and drink as she pleased soon enough.

"Is this everything?" he questioned as she picked up her bag to zip it shut.

"No, my clothes are in the bathroom floor and my makeup kit is on the counter." Her hand on her head, Danni asked, "Did you get a room here last night Sanders?"

"No, I slept here with you, honey," he responded, a wry grin on his face. "But don't worry, nothing happened. You were obviously too drunk to remember."

No, she didn't remember that, but she believed him. There was just one other little thing bothering her, "Did you call me your fiancé?" she asked hesitantly, still rubbing her burning rear with her other hand.

"Yes I did," he answered smoothly. "I wasn't sure your burly friend would let me take you if I didn't."

"Oh...right," she nodded, her head and bottom aching too much to worry about the propriety of the situation.

When Sanders strode past her to get the articles mentioned, she curled up on the bed and closed her eyes. It felt so good to lie down and rest again. She did NOT feel like getting on an airplane. The idea of the hot stuffy cabins and cramped quarters did not

appeal to her at all. Not to mention the hubbub of the airport!

"I got your shampoo from the shower..." Sanders began as he came around the bathroom corner. Seeing Danni lying on the bed, he dropped the bag and sat down beside her, running his hand up and down her back and over her heart shaped bum.

"Feeling pretty bad, little bunny?" he murmured.

"I really don't feel very good, Sanders, do we have to leave right away?" She reached out and laid her hand on his thigh, the other one curled under her cheek.

"Not if you don't want to, honey," he replied. "I've got a private plane, and we can leave anytime you're ready." His other hand closed over hers, playing with her fingers.

Yawning widely then, Danni muttered something unintelligible. She was quickly succumbing to the desire to sleep.

"Tell you what, you rest for awhile, and I'll go find us something to eat." She didn't answer.

Sanders stood up and retrieved a pillow, pushing it under her cheek. He flipped the cover over her and kissed her tenderly on the tip of her ear. She stirred a bit but didn't open her eyes.

Grinning and shaking his head, he left the room, a man in quest of life's most basic requirement.

"Damien, you are the most stubborn man on God's green earth I swear!" fumed Marnie, holding up the letter again.

Thirty five-year-old Marnie Weathers stared at Damien Stocks, a scowl on her pretty face. A mass of dark ringlet curls surrounded her well-shaped head and her gray eyes flashed fire.

"It says right here in black and white that they want to use you for a test case, all expenses paid!" She walked over and shoved it under his nose. "What more can you ask for?"

"I don't care what it says, darlin'," scowled Damien. "I'll bet you good money that Danni Oaks is behind this, and I *will not* take charity." He grabbed the paper away from her and threw it on the coffee table beside him.

"Ohhhhhh...you make me want to scream!" yelled Marnie, stamping her foot in frustration. "It's from that clinic in Michigan that specializes in eye diseases. How in the world would Danni have anything to do with it? You are just being a pain in the ass because you don't really want to marry me do you?"

"If you want a pain in the ass, darlin', just come on over here. I might be blind but I bet I can manage to paddle that sassy backside of yours just fine."

"You'll play hell too, Mr. Stocks!"

"It would almost be worth it to be able to see just so I could blister your butt, Marnie," growled Damien, reaching out for her.

Marnie quickly stepped out of reach and he missed. Not that she was really worried. He had threatened her rear countless times but had yet to do anything.

"Ha!" scoffed Marnie. "If I thought that's all it would take, I'd lay over your lap myself. You're all talk and no action mister!"

"You better watch, it little girl," warned Damien. "You're gonna push me too far one of these days and I might just surprise you!"

"You're really scaring me here," came the sarcastic reply.

When he didn't answer this time, she sighed. Slumping at his feet, she laid her head on his knee. "I love you, Damien Stocks, but you are frustrating the hell out of me."

"You know how I feel, Marnie," he replied quietly. He put his fingers in her curls and gently massaged the back of her head.

It was an old argument. One they had had many times over. How could he make her understand? He

did love her, but felt he didn't have the right to tie her to a blind man. A man who would never be anything, never do anything worthwhile in life. She needed someone who could take care of her the way she deserved.

What if the operation never even worked? He felt a stab of fear in his heart as he contemplated the reality of his situation. Worse yet, what if it did work, and he still couldn't do anything? Anguish swept through him at the thought of losing Marnie, but he had to let her go. He had to at least be man enough to do that.

Marnie punched him in the calf with her fist, her frustration with him overflowing her heart. "You're just a coward, Damien Stocks, a yellow bellied coward!" she flung at him recklessly, wanting to hurt him the way she was hurting. "All you want to do is hide here forever in the dark like a slug under a rock because you're not man enough to take a risk!"

Anger boiled up in Damien as she voiced the very fear he tried to hide, even from himself. That he would never be a real man!

Adrenalin surged through him, and he hauled her up and over his knees. Marnie fought and kicked, but he was far too strong for her. Ruthlessly, he swept her sweats down her thighs, his strong hand gripping her hip.

His powerful right arm came down, and he pummeled her tender bottom with painful bruising slaps. The scant lacy panties she wore were virtually no protection.

Marnie gasped for air, the pain of Damien's assault on her backside taking her breath away. She bucked and kicked, her arms flailing uselessly as she tried in vain to reach her bottom and stop the onslaught. Failing in that endeavor, she reached for the floor.

A keening sound began at the back of her throat as she clawed into the carpet, trying to crawl off his lap as she pushed herself forward from her toes. It

was no use! His grip was too tight, and the blistering spanks were landing all over her buttocks and the back of her thighs.

Her ass was literally on fire, and the keening sound became one long drawn out howl as she finally opened her mouth wide to protest.

"Damiennnnnnnn!" she wailed as the sobs tore at her chest. She was going to die, right here and now and hell couldn't possibly be any hotter than her rear end!

Damien spanked her hard, his rage and frustration at himself and her, lending strength where he didn't even need it.

He was a very powerful man, broad of chest and shoulders and biceps that were well developed from years of lifting weights and working out. It was his one claim to exercise, and he used it to relieve the stress and frustrations of his sedentary life.

Marnie's 130 pounds was nothing to him, and he handled her easily.

"Sto...ho...hoppp," screeched Marnie; helpless to do anything but howl as the punishment seemed like it was never going to end. Her bottom and thighs were deep red, and bruising was already beginning as some of the red became purple.

Her screams finally pierced the fury in Damien's mind, and he suddenly stopped, realizing what he was doing.

His rage over as quickly as it begun, he hauled the wildly sobbing girl up and into his arms. "Oh god, Marnie, I'm so sorry!" He held her close to his chest, rocking and soothing her with little shushing sounds. "I'm so sorry, Marnie, I'm sorry," he repeated over and over.

Disgust and anger at himself curled his stomach. How could he do that to her? He had made himself a vow that he would never be a spanking man because he couldn't see what he was doing, and he refused to take the risk of hurting a woman.

Not that he didn't believe in it...he just didn't believe in himself.

"How you must hate me," he whispered brokenly into her curls. "I hurt you, Marnie, I'm so sorry. I never meant to hurt you and now I have. I wouldn't blame you if you never came back."

Still sobbing, Marnie fought her way out of his arms and painfully stood up. Stepping away from him, she bent and slowly pulled her sweats up, gasping as they slid over her abused backside.

She walked to the table and picked up her purse, then headed for the door, still sobbing softly.

"Goodbye, Marnie," choked out Damien, the words sticking in his throat. The least he could do was let her go without breaking down like a fool. He didn't need her sympathy. Let her go...*hating him*. It was the best way for both of them.

He heard the door open, and then softly close. He let out the breath he had been holding and leaned forward, his head in his hands, elbows on his knees. A gut-wrenching sob tore from his chest as he tried to hold back his emotions. Men didn't cry, but then he wasn't a real man was he?

Marnie stood at the door, the pain in heart exceeded only by the pain in her aching bottom. She turned to look at Damien one last time, biting her lip at his stoic expression.

She hesitated, and then softly closed the door. She couldn't do it. She just couldn't leave like this. The tears still running down her cheeks, she stared as the man broke down, a hoarse racking sob shaking his broad shoulders. She was stunned.

Marnie dropped her bag on the carpet and moved swiftly to Damien, dropping to her knees in front of him.

Damien started when a pair of soft arms crept around his neck and a silky wet cheek pressed into his. With a groan, he grabbed Marnie and pulled her up into his chest, enclosing her in a big bear hold. Their lips met frantically, each seeking reassurance and warmth...and love.

"Damn you, Marnie," he choked out, "why did you have to come back? I can never give you a real life, can't you see that?"

"You ARE my life you idiotic man," whispered Marnie her forehead pressed against his. Can't you see *that?*" she echoed, pounding her small fist against his shoulder.

"All right, Marnie," he sighed heavily. "You win, I'll have the surgery, if you can forgive me for brutally spanking you like that."

"No, WE win, darling," said Marnie, her gray eyes warm and soft on his face. "Besides, what are a few bruises? I told you I'd *lay myself* over your lap if it would change your mind." She didn't bother to tell him that she knew she'd probably be black and blue. She had never been spanked before and she bruised easily anyway. By the time he was able to see, they would be long gone. And she *knew* he would be able to see, she could feel it in her bones.

Marnie was pretty sure Danni was behind the offer from the eye institute as well, but she wasn't going to say anything. Time enough for that later after it was all over. Right now, they needed to concentrate on getting Damien's eyes taken care of. Then there was the book he was going to write, and the thesis on the life of the blind and how they coped, and...Marnie's thoughts were busy organizing his life while he was busy pulling off her sweater!

When his firm lips began to press sweet kisses on the soft swell of her breasts, a licking fire began to spread to her abdomen. Breathlessly, she allowed him to unsnap her bra and groaned with pleasure as his mouth sought the aching buds that were released from their lacy covering.

"Oh, Damien," she breathed as he gently pushed her onto the carpet and followed her down, their lips locked in a drugging kiss that went on and on and on....!

Chapter Twelve

Danni stirred as the door opened and then closed with a soft snick. As she slowly woke up, she realized that her head had stopped aching and only a dull throb remained. Lifting her fingers to her temples, she massaged them slowly, turning onto her back.

She felt the tenderness in her bottom as soon as she rolled over. Not too bad, though, but enough to know she'd been spanked earlier.

"How are you feeling?" Sanders asked as he walked into her line of vision, carrying some bags in his hands.

No longer needing to squint, she yawned and stretched. "I feel a LOT better," she said cautiously sitting up and dropping her legs over the edge of the bed. She stretched again and yawned widely, then flushed as Sanders looked appraisingly at her. "Not THAT good," she amended hastily, seeing the look on his face.

"Don't worry," he laughed. "You'll get your paddling soon enough. But, it'll wait until I get you home."

"Until *you* get *me* home?" she arched her eyebrow delicately.

"Yes, I can see you *are* feeling better," he stressed just as smoothly.

Throwing him a withering look, she headed for the bathroom, yawning again.

She really is a brat, Sanders decided, watching her gently swaying hips as she walked away from him. Well, he had just the cure for that, but all in good time.

Picking up one of the bags, he took the food out of it. It was almost 11:00 and breakfast was history, but he'd brought back hot vegetable soup and a ham sandwich for her.

It was pretty cold outside and the soup had tasted good at the little diner he found a few streets away.

The Tylenol had done wonders for Danni's headache, and she actually felt human again. She sniffed appreciatively as the smell of the soup invaded the bathroom. Flipping the towel over the rack, she headed back to the table to see what other goodies Sanders had brought back.

"Hey, this looks good," Danni said enthusiastically as she picked up the ham sandwich and took a bite. "Mmmm...tastes good too!"

She flopped down in the chair and picked up the spoon he had lain by the bowl and took a sip of the hot juice on the vegetables. "This soup is really good too!" She exclaimed after swallowing the mouthful of sandwich and soup.

Sanders watched in amusement. "A girl who actually likes to eat huh?"

"Doesn't everybody?" asked Danni in surprise.

"Most girls pick at their food or live on salads," he explained dryly.

"Oh well...not me," declared Danni, taking another big bite. "I get hungry, I eat. I guess I'm blessed to have one of those lean metabolisms," she grinned impishly before tackling the soup again.

Sanders watched as Danni eagerly polished off the soup and sandwich in record time. She leaned back with a sigh and pushed the chair away from the table.

"We need to talk you know," he said, eyeing her carefully.

Flushing a bit, Danni turned and stared out the window. "Yes, I know."

"Dale and Eva told me what happened. I'm sorry Danni."

"It's history now, Sanders," she replied, her tone troubled. She knew she would have to tell him sooner or later, but she wasn't ready yet. It was all so...sordid. She looked across the table at him. Even though her worst fears were now at rest, it was still embarrassing to know that her own father had been behind it. How did one explain that their father allowed this to happen to them?

Restless, she got up to throw the remains of lunch into the trash. She wondered if this would set her free from the nightmares. Or if it would eliminate the fear that overcame her when she was kissed deeply.

Beyond that, what if Sanders and her father were in business together? That thought really sent a stab of pain through her chest and she pushed it away. She really wanted to trust Sanders, but if he was in business with her father, then she could not in good conscious have anything more to do with him. Her father scared and disgusted her and she had no desire to be anywhere near him, now or in the future.

Turning to face Sanders, she asked point blank, "Are you and my father doing business together?" Keeping her face carefully blank, she awaited his answer.

Sensing the tension in that question, he got up and walked over to her. "I bought the ski lodge yesterday, Danni," he answered quietly. "Does that bother you?"

"No, not necessarily," she replied cautiously. "Is that all you have to do with him?"

She held her breath, waiting for his answer.

Sanders hesitated for a moment, and then replied, " No, I have some other things going, Danni, but I need you to trust me. I know you have no real reason to, but you will see very soon what I'm talking about."

She searched his face, wishing his words to be the truth and not a ruse to put her off.

"My father never does anything without a reason behind it. He has always pushed me towards any man he thinks might be good for his company. Now, he is suddenly warning me off you?"

She cocked her head to one side, "What's different all of a sudden with you?"

"How much do you know about your father's business, Danni?"

"More than I ever care to know," she replied bitterly, flushing slightly.

"Did you know he has been having setbacks over the last several years?"

She looked at him in surprise. "Are you saying he is losing money or something?"

"Does that bother you?" he asked calmly.

"Not particularly," she responded offhandedly, "but it might bother my mother."

"And that *would* bother you?"

Danni considered for a moment. Although her social butterfly mother might not have been there for her very much, she didn't want to see her hurt either. Carolyn Oaks was used to a high standard of living, and not having money could be a big problem.

Sanders read the answer in her hesitation. It *would* hurt her for her mother to be hurt. He had to admit it was one point he hadn't considered in his plans. His goal had been to ruin John Oaks; he hadn't worried about the rest of the family. Of course, he hadn't planned on meeting Danni either. This was getting more complicated by the moment. Perhaps Hagen had a point; maybe revenge was something he needed to reconsider.

"I wouldn't want my mother to be hurt, no, but she does have a trust fund from grandma that she could live on if she needed too. So, am I worried about her? No, not really." She looked up at him again.

"Why all the questions Sanders? Is my father on the brink of ruin or something?" she asked laughingly.

"I was just wondering," he replied warily. "You father has hurt you greatly in the past and I was curious as to how you felt about him." This was not the time to tell Danni about the deal between him and her father. He wasn't ready to put that plan into action yet.

"If I never saw him again, it would be too soon," responded Danni bitterly, "does that answer your question?"

"Close enough," he murmured, a small sigh of relief escaping his lips. Pulling her into his arms, he held her close to his broad chest, her head just fitting against his chin and neck.

She felt so right in his arms, he loved the feel of her body next to his and the way she snuggled into him. Other feelings began to stir and he tipped her chin up for his kiss.

Her rosy lips opened slightly as he bent his head to claim them. Soft arms crept up around his neck and he ran his hands lightly down her back to the rounded swell of her buttocks.

What was it that was so perfect about a woman's bottom he wondered? He loved the feel of her heart shaped cheeks as he cupped and massaged them. The way they gently parted when they filled each of his hands and their warm satiny feel beneath his caressing palms.

He could cheerfully have her bare bottomed over his lap just relaxing and watching television as long as it was there for him to view, tease, or spank as he wished. He figured she might have something to say about that, though.

Danni loved the feel of his hands on her buttocks, the warmth of his palms sliding over the rounded swells, cupping and lifting. She hated the punishing hardness when he spanked her but when he was loving her as he was now, it made her shiver and tremble with desire. She moaned as he deepened the kiss, little by little, her breath coming faster as he probed gently, seeking entrance.

No other man had ever affected her this way and, she was confused. Was this love? It's not as if she hadn't been kissed and caressed before, but her previous experiences seemed boring and banal next to Sanders. He ignited a fire that seemed to race through her veins, leaving her breathless and wanting...*more!*

Suddenly, she was gasping for air again and that suffocating feeling began to close in on her. The next second she was free, and he was planting kisses along the side of her neck and chin, then back up to stake his territory on the rosy petals once again.

Danni heard a knocking that sounded from a long way off, and Sanders lifted his head and answered, "Just a moment please."

He stared into her bemused eyes. He felt the same way she did, and he was breathing heavily. He was pleased with the progress he was making. He was able to kiss her longer and deeper than he had before, and he knew that whatever had been troubling her, was losing its grip on her.

"I'm afraid we have to go, little snow bunny," he murmured thickly. "I'm sure that's the maid, and you are supposed to be out of here by noon."

"Maid?" questioned Danni dazedly. "Oh...yeah...the maid. Yes, checkout is 12:00 noon, and it must be close to that now," she said, pushing away from Sanders. "I guess I better get my boots on," she said, going to her bag for some socks.

An hour later, they were walking up the steps to the private plane Sanders had flown to Vegas in.

"I'm so excited!" Danni hopped up the stairs and ducked to go into the plane. "I am envious too, Sanders! I've always wanted to take flying lessons and become a pilot; I just haven't gotten around to it yet! But I will!" she exclaimed, her eyes shining as she looked back at him.

"What??" exclaimed Sanders, amusement in his voice? "Bunnies can't fly! Besides, if you get a license, who knows where you'd go haring off to!"

She ignored the pun in his words and stuck her tongue out at him. "This bunny is going to fly someday, you just watch me!"

Sanders pulled the door up after him and turned around to stow his bag in the wall compartment.

"I intend to get my own plane one of these days, as soon as I buy my home."

"How wonderful!" Danni laughed up at him. "Are you going to name it?" she asked teasingly?

"Maybe," drawled Sanders, giving her a mischievous look.

"Are you going to draw a picture of a naked lady on the side?"

"Are you going to pose for me?"

"I might," replied Danni, pretending to consider the idea. "Hey! Maybe I should take that up as a sideline. I could pose for pilots!" She laughed at his outraged look.

"You know what?" he asked silkily. "I think maybe I better check the status of a certain little tail. We obviously need to make sure it stays "in the pink."

"Oh no you don't," giggled Danni, covering said tail with her hands and backing away.

"Oh yes, I do!" came the determined reply as he advanced on her.

She turned to run for the cockpit but he reached out and snaked an arm around her waist.

Danni squealed and tried to pull away, but Sanders tucked her under his left arm and down went the leggings once more, the bikini scraps with them.

"Don't you dare, Sanders," yelled Danni, half laughing, half worried.

"Hmmm...not pink at all any more. Guess I better fix that," he mocked as he caressed the delightful heart.

"No! You wouldn't!" pleaded Danni, beginning to get very worried. "Sanderssss!"

Sanders lifted his arm and brought his hand down on the bottom wiggling so furiously beneath his arm.

Swat! Swat! Swat!

They weren't hard swats, but Danni jumped and squeaked anyway, just so he would think he was having a harder effect than he was.

Swat! Swat! Swat!

Sanders was thoroughly enjoying himself. He watched in fascination as the firm buttocks bounced beneath his ministrations. He was careful not to hurt her...*much!* He was just playing with her after all.

"Who's going to pose naked for pilots? Swat! Swat! Swat!"

"Ooo...ow...Sanders!" giggled Danni, knowing he was just playing, but it was stinging none the less.

Swat! Swat! Swat! "I asked you a question, little bunny!"

"Ouch! Not me...not me!" she yelped.

Swat! Swat! Swat! Swat! Swat! Swat! "Right answer, Miss Brat!" responded Sanders smugly finishing with a volley of spansks.

He ran his palm lightly over the delicious pink cheeks, admiring his handiwork. "There you go, little bunny, nice and pink," he said, pulling her clothes back into place.

"If you are expecting a thank you, you'll be waiting for a long time," she replied cheekily, reaching back to rub a bit, her eyes twinkling.

"That's okay," he returned, the dimple in his cheek grooving as he grinned. "You'll thank me one of these days, just wait and see."

"Yea right, and hell will freeze over too."

Sanders twirled her around and swatted her firmly on each cheek then. "Watch your mouth young lady!"

"Ow! Okay, okay," she said hastily, seeing the warning glint in his eyes. Huffing, she turned away and stepped into the cockpit. "But I can't ever see me thanking you for a spanking!" She hastily took her seat before he could "say" anything else.

"Honey, you have a lot to learn," he grinned at her as he took his seat.

Chapter Thirteen

It was 8:00pm that evening when Sanders opened the door to his condo near the Stardust Ski Lodge. He ushered Danni inside and she looked around nervously.

She had certainly had a wonderful time flying in from Vegas with Sanders. She loved the feeling of being up in the clouds and had decided it was time to pursue that dream of becoming a pilot. They had talked and laughed, exchanged childhood escapades, although Danni didn't have near as many as Sanders did, and got to know one another.

Sanders had grown up in Sweden, in a city called Lucerne. During the summers, they enjoyed the Lake of Lucerne for summer activities, and of course, in the winter, skiing was the sport of choice.

He had one brother, Hagen, and the two boys had grown up running around their father's ski resort...The Borderland. Hagen had been 21 and Sanders only 15 when their father had passed away. So the boys could ski, snowboard, cross-country ski, and just about any other winter sport you could name. Sanders favored cross-country, but enjoyed slope skiing too.

Hagen had finished his hotel management degree and with his mother's help, purchased back the ski lodge his father had lost in a hostile takeover. The lodge had been stripped of all its assets and thrown into a public sale; little remaining of the popular resort that Hans Linson had run all his life.

Sanders had entered a university in Bern when he turned 17 and obtained a degree in business management and financial planning. He had been driven to succeed and he and Hagen had made an awesome pair.

Investments had been Sanders, specialty and his extremely high IQ had ensured his success in his business endeavors. Of course, he had glossed over that part, preferring to downplay how much he and

Hagen were worth in assets, and concentrate on the more lighthearted memories of his childhood.

Their company, Sangen Corporation, was well diversified and had many business ventures in progress, but the hearts of the brothers were in the ski lodges. That was their first love.

Sanders had been investigating the Stardust lodge for quite a while now, and intended to move to Utah and take over this one himself. Hagen would continue to run their Swedish lodges and Sanders would concentrate on building US sites.

Danni's nervousness increased for she knew Sanders intended to paddle her and she was not happy about it at all. She had avoided thinking about it all day because she knew it meant a confrontation, and she wasn't sure how she felt about it.

The two serious spankings he had given her thus far, she could honestly say she had probably earned. But this, this was different.

They had met up with Eva and Dale and had dinner in the Stardust Lounge and make plans for snowmobiling the next day.

Now they were alone in Sanders' condo, and she was decidedly apprehensive. She knew he wanted answers as well, and she wasn't ready for that either!

"Maybe I should...um...go to my condo, Sanders," she hedged anxiously, not taking her coat off.

"Running again little, snow bunny?" murmured Sanders.

Danni flushed defiantly. "I know what you are planning, and I don't want you to!"

"Give me your coat, Danni," insisted Sanders reaching under her chin to undo the zipper.

"No," she said stubbornly, holding onto it.

"I hadn't decided whether to spank you for sure or not, but you just confirmed a positive with that attitude," declared Sanders impatiently.

"No...wait...please, Sanders," whispered Danni, her eyes misting with unshed tears.

Sighing heavily, Sanders moved her hands aside to open the zipper. "Will you just trust me for now?"

At her mute nod, he opened it and took her coat to hang in the closet.

"Would you like a drink?" he asked quietly, escorting her to the couch. He loved the feel of the warm silky material of her dress under his hand, and the sensuous movement of her hips as they walked. The deep purple cocktail dress made her light blue eyes seem lavender in the evening light and her pale hair fell like a curtain against the backdrop.

"No thank you," she replied uneasily, wanting to get this settled.

Danni was very uptight, and she crossed her legs, her foot swinging back and forth.

Sanders seated himself beside her, his arm going around her shoulder and drawing her in close to his side.

"Tell me why you went to Vegas."

Twisting her fingers together, Danni replied, "I needed to get away, Sanders, to take care of something. I needed to think...alone."

"But, why run off in the middle of the night?"

"Why not?"

Sanders stared at her. He could see she wasn't being facetious. She really didn't see why that bothered him.

"Because no one knew where you went, Danni!"

"I left notes!" she replied defensively.

"Danni, didn't it occur to you that we would be worried?" he asked incredulously.

Danni shifted uncomfortably in her seat.

"Well, no, not really," she answered honestly.

"I've come and gone on my own since I was eighteen. It's never bothered anyone before"

"Do you really believe that, honey? Or do you just not care?"

"Besides Eva, who is there to care?" questioned Danni bitterly, her blue eyes flashing. "My dear father was quite happy to have me out of his hair and as long as he's happy, then my mother's happy! Besides, my friends know I can take care of myself, I always have."

She hugged her arms around her waist, an unconscious gesture of defense.

"What about Dale?"

"Dale is Dale. He puts up with me because Eva is my best friend, but he was more exasperated with me most of the time than anything else, and that was fine with me."

Sanders eyed her bent head thoughtfully. Things became clearer with each word Danni spoke.

"What about men friends, Danni?" he asked cautiously.

"Which ones, Sanders," bit out Danni sarcastically. "The ones who wanted my father's money, or the ones who wanted a roll in the sack?" She got up and walked to the window, the pain of her memories driving her to withdraw.

At last, Sanders began to understand. Danni had been alone most of her life except for Eva. She had grown up in boarding schools, told she was a business asset by the men who should have protected her, and learned to be mistrustful of male relationships. In self-defense, she lashed out at the men who crossed her path, pushing them away, and then scorning them when they left. She had remained aloof from Dale because she hadn't trusted him either he suspected, but Dale had put a stop to it and then he himself had entered her life and she had become confused.

Eva of course could not handle Danni, and had tried to push her and Dale together. But she wouldn't confide to Dale anything about Danni, so Dale had assumed the same thing everyone else did, that Danni Oakes was a spoiled brat!

Sanders didn't see a spoiled brat. He saw a young woman full of hurt and anguish, and who had

a strong enough spirit to face the world with impish enthusiasm and a desire to help others. Privately, of course...couldn't let that carefully built brat image become tarnished!

There was still something missing though. A piece of the puzzle he had yet to discover.

What made her so fearful of sexual closeness?" If he had to stake odds on it, he would bet Danni was inexperienced. But was it her distrust of men that had made her that way...or something else?

Remembering how desperately she had fought him, he would bet it was something else. But what? A grim look settled on his features as he contemplated the possibilities, and none of them were good.

He stood up and walked up behind her, pulling her back against his chest. "Danni," he said quietly, "I care. And I don't ever want you to run from me again. I want you to come to me when you have something to work out, not take off."

Danni couldn't relax, even though Sanders felt so warm and comforting, his broad chest solid against her back. She wanted so badly to confide in him, but how to make the words come out? Every time she thought about it, her disgust and loathing for her father formed a tight band across her chest and she couldn't seem to break it.

"There's something more you haven't told me, Danni," Sanders continued quietly. "Why are you so afraid of intimacy?"

Danni froze, her heart beating fast. "I...I can't tell you that," she whispered, hanging her head.

Sanders turned her to face him. "Honey, its obvious something, or someone has hurt you deeply." He lifted her chin to look into her eyes.

"I love you, Danni," he said softly. Her eyes widened in surprise, and she opened her mouth to reply, but he put his fingers on her lips. "Sssh...listen to me. I fell in love with you the first day we met and have only fallen deeper with each

day since. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, you could tell me that will change that."

He stroked his thumb along the softness of her jaw line and over her rosy lips. "I want to protect and defend you, keep you safe, love you in every way possible. Will you trust me...please?"

Danni stared up at Sanders, her emotions at war with each other. The warmth in his blue eyes and the sincerity of his words melted some more of the ice around her heart.

Lord, how she wanted to believe in his words! To believe that his love and concern would not turn to disgust for her and her family. To believe that it was not her fault that men lusted after her, and most of all...to believe that she had not, in some way, encouraged what had happened.

She turned and stared out into the night, the sparkling lights on the freshly falling snow mesmerizing her. The ski slopes looked like a wonderland as the big flakes shimmered in the lights that were everywhere, making the entire lodge seem like a fantasy.

"Tell me what happened, Danni," came the soft insistent voice behind her. Sanders slipped his arms around her and under her breasts, enveloping her in his protective hold, patiently waiting for her to respond.

Danni rested her arms on his, savoring the feel of his maleness, his strength; her head rested gently against his shoulder.

Her thoughts drifted back to that awful night, the night she faced her biggest betrayal.

"I had just come home from school," Danni began, "and my father announced that he had a prospective son-in-law lined up for me."

It seemed that John Oaks had a deal going with another corporation and it was going to be mutually beneficial for David Nixon and Danni Oaks to marry.

John Oaks wanted the Elixir Corporation, and Nixon's son David...well...he wanted Danni.

"You have been groomed for this role for eighteen years, Danni," her father had stated, "and I am responsible for you, so I will make your decisions for you."

"John!" Carolyn had protested on Danni's behalf. "The children at least need time to get to know each other, and Danni just got out of school!"

"That's exactly my point!" argued John Oaks. "She is naïve as to the world and doesn't know what's best for her. She needs to listen to me!"

"You mean you want to use me, don't you Dad?" Danni had accused hotly. "Well, it's not going to happen! I won't be used to cement your business deal for you. When I get ready to marry, it will be to someone I love, and who loves me!"

The argument had been bitter, and Danni had finally stomped off to her room, refusing to even be there when the Nixons came over to talk business with her father and her Uncle.

She had gotten up for a drink of water, the clock on her nightstand showing 1:00am, and she could hear their voices still coming from her father's study.

She had been climbing back up the stairs, when she felt his eyes on her. Turning around, Danni had immediately recognized the raw lust in David Nixon's eyes.

"So beautiful," he had muttered, "so innocent. All you need is a little convincing angel."

She had started at his words and hurriedly rushed up the stairs and slammed the bedroom door behind her. She had heaved a sigh of relief when she didn't hear anything else, and she returned to her bed, settling in for the night.

Danni began to tremble then, and Sanders pulled her closer, holding her, sharing her memory as best he could.

She had come awake suddenly, the length of David Nixon's body pressing into hers. He was kissing her, and his hands were roaming up and down her body. She slapped at him and tried to

scream, but his tongue probed into her open mouth, stifling it in her throat. She had tried to scream again, but she couldn't get any air...and then everything had gone black.

"My God," whispered Sanders, turning Danni to face him. "The son of a bitch assaulted you didn't he, Danni?" He pulled her into his arms, holding her close, his face white. "I'm so sorry, honey, that you had to go through that."

"No, Sanders," responded Danni hoarsely. "That's what I went to Vegas to find out. I went to a doctor and had an exam done. He didn't assault me after all, I just thought he had for the last five years, but wasn't sure."

Sanders stared at her pale face, the tears on her cheeks. "It doesn't matter to me, Danni, it wasn't your fault. You have nothing to be ashamed of, it doesn't change my feelings for you in any way."

"No, Sanders...you don't understand. When I woke up, there was nothing to suggest I'd been assaulted, only the...the sticky wetness that was all over the bed and me. But I couldn't be sure, and was afraid to find out...until now."

She reached up and stroked the side of his face. "You gave me the courage to find out, to end the nightmare and the worry. I...I love you too, darling," she choked out, her face flushing.

Sanders groaned and swept her up in his arms, carrying her to the couch where he sat and cradled her on his lap.

"No wonder you can't stand your father," he growled, the disgust on his face more than evident.

Danni opened her mouth to reveal the last secret and found the words would not come. She just couldn't do it! This was between her and her father and she didn't want Sanders to know. It didn't matter anyway, since he obviously had no intention of doing business with John Oaks.

Happily, she began to press kisses along his chin, elation and joy filling her as she gave her trust fully into Sanders' care and keeping.

The thought briefly crossed Sanders' mind that he should tell Danni what he was doing, then decided to keep it as a surprise for her. He couldn't think of a more deserving man than John Oaks to lose his business and reputation, and he wanted Danni to enjoy the coup de grace. Yes, John Oaks was going to pay for not protecting his daughter, and for ruining his father! Those funds were as good as transferred. It seemed a fair exchange!

"Well, now that we have that matter out of the way, it's time to discuss your paddling," rumbled Sanders, his eyes twinkling as he tried to lighten the atmosphere.

Danni stared up at him in disbelief. "You are kidding aren't you?"

"Nope, I'm dead serious, little snow bunny," he replied tenderly.

"Sanderssss!"

He held up his hand, laughing at her. "You got spanked this morning for taking off alone, and I'm willing to let the *worried us half to death* part go after your explanation...this time!" He looked sternly at her then, "but, there's still getting drunk on your butt in a casino to ante up for."

"Oh no, you don't," glared Danni indignantly. "You're not going to lay that old irresponsible with alcohol trip on *me*," she stated.

"I knew what I was doing, and Lefty was there to make sure I was okay. I was celebrating my trip to the doctor, and I fully think I deserved to!"

Sanders threw back his head and laughed in delight. "You've got me there, honey," he admitted.

Danni smiled in triumph.

His eyes gleaming with mischief, Sanders responded, "However, I still *want* to spank you, so you are getting one anyway."

"What?" squealed Danni as she felt her body being turned over quick as a wink until her nose was suddenly pressing into the sofa.

"You can't do this, I won't let you!"

She began to struggle as she felt her silky skirt being pulled up and pinned under Sanders' arm. She began to kick furiously, and Sanders slapped her smartly on the seat of her silky undies.

"Stop kicking!"

"I won't let you spank me, Sanders, I mean it!" She continued to kick at him, her high-heeled spikes biting into his arm.

"Danni! If you don't stop kicking this instant, I'm going to take off those dangerous little shoes and then blister your butt for real!"

At his threat, Danni stopped instantly. It sounded like he hadn't really planned on spanking her after all. He must have just been teasing, she realized in relief.

"That's better," growled Sanders as she finally relaxed. "Now then, little snow bunny, there is more than one kind of spanking you know."

Danni didn't know, but she listened carefully.

"You've had a long hard week, honey," he murmured, "and I want to help you relax. Do you trust me?"

Shyly she looked back at him, realizing the view he must be seeing. She blushed at his knowing grin.

He began to caress her bottom, loving the feel of the silky purple scraps stretching across her taut buttocks. With his left hand, he smoothed her hair to the side and began to rub her back. When he could feel her beginning to relax and noted her closed eyes, he drew his hand back and lightly swatted each of her delicious cheeks.

Her eyes popped open, and she stared at him in consternation.

"Trust me," he responded quietly, caressing the slight sting.

Nodding, she closed her eyes and relaxed once again.

One by one, Sanders lifted her delicate feet and took the heels off, dropping them to the floor.

He lightly spanked her again, several small swats, and this time she didn't open her eyes.

He began peeling the thigh hi's off each satiny leg, stroking and massaging as he went.

Danni sighed in bliss. She loved the feel of his hands on her legs, and began to anticipate the warm stingy slaps that left a bit of warmth in their wake.

She shivered in delight as she felt his hand beneath her panty, caressing the sting from the last round of spanks. They had seemed a bit smarter this time, nothing like the hard burning slaps she had received during his punishments though.

She was beginning to feel a stirring heat in her loins and dampness between her thighs. She felt the tug of desire curl her stomach and when Sanders finally slid her panties down and off her legs, she was beyond caring.

She began to moan softly as he spanked again, harder this time and her hips began to rise as if in invitation to his palm.

He massaged again, then trailed his fingers lightly down the cleft in the heart shaped rear, his fingers searching the wetness for the little bud he knew would drive her desire even higher. Her thighs fell apart to allow him full access as he gently rubbed and stroked, her hips gyrating with each magic dip of his finger into her honeyed sweetness.

He began to spank her with his left hand, harder and harder as she gasped and moaned his name over and over. He smiled as he continued to give her pleasure, building her desire to a fever pitch.

Danni had never experienced such delicious sensations before, and she felt her body tensing, her hips moving in rhythm to the spanking and rubbing delights Sanders was subjecting her to.

It felt so good that her only fear now was that he would stop before she reached whatever pinnacles her body was climbing.

But, Sanders didn't stop and as he delivered an especially sharp volley of spanks and his fingers worked their magic, she felt her body explode in sweet spasms and she squealed her delight and

pleasure as she rode the sensations down until there was nothing left but a deep relaxing feeling and she was drained and spent.

She laid there, her eyes closed and breathing deeply while Sanders continued to caress her stinging bottom. Finally, she opened one eye and peeked up at a smug grin.

"Told you there was more than one kind of spanking, honey."

Blushing, she replied, "If all your spankings are like this, I'll be happy."

"They won't all be like this, and you darn well know it, miss brat," he chuckled. "But, when you are a good girl, it will be my pleasure to give you these. When you are a brat, you will get the other kind."

Sanders was beginning to sound a bit hoarse, and Danni became aware of his hard maleness against her hip. Realizing his predicament, she blushed again and tried to get up.

"Danni, do you want to remain a virgin until we're married?" he asked thickly, hoping she would say no, but willing to wait for her sake. It was a rarity these days after all.

"I...I think that would be best," blushed Danni furiously, realizing she knew nothing about birth control and such. She made a mental note to get to her doctor.

Groaning at her words, he sighed and smoothed her dress down over her hips and helped her sit up. Danni felt guilty then as she felt him rock hard beneath her bottom. Moving to the side, she tentatively put her hand on the hardness, shyly rubbing the length of him.

Flushing, Sander took her hand away. "Don't do that honey, or you'll start something that has to be finished."

Not being totally naïve, Danni's hands moved again to his zipper. "I want to please you, Sanders," she said shyly, sliding it down and caressing him again. "Can I, please?"

"Oh yes, babe...you sure can!" he groaned.
"Show me what to do," she whispered.
With a heartfelt groan, he did.

Chapter Fourteen

Danni laughed with exuberance as she flew along on the snowmobile, the wind whipping her pale hair behind her.

Abreast of her was Eva, barreling along with her as they raced Dale and Sanders to what used to be the old Danvers cabin.

Sanders owned it now, and the four of them had decided to snowmobile in, spend the night there and return on Monday.

The men had already pulled ahead on their powerful Artic Cats but Danni wasn't worried. She had discussed this with Eva early that morning while they were packing, and they had both agreed to take Danni's shortcut. Eva had been worried, but Danni soon convinced her that it was unfounded.

They had laughed at the thought of the men's chagrined faces when they would pull up to the cabin and realize the girls had already beaten them!

Danni ignored the fact that Sanders had cautioned her to stick to the main trail and not pull anything crazy. There were enough deviations along the route they were taking where the girls could pull ahead...that is if they were good enough he had added.

Not one to back away from a challenge, that last smirking comment had sealed her decision. No one knew these trails as well as Danni, and she knew she could traverse Mayers Pass with no problem!

The men were out of sight among the pine trees ahead when Danni signaled Eva to bear left. Laughing, Eva followed her friend and the two headed up the pass.

The four were already an hour away from the lodge and another half hour would put them at the cabin.

Sanders rounded the corner and smiled in triumph. The girls were nowhere in sight! Pleased with himself, he turned off the powerful Artic Cat and grinned at Dale while he removed his helmet.

"Looks like we got 'em, Dale," he crowed as Dale mimicked his actions.

"Sure does," chortled Dale triumphantly, his blonde hair damp against his forehead. "Looks like they get to cook tonight!"

Reaching into the boots of their snowmobiles, the men grabbed some of their gear and trooped into the cabin. "I'll get a fire started," said Sanders cheerfully.

"And, I'll refill these lanterns," responded Dale, noting the two sitting empty on the table.

The little cabin was built well, a huge fireplace almost covering one wall. There was a small kitchen and bathroom, two small bedrooms, and a loft. Each of the bedrooms had gas space heaters, as did the bathroom, but the rest of the cabin was warmed by the oversized fireplace.

Sanders had fallen in love with it and bought it a few months ago when he had come over from Sweden. He had fully stocked it and usually spent time there when he came cross-country skiing.

Once the fire was going, he walked out to the porch to listen. It had been 15 minutes since they pulled in and he really hadn't expected it to take that long for the girls to appear.

"How good a rider is Eva?" he called back to Dale.

Dale had finished and was coming to join Sanders on the porch. "Not as good as Danni, but certainly able to hold her own on the trail we came in on," responded Dale uneasily.

"They really should have been here by now," frowned Sanders, looking at his watch. "It's going on twenty minutes."

"I hope Danni didn't decide to go up Mayers pass," exclaimed Dale, scowling in consternation.

"Mayers Pass? You mean the one that has a reputation for a new fissure each year?"

"That's the one," replied Dale grimly. "It would cut 10 minutes off the ride, provided you traverse it safely that is."

"I told Danni to stick to the main trail!" Sanders was really beginning to get worried.

"Once Danni sets her mind to something, there's no stopping her!" Dale strode to his snowmobile and grabbed his helmet. "And Eva is not much better! Either one of them could have come up with something harebrained like this." Dale jammed the helmet back on his head and started his snowmobile, Sanders right behind him. "And, if she has, my wife is going to be eating her dinner standing up!" He gunned the machine and headed back the way they had come.

"So will a certain snow bunny!" vowed Sanders, worried and furious that Danni had obviously disobeyed him.

Danni and Eva were 10 minutes into Mayers Pass when the inevitable happened. Rounding a curve at a fast clip, both girls saw the fissure at the same time. It was 4 foot wide and 3 feet deep. Slamming on their brakes, they tried to slow the impact, but the front of the Panteras dipped into the fissure. The runners jammed into the opposite bank, sending the girls tumbling head over heels across the handlebars.

Danni lay still, scarcely daring to breath as she waited for the pain to set in. Something felt wet on the left side of her face and the snow was beginning to numb it already. Lifting her head cautiously, she saw red on the snow where her face had been.

"Danni! Danni!...are you all right?" Eva breathlessly scrambled over to her friend, worried that she had not gotten up yet. Eva had landed against a snow bank and was thankful it had been a soft one. She would have a few bruises here and there, but was none the worse for her experience. Seeing Danni still lying there, she had been terrified that she was unconscious.

Spying the blood on Danni's face when she lifted her head, she shrieked, "You're hurt!"

Sucking air back into her lungs, Danni cautiously sat up. Feeling everything move normally, she took

off her glove and touched her cheek. She didn't feel any cuts on the cold skin.

"It's your temple Danni," said Eva worriedly.

Danni found the lump then just below the hairline on her left temple. She laughed shakily at Eva. "I'm fine Eva, just a lump and a surface cut it feels like."

"Let me see," demanded Eva, pulling Danni's hair aside to inspect the cut. "Yes, you're right. Not a deep cut, just a long one, and head wounds always bleed a lot. Let me get the first aid kit."

Walking swiftly towards her snowmobile, she started to jump into the fissure when Danni yelled, "NO Eva!"

Hesitating, she looked back.

"Do NOT go in the fissure Eva, those things are dangerous and sometimes drop even further. You could end up in a hole somewhere, lost forever!" Danni's eyes were huge in her pale face.

Eva hastily retreated and sat down by Danni, "What do we do now?"

"We've got two choices, either walk out, or wait for the guys."

"The guys! Oh my gosh," squeaked Eva. "Dale is going to be so mad at me!"

"Me too," agreed Danni woefully, thinking of Sanders warning earlier. "Not only him, but Sanders is going to kill me!"

"Oh noooo..." moaned Eva. "And, Dale brought the paddle too!"

"Paddle?" echoed Danni, staring at her friend in consternation.

"Yes, Paddle!" Eva wrung her hands. "That thing hurts so bad, Danni. It's made of heavy leather, and it almost covers my whole bottom in one swat!"

Danni blanched. She had no doubt she would get everything Eva got, if not by Dale, then certainly by Sanders! She didn't know how experienced a spanker Sanders was, but she had no doubt why Eva had become so well behaved in the last three years! As many times as she had

frustrated Dale in the past, she was quite sure he would love to lend his paddle to Sanders, not to mention any coaching. This paddle must certainly be fearsome if it had Eva sniffing at the mere thought of it!

Desperately, she tried to think of a way out of their predicament. There was no way her and Eva could get the snowmobiles out by themselves. They simply weren't strong enough. It would take men and ropes.

They could start walking, but that would just worry the men more when they arrived and found them gone. She was pretty sure a worried spanker meant more spanking! Better to stay put and wait. The girls huddled together, beginning to get cold as the icy snow numbed their bottoms through their ski suits. They tried to enjoy the sensations, rather than dwell on how roasted they were going to feel before the day was out!

Danni sniffled, feeling very sorry for herself. A tear slipped out and slid down her pale cheek. Why had it been so important to win? It would have been better to lose and get the sexy spanking Sanders had promised her than what she was going to get now.

Sanders and Dale found the spot where the girls had parted company with them. "Just as I figured," bit out Dale, his face grim. "Mayers Pass!"

Neither man spoke as they turned their snowmobiles in the direction the girls had taken. Each feared for their safety and each vowed retribution once they had them safe!

Danni and Eva heard the whine of the big Cats as they approached. "You don't suppose they will do the same thing we did do you?" asked a worried Eva, picturing the men tumbling head first into their laps.

"Of course not," scoffed Danni. They would be cautious as they came around the curve, unlike her and Eva. Another tear slid down her cheek and she

sniffled again, wiping it away with the back of her hand.

Sure enough, the whine of the machines decelerated as the men came around the curve and then came to a stop, quickly pulling off their helmets.

Sanders ran to a narrow portion of the fissure and leaped across, Dale right behind him.

Two more woebegone faces could not be found as the men rushed to the girls, scanning them for obvious injuries. Sanders blanched at the blood on Danni's face, but he enveloped her in a hug. "Are you all right?" he whispered hoarsely, pushing her away to inspect her wound.

"I'm sorry Sanders," sobbed Danni, the tears coming in earnest now as he tenderly probed the lump on her head.

Eva wasn't in any better shape, sobbing into Dale's shoulder as she too apologized and hugged her husband.

Both men pulled the girls to their feet, carefully inspecting them for broken bones and the like. Satisfied at last that they were okay except for their scare, they helped them back to the other side and sat them on the snowmobiles.

It took them an hour to get the Panteras out of the fissure, working carefully with ropes and using the Artic Cats to pull.

The runners were bent badly on both of them and Eva's had the casing cracked on hers.

They could not be ridden as they were, so the men tied ropes to the runners to pull them behind them.

It was a quiet group that returned to the cabin and they all trooped inside, Sanders shutting the door.

Danni removed her parka and Sanders motioned her to take the bibs off too.

"But, I don't have any pants on except my underwear," she protested.

"You won't be needing any for awhile," returned Sanders, his face determined.

"Go the bedroom Eva...to the corner, bottom bared and wait for me," instructed Dale quietly, his face stern. "You know what to do."

"Yes sir," whispered Eva, tears rolling down her cheeks once again.

Walking over to his gear bag, Dale bent down and unzipped the side compartment and took out a heavy looking brown paddle.

Turning to Sanders, he told him, "You can have this when I'm finished. It works wonders." Having said that, he turned towards the bedroom.

Sanders turned back to Danni, indicating again for her to remove the bibs.

Obligingly, she slid them slowly off her shoulders and pushed them down, stepping out of them. She stood there uncertainly in her sock feet, turtleneck, and panties, biting her lip.

Sanders took her hand and pulled her to the table where he sat her in a chair. Getting a bowl of water and a cloth, he washed the side of her face and the blood out of her hairline. They could both hear the deep rumble of Dale's voice and the feminine tones of Eva's.

Sanders was just putting the band-aid over the cut when the harsh slapping sounds of palm against flesh came cracking from the bedroom.

Danni jumped, and Sanders calmly continued to wash the blood off her hands. Soon, Eva's cries began to filter through the foot wide opening Dale had left in the door. Then suddenly, the swats stopped.

Danni, thinking the spanking was over, sighed in relief. Suddenly a much louder distinctive splat sounded through the cabin, and Eva's shriek rang in her ears.

She clapped her hands to her ears, and her eyes went wide with fright.

Sanders pulled her hands away and said sternly, "You need to hear what you have put Eva through

with your disobedience. There is no doubt in my mind that this was your idea." He looked at her expectantly.

Danni's face was pale, and her chin wobbled, but she nodded her head affirmatively.

"I thought so," he replied grimly. "Well, you're next."

"Nooo...Sanders, please," sniffled Danni. "Please, don't use that thing on me."

The heavy splats of the paddle and Eva's wails and shrieks were making Danni feel sick to her stomach. She felt even worse when it stopped! She could hear Eva's wild sobbing and Dale's low rumble again, and a few minutes later, Dale walked out. He strode over to Sanders and handed him the leather paddle, giving Danni a hard look.

"I'm sorry, Dale," whimpered Danni, thoroughly subdued.

"Not as sorry as you will be, I'm sure," responded Dale sternly.

Sanders took Danni by one hand and with the paddle in the other, led her to the other bedroom. Like Dale, he left the door open a foot.

He took her to the corner and turned her into it. Then he slid her panties down and ordered her to step out of them, which she did. Putting his arm around her middle, he landed several stinging hard swats to her rounded cheeks with his other hand.

Danni cried out and tried to tuck her bottom in and away from the hard spansks, but Sanders kept her in place over his arm.

"Why did you take that pass, Danni?" he questioned, pausing. "Don't you know you could have been killed?"

"I know," she whispered tearfully, trying to rub her stinging rear, "but I didn't think of that then." She looked back at him. "I just wanted to win."

"Your desire to win put both of you in danger and caused hundreds of dollars worth of damage to the snowmobiles. I want you to think about that for a few minutes."

Sanders went and sat on the edge of the bed, his arms folded and watched Danni for a few minutes. Her hands were clasped behind her back and her right foot was on top of her left, just like a recalcitrant child in trouble. He knew she was scared, and he was not unsympathetic, so he didn't want to make her wait too long. She sniffled, and Sanders' heart went out to her, but he knew he had to follow this through. Eva had already been thoroughly paddled, and it wouldn't be fair to let Danni off.

Sighing, he called to her, "Come here, Danni."

Danni's knees felt shaky as she turned and shuffled over to Sanders, trying to delay the inevitable. She could tell by the strict look on his face that she was going to be soundly spanked, and she was terrified. The incident with the switch had happened so fast, she had not had time to be scared. And the other spanking she had received from Sanders had only been with his hand. But this, this was different! Her chin trembling, she avoided looking at the wicked paddle Sanders had laid to his right on the bed.

She gulped as he pulled her to his right side and tugged her down over his lap.

"Wait, Sanders," she pleaded as she went down, desperately trying to resist.

"No waiting, Danni. Let's get this over with."

Panic began to assail her, and Danni fought wildly.

"Settle down, Danni," ground out Sanders, "or I will add to your spanking."

Danni ceased struggling, immediately, and looked back at Sanders, her eyes wide and frightened.

He caressed her pink bottom and spoke quietly to her. "Danni, you know you have earned this spanking. You deliberately disobeyed me and put yourself and Eva in danger. You understand me?"

"Yes," whimpered Danni. "I won't ever do it again. Please don't spank me with that paddle, Sanders."

Her words tugged at his heart, but Sanders strengthened his resolve with the memory of the blood running down her face.

"No, Danni, I'm not letting you out of this, honey. After I've warmed you up sufficiently with a hand spanking, you will be given 20 hard swats with the paddle. A hard spanking like this will happen anytime you do something dangerous and foolish. I love you, and I don't want to lose you."

Finally resigned to her fate, Danni slumped over his thighs and tried to tell herself she could do this. The first slap of his hard palm caused her to gasp and jump, even though she had known it was coming.

She tried not to wiggle and squirm too much as his hand continued a steady rhythm of stinging slaps that elicited cries of pain and protest from her. Her bottom was burning, and the pain was increasing with each spank. Her bare feet beat a steady tattoo on the bed as she cried softly, knowing the worst was yet to come.

When Sanders stopped spanking, her heart jumped into her throat. She felt him shift her body so her legs hung between his and she felt his right leg drape over hers, effectively pinning her in place.

"No! I can't do this! Sanders...No!" The last no exploded in a screech as the first smack of the leather paddle bit into her buttocks.

SMACK! SMACK! SMACK!

"OWWWW..." wailed Danni helplessly, her body bucking against the fierce burning pain.

SMACK! SMACK! SMACK!

"AIEEE..." she squealed. Desperately she tried to put her arms back to stop the blistering cascade, but it was useless!

SMACK! SMACK! SMACK!

"Pleeeeeeeeeeeasee....!" She sobbed frantically.

Her bottom burned horribly, a mass of fiery pain as the paddle relentlessly tattooed its message, turning her bottom a deep red.

Eleven more times it fell on Danni's hapless rear as she screamed her sincere apologies and vowed never to disobey again. She felt incredibly miserable as she realized the worry she and Eva had put them through and the damages they had caused by her thoughtlessness.

Finally, it was over, and Sanders ran his hand over her flaming cheeks while Danni cried and cried.

A trifle worried about her, Sanders picked her up and cradled her shaking body in his lap.

"Sshh..." he soothed. "It's all over, honey, and you're forgiven. Don't worry about it anymore. I love you."

But Danni continued to sob brokenly until Sanders tipped her chin up and began to kiss her. "Stop crying now darling, it's all over," he murmured against her mouth. He knew he should probably put her back in the corner, but he didn't have the heart to do it. There would be time for that later when she was more used to being spanked. She was new to discipline and he didn't want to be a brute.

Danni looked at him through tear drenched eyes, her slender shoulders still shaking with hiccupping sobs.

He continued to caress her thighs in long sweeping strokes and plant little kisses on her lips and jaw line, until at last, she began to respond.

She wound her soft arms around his neck and buried her face in his shoulder as he moved her hair aside and lightly kissed her neck.

Sanders held her tightly, stroking and soothing until at last, her breathing began to slow and deepen and he realized she had cried herself to sleep. Gathering her up in his arms, he stood, turned, and laid her gently down on the bed.

That bottom would need some cream he decided, softly patting the heart shaped cheeks. But

it would wait until later. Right now, she was exhausted.

He pulled the afghan up from the foot of the bed and covered her to her waist, then walked out, closing the door behind him.

Chapter Fifteen

Eva woke to the delicious smell of hamburgers being grilled over the hibachi and she stretched and yawned. As she rolled onto her back, she remembered why she was in bed. Flipping to her side, she put her hand back and ran it over her naked posterior. She groaned as she remembered the 40 swats Dale had given her. She sat up and winced while her legs slid to the floor.

She grabbed some sweats and slipped into them, then padded out to find Danni. Dale was just coming to get her when she stepped out of the bedroom.

"Did you have a good nap, darling?" asked Dale solicitously.

"Yes, thank you! Is Danni awake yet?" She shivered as Dale ran his palm inside the back of her sweats. His body shielded her from Sanders, view, but she had no doubt he knew what Dale was doing.

"Still a bit warm huh?" teased Dale.

"Yes, and you know it!" accused Eva, laughing up at him.

"You deserved it," he said quietly. "I was very worried about you, Vee."

"I'm sorry," she whispered, burying her face in his shoulder. "I didn't mean to upset you."

"I know," he responded, pulling her in close to him. "I'm just glad you're all right. You're forgiven...just don't do anything so foolish again!"

"I won't!" Her promise was heartfelt, especially when he cupped her sore cheeks and lightly squeezed them.

"Danni's not awake yet, why don't you go check on her?"

"I was just headed there." Flashing him a smile, she swiftly crossed the room and let herself into the other bedroom.

Danni was already sitting up, grimacing as she leaned to one side and gingerly tested her bottom

flesh with her fingers. "You were right, Eva," she groaned. "That thing HURTS!"

"Tell me about it," responded Eva, wrinkling her pert nose and rubbing her own tender nates. "Forty swats with the beast and I'm mush!"

"Forty!" Danni was shocked. "I only got twenty, and I thought my butt was going to ignite!"

"Well, I'm sure Sanders went easy on you because it's your first time for something like that. But trust me, the more times you get spanked for the same kind of thing, the worse it gets each time until you are convinced, finally, that its not worth the consequences."

"So, that's why you've refused to go drinking with me for the past two years, huh?"

"You got it, hon," winked Eva. "Now that you are in the same boat as me, you'll understand when I say no. And pretty soon, given enough spankings, you'll stop asking me!" She gave Danni a smug grin.

"Well," huffed Danny indignantly. "I'll never stop doing as I please...about most things anyway," she hastily amended when Eva grinned sardonically at her.

Ignoring her friend, she rummaged around for some sweats, and then the girls followed the lovely cooking smells that were wafting in from the kitchen.

Sanders pulled out a couple of chairs from the table and indicated the girls to come sit. The girls couldn't help smiling when they saw the fluffy pillows that had been placed on the seats.

"That sure of yourself, huh?" teased Danni, looking at Sanders.

"If I wasn't successful, I'm sure Dale will be glad to lend me his paddle again," returned Sanders silkily. He looked her over carefully in spite of his warning tone and gave her a big hug and a wandering caress down her shapely rear.

"Even if you hadn't, I wouldn't admit it!"

"Smart girl," he murmured wickedly.

"Even though we won the race, we decided to cook for you girls after all," teased Dale, bringing the food to the table. "Seeing as how you had to be spanked and put to bed like naughty five year olds."

"Thank you, Daddy," smirked Eva back at her husband. "At least we got out of cooking."

Danni snickered behind her hand.

"I better be hearing some sincere "thank yous" young ladies, or someone may be getting another spanking and put to bed without supper!"

Sincere "thank yous" were immediately accorded the waiting men, and supper was served.

Much later, they all lounged around the massive fireplace toasting marshmallows and making somores.

"Oh, by the way, Danni," began Eva, "I almost forgot to tell you that Damien called."

"Oh?" responded Danni innocently licking chocolate off her fingers. "What about?"

"It seems he received a letter from the eye Institute in Michigan wanting to use his case as a test case and offering to do vision surgery, all expenses paid."

"How great for him," enthused Danni, blushing slightly. "And, is he going to do it?"

"He wasn't at first, but he is now. I guess Marnie finally got through to him, and he is putting his pride aside and going for it. The surgery is scheduled for next Friday, and they are flying out Tuesday morning." She looked closely at Danni. "You didn't happen to have anything to do with that did you?"

"Well, I'm glad Marnie finally got him to see sense," declared Danni, neatly sidestepping Eva's question. "He is one stubborn man." She propped herself up against Sanders as he lay on the thick floor rug, his arm bent to support his head in his palm.

Sanders studied her profile in the firelight, wondering if he would ever know all there was to know about Danni. Absentmindedly, he massaged

her shoulder where it lay against his ribcage as he listened to her talk.

"Maybe now they will be able to finally get married," said Danni, the satisfaction evident in her voice. She was happy to know her plan had worked, but she had no intention of letting anyone know she had anything to do with it until it was all over.

She just knew Damien would be able to see! The director had been very positive about the results after carefully studying Damien's case. And they had a top-notch surgeon who was looking forward to the challenge.

She stretched and yawned, then laid down spoon fashion against Sanders on the rug, easing the soreness in her bottom.

The four friends talked well into the night and finally, Eva and Dale said goodnight and left them lying in front of the dying fire.

"Tomorrow I have something I want to show you little snow bunny," rumbled Sanders softly. "Remember that lookout where you were on your snowmobile?"

How could she forget thought Danni as she nodded.

"From there, you will be able to see the property I am purchasing to build a ranch home." He ran his palm up and down her side, caressing her hip. "And I want you to help design the house with me. Would you like that?"

Danni rolled to her tummy so she could see Sanders, face. Her eyes were shining with excitement as she exclaimed softly. "Oh yes, I would love that. Are you planning on having horses?"

"Certainly, and whatever else you would like." He paused. "You will marry me won't you, Danni?" He gazed tenderly at her lovely face.

"Well, since you are officially asking me now," she teased delicately, "I will answer officially...yes." Then eyeing him impishly she asked, "Now, where's my ring?"

"Getting a bit sassy aren't we?" he murmured smoothly, running his hand gently over the sore swells of her bottom.

"I thought engagements were always accompanied by a ring," she protested laughing, but enjoying his ministrations. When he began to slide her sweats down below her buttocks, she got a little worried.

"Uh...Sanders, what are you doing?"

Reaching up behind his head to the coffee table, he opened the drawer and took out some cream. Squeezing a generous amount onto his palm, he returned his hand to her delightful derrière and began to massage it into the sore flesh.

"Taking care of a certain little tail that got blistered today," he chuckled in response. Again, he marveled at how perfect the sweep of her back and the perky globes were and he knew he would never tire of the view, or of spanking and massaging her. He hoped he didn't have to punish her too often, he hadn't enjoyed that, he mused. He knew she needed it though. She knew she needed it too, or she would never have been so compliant with him. She might not be willing to admit it just yet, but over time, he knew she would.

Sanders had never in his wildest dreams figured to meet someone like Danni. She was the perfect combination of fire and innocence and he burned for her. And to find a woman, who so readily accepted his authority and decision to spank her, had indeed been rare.

He recalled the last time he had spanked a woman. Nina had been a model and a major spoiled brat. She had gotten miffed at him because he refused to buy her the diamond necklace she had hinted at and ordered him out of her apartment. It had been the last straw in a series of petulant incidences between them and his patience had finally snapped. He had drug her over to a kitchen chair and forced her over his lap, flinging up her

skirt and yanking down the sexy French panties; then spanked her perky little butt.

She had fought and swore at him the whole time and then slapped him when he let her up, threatening to have him arrested for assault. He had laughed at her threats and then dug into his pocket and proffered the aforementioned diamond necklace.

She was instantly all smiles and forgiveness, but Sanders was tired of her. It had been worth the cost of the necklace though, just to paddle her once in her spoiled life. She had not engendered in him the desire to protect and guide that Danni did. None of the women he had dated before ever had. Although he hadn't spanked all of them, he certainly had a few. But there had always been something missing...until he met Danni.

She made him want to bury himself in her honeyed sweetness until he was totally satiated and he couldn't get enough of her. He loved everything about her he decided, running his palm possessively up and down the length of her back and buttocks. Especially these cute little perfect swells, he decided. They were his to spank as he pleased, and he pleased...often! Luckily for him, Danni appeared to love it too. She laid with her head on her hands, moaning softly as he caressed and played with her, his fingers delving into the telltale moisture between her upper thighs.

Groaning her name, he turned her over, then bent and sought the rosy lips she lifted to meet his. After a long drugging kiss, he slid the sweatshirt over her head, revealing her lack of anything to support her pert breasts. Her body gleamed in the firelight and he kissed and touched her pink nipples, the passion building between them until he stopped, breathing hard. "Honey, we have to stop, or I won't be able to in another minute."

Her eyes dark with passion she wound her arms around his neck and whispered, "We're getting married aren't we?"

Groaning again, Sanders quickly divested himself of his clothes and soon her aching nipples were pressing against his hard chest, their lips clinging and drinking from each other.

When he gently entered her, he felt the small barrier that blocked his path. Looking into her eyes, he drew back and then plunged forward quickly, taking her gasp of surprise and pain into his own mouth. Gently he slid forward until he was buried totally within her, absorbing her small cries against his lips as he waited for her to get used to the foreign feeling of being full of him.

Danni was gazing deep into Sanders passionate eyes when she felt him probing for entrance. She ached deeply within to feel him inside her and her pulse raced with excitement. When he thrust into her, she gasped in shock and pain. But the pain quickly receded and cries of pleasure and fulfillment began to rock her willing body and she moved her hips in an unconscious rhythm that came like second nature to her.

She needed...wanted...she didn't know what it was, but she wanted it. Resting on his elbows, Sanders deepened his kiss as he moved rhythmically against her, building her pleasure and trying to withhold his own for as long as possible. When she gasped and arched against him, her fingernails digging into his shoulders, he knew she was close and they rode the wind together, passion sweeping them on until at last they both lay panting and sliding down the other side of release, their bodies trembling and spent.

He rolled onto his side and gathered her in under his chin. "My little snow bunny," he murmured thickly against her hair. "The fox has caught you now, and you will never hop away again. You will always be mine!"

Hopping away was the last thing on Danni's mind as she snuggled into the fox. She was deliriously happy and sated. She never wanted this

moment to end. She was well and truly caught, and was indeed, a most willing prisoner.

Monday morning dawned clear and bright and the men got the snowmobiles warmed up and ready to go. Danni and Eva both groaned at the thought of riding all the way back to the lodge on their sore bottoms, but the men were unsympathetic.

"But Daaaaalllllee"...whined Eva, "it will be almost like getting spanked all over again!" She put her palms on her rear and rubbed gently, pouting at her husband the whole time.

"She's right, Sanders," added Danni petulantly, her fingers probing her own tender cheeks. "Its an hour and a half to the lodge!"

"You should have thought of that before you decided to take a shortcut, Vee," responded Dale cheerfully. "Even if nothing had happened, you would still have gotten spanked for taking that dangerous pass." He looked sternly at her then, and she flushed and looked at Danni.

"Well, I guess you girls could always borrow my cross country skis and ski back to the lodge," offered Sanders helpfully. "I have two pair here at the cabin." His eyes twinkled at the sullen girls, and he patted Danni's buttocks. "Maybe next time, you'll listen to me, little snow bunny."

"Humph," replied Danni, scowling up at him. "No thank you. It would take forever to ski there. I'll just get a pillow instead." Nose in the air, she returned to the cabin in search of a pillow she could sit on.

"I'm with Danni," huffed Eva, following her friend into the cabin.

Dale chuckled as the girls stalked up the stairs. "Think they will ever learn to behave themselves, Sanders?"

"I doubt it," answered Sanders wickedly. "And just wait until Nita, my sister in law gets here. Talk about a terrible trio!"

"She keeps Hagen hopping huh?"

"Does she ever! Got a mouth like a buzz saw and a temper to match," chuckled Sanders.

"Great, just great," moaned Dale. "That's all they need, a little more encouragement."

"Maybe we should take their pillows," supplied Sanders helpfully. "It might send the message home a little better."

"Oh, I think they will have enough trouble being comfortable, even with the pillows."

It turned out Dale was right. The girls complained so much that the men had to stop three times before they finally got back to the lodge. The last stop was at the lookout where Sanders had used the switch on Danni the first time.

"Oh geez," grumbled Danni, swinging off the snowmobile and massaging her aching buttocks. "That pillow isn't helping a whole lot Sanders," she complained.

"It's not?" responded Sanders, feigning surprise. "Gee, I'm sorry, honey. Guess you'll just have to obey the next time I tell you something huh?"

"I think you are enjoying this," she accused, glaring at him.

"Here, let me help you," he said solicitously. He began rubbing and caressing her pert bottom, loving the feel of it. She sighed and leaned into him, her head on his chest. It did feel good, and she didn't even care that Eva and Dale might be watching. She didn't want him to stop. Had she cared to look, she would have realized that Dale was doing the same for Eva.

With a final pat on her heart shaped cheeks, he chuckled and steered her to the lookout. There he pointed out the property that he had purchased, and Danni leaned back into him, his arms around her middle.

"It's beautiful!" Her eyes were shining as she turned her head and looked up at him. "It really is, Sanders, it's gorgeous. I love it! I can't wait to start planning the ranch house."

"Does this mean what I think it does?" asked Eva, overhearing her words.

"Are you two engaged?" added Dale.

Danni blushed. "Actually, Sanders did ask me to marry him last night...and I accepted. But, since it didn't come with a ring, it's not official," she teased him, laughing up into his face.

"I can always take away that pillow, miss brat," he warned.

"No no...I'm just kidding!" Her eyes twinkled with mischief as she withdrew her taunt.

"I'm so happy for you, Danni," Eva said excitedly, giving Danni a hug.

"Congratulations, both of you," Dale said heartily, shaking Sanders's hand and giving Danni a kiss on the cheek.

"Thank you," murmured Sanders, returning Dale's handshake and the hug from Eva. "We better get going, though, or we'll never make it back to the lodge before dark." He watched as Eva and Danni hugged.

"You're right there," answered Dale, chuckling. "Having to stop every five minutes makes for a long trip."

The men herded the protesting women back to the snowmobiles and the group continued on towards the lodge.

Sanders had just dropped Danni off at her condo and she was walking in the door when her phone rang.

Picking it up she said, "Hello?"

"Hi Danni!" came her mother's voice over the phone.

"Hello mother," replied Danni cautiously. Her mother never called unless she needed something or wanted to invite her to a stuffy boring dinner that she felt obligated to have for her only child. Come to think of it, she hadn't been to dinner in a month, so her mother's obligatory call was late.

Carolyn sensed the hesitancy in Danni's voice, and as usual, experienced the painful stab of regret that things weren't different between them. "I'd like for you to come to dinner tomorrow night if you can. Do you think you can make it?"

"I think so," responded Danni, "but do you have room for one more?" She hated to do this, but they had to know sooner or later. Of course, she would rather live her life without having to come in contact with John Oaks, but she knew that would never fly. Besides, she really didn't have anything against her mother; it was just too late for her to play the mother role at this late date in the game.

"Oh?" queried her mother. "Do you have someone you'd like to bring?"

"Actually...yes. I would like you to meet him, mother. His name is Sanders Linson." She didn't tell her mother they were engaged because she was afraid she would start planning the wedding immediately and a small dinner would turn into a huge wedding announcement and Danni had no taste for that. Her and Sanders could tell them both together tomorrow night.

"Oh, you mean the man who bought the ski lodge?"

"Yes, you've heard of him?" questioned Danni, suspicious immediately.

"Your father has mentioned him darling. He told me the ski lodge had been sold and who bought it of course."

Danni squelched the small thread of doubt that crept into her mind. Her father never discussed business with her mother. He had told her that little jewel years ago. He had said women were meant to be decorative, but not in the boardroom.

Of course, that could have changed. She had been gone from home for a long time, but somehow she doubted it. She shrugged her slender shoulders. Oh well, she trusted Sanders. If he said they were not in business together, then she believed him.

"What time tomorrow night, mother?"

"Make it 6:00pm for cocktails darling, and of course, dress clothes. We'll see you both then!" her mother cheerfully rang off, leaving Danni staring at the phone.

A knock sounded on the door and Sanders strode in. Seeing the phone in her hand, he asked, "Who was that?"

Danni replaced the phone on the hook. "It was my mother," she replied thoughtfully. "She called to invite me to dinner tomorrow night, and I asked if I could bring you. Is that okay with you?"

"Sure, honey, but why so worried?" He inspected her face carefully.

"When I told her who you were, she already knew you."

"And there's something wrong with that?" Sanders frowned, beginning to get a bit uneasy. He had that "something didn't feel right" feeling again.

"Mother never knows what's going on in the business. My father made it a point to leave her out of those dealings from the very beginning. It's odd, but I suppose not terribly unusual." She frowned not wanting to let her mind go down the path it was wandering.

Sanders wondered for a moment if he shouldn't just tell Danni what he was doing, but then decided no. Tomorrow night would be a good time to surprise her. A quiet family dinner was just the right setting to inform the man he was going under. And, Danni would be there to enjoy it. She could finally feel avenged for the pain and suffering her heel of a father had put her through and for the neglect they had both accorded their only child. And he and Hagen would at last have avenged their father and mother.

Sanders felt somewhat disgruntled, though. The revenge didn't seem as sweet as it once had. He wondered if Danni had been honest in not caring if her mother got hurt financially in the process. Shaking off his doubts, he hugged Danni and gave her a kiss.

"I have business to take care of, miss brat, so I'm going to leave you for awhile. Do you want to go to the airport to pick up Hagen and his family with me?"

"Of course, I'd love too," responded Danni with enthusiasm. She wanted to meet Nita; the red headed spitfire Sanders had told her about. She was pretty sure they would get along too.

She wound her arms around Sanders' neck and leaned into him, enjoying the feel of him against her body. He was already responding, and she teasingly ground her hips against his rising erection.

Sanders responded with a growl, and his lips swooped down to claim hers again in a searing kiss. Her nipples hardened, and she moaned in return as his hands swept down her back and over her bottom, cupping the still tender cheeks through her ski pants.

With a hoarse groan, he gently lifted her up and against him and started walking towards the bedroom, "I think I can spare some time before I have to leave," he said, his voice heavy with passion.

"I hope so," she replied gasping in delight and hanging on for all she was worth. "I *really* hope so!"

Sanders walked inside the bedroom and kicked the door shut with his foot. They quickly divested themselves of their clothing and Sanders turned Danni around, leaning her over the bed. She was already hot and wet and gasping as he ran his fingers down the moist slit feeling for the tender bud he knew was waiting there. With a groan, he held her by her hips and gently slid into her, until he was fully home. He wanted to thrust in quickly, but he was afraid she might be sore from last night and so wanted to be gentle with her. There would be other times for a fast hard ride. Reaching around to massage her clit with his fingers, he rode her gently, feeling her body tense as she arched her back and moaned in delight.

When the spasms shook her body, he allowed himself a few hard thrusts and he joined her groaning at the sweet shuddering release that held them both in its grip.

Collapsing on the bed, he pulled her onto his chest, his hands rubbing up and down her back and roaming over the swells of her rear, massaging, rubbing, and loving her.

"I love you, Danni," he whispered in her delicate ear.

"I love you too," she whispered back, her eyes shining as she thoroughly enjoyed his ministrations.

It was much later when Sanders finally left, but when he did, it was with a very satisfied male smile on his face.

Chapter Sixteen

"Oh, Sanders, this is beautiful," exclaimed Danni, her eyes shining as she admired the ring on her left finger once again.

Sanders smiled at her indulgently. They had picked out her ring earlier that day, and Sanders had loved it the minute he saw it. So had Danni. It was a single diamond, with a wraparound on one side that sported two baguette rubies. The wedding band would be a simple wrap round to the other side with the two additional rubies, making a total of 4 rubies, with the quarter carat diamond in the center.

Fire and ice, Sanders had thought as soon as he had seen it. It was perfect for his snow bunny. As Danni admired the ring, she thought of Marnie again.

They had run by Damien's place and went with him and Marnie to the airport to see them off to Michigan.

"I just know you had something to do with this, Danni," Damien had scowled. "And if I find out for sure, I'm going to spank you myself! After I get my eyesight back, of course."

"But, Damien," she had protested. "Even if I did, you should be thanking me when you are able to see, not paddling me!"

He had given her a big bear hug then and whispered in her ear, "Whether you did or not, thank you, Danni Oaks, you are a truly wonderful friend."

The girls had walked to the airport snack shop for a soda while the men had talked, and Danni had asked Marnie how she had gotten Damien to change his mind.

Marnie had blushed and told her what happened. Danni had just laughed and told her to join the spanked wives club.

"Well, I'm so happy for you guys, Marnie, I just know the surgery will work. Let me know when the wedding is," she had insisted.

"You too," responded Marnie.

Sanders had liked Damien and Marnie right away. Danni had introduced them and after a few minutes of conversation, he could see why Danni wanted so badly to help them. If she really did have anything to do with it, he would be congratulating her.

Damien had impressed him with his knowledge of the world and his ability to converse well on any subject. It has been a delightful couple of hours they had spent in his and Marnie's company, and he had no doubt that Damien would be a successful writer.

They had waved them off with reminders to call as soon as they knew how the surgery went.

Now they were on their way to Danni's parent's home for dinner, this being the appointed date. Sanders remembered Hagen's words yesterday, and he was a bit uneasy. He had everything in place; the funds had been transferred, making him a third partner in OakHedges. He was in the perfect position to bring the hammer down, and he was looking forward to surprising Danni with it.

"I just hope it doesn't blow up in your face, Sanders," Hagen had replied, a frown furrowing his brow. "It's one thing to be a factor in failed business enterprises, but quite another to bring your enemy down face to face. Especially in his own home in front of his wife and daughter."

"You don't understand, Hagen," Sanders had argued. "Danni will enjoy this." He refused to acknowledge the twinge of doubt he felt at the back of his mind. "And so will I, on both our behalves, plus yours!"

"It's your show, Sanders," Hagen had returned quietly. "I just hope it goes the way you want it to."

"I can't wait to show it to Nita," caroled Danni. She and Sanders had picked up his brother Hagen

and his family, and Danni had loved them all, immediately. Hagen was an older version of Sanders, and Nita was every bit the spitfire Sander's had predicted. Singen and Monique were delightful, seemingly well-adjusted children, and she looked forward to getting to know all of them.

Danni's words brought him back to the present. "You like her huh?" teased Sanders.

"What's not to like," returned Danni impishly.

"That's only because she's just like you!"

"She is my kind of girl," responded Danni smugly.

"Yes, and I foresee just as many trips over my knee for you as Nita has had over Hagen's."

"Humph...men...you are all a major pain in the butt, one way or another," snorted Danni disdainfully.

"Careful, Miss Brat, or I shall have to stop and make sure you are "in the pink" again before we get to your parents home!" Sanders half hoped she would push it, she looked so delightful with a bare bottom and he loved swatting it until it was nicely "pinked."

He chuckled at her outraged expression. He was pretty sure she loved it too, for all her protestations.

"You wouldn't dare!" scoffed Danni, pretty sure he wouldn't in the car. "Not in the car anyway."

"No?" replied Sanders silkily. Putting on his blinker, he turned into the parking lot behind the capitol.

"Sanders! You can't, we are in a public place!"

"The lot is mostly deserted because it's evening now, honey," Sanders asserted calmly. "There is no one to see or care." Putting the car into park and scooting to the middle of the bench front seat, he patted his thigh invitingly, his eyes full of devilment.

Danni looked down her nose at the proffered thigh like it was the nearest thing she had seen to a slug under a rock all day. "As if..." she said haughtily.

"You made me stop, little snow bunny, now you get to take the consequences."

"In your dreams," she replied a bit snidely, looking around her uneasily.

"This is not a choice, miss brat. Over my lap...now!" This last order was issued quietly, but with no less authority, and Danni's insides flipped like jello. Was he serious or playing?

"I don't THINK so, Sanders," she returned, some of the hauteur being replaced with a bit of uncertainty. She wasn't taking orders, not even in play.

Sanders looked at her sternly this time. "I'm going to count to three, Danni, if you aren't coming over my lap by the time I'm at three, you are going to be sitting uncomfortably at dinner tonight."

Danni stared at him, trying to ascertain his real mood, but the playfulness had been replaced with a steady piercing gaze.

"One!"

Danni's eyes opened wide in alarm. He certainly sounded serious. But, she hadn't done anything to merit this treatment! This was *very* unfair!

When Danni didn't respond, Sanders counted again, "Two!" His blues eyes gazed firmly into her uncertain ones. At his second count, her lip quivered into a pout, and she reluctantly began to lean over his thighs, an aggravating huff coming from her lips.

When that count of two had come, Danni lost the battle with pride. She may not have done anything, but the thought of squirming on her mother's hard dining chairs was a not very inviting one. If there was any chance Sanders was serious, then she better play it safe.

Sanders smiled as he watched her tug of war with herself. She hated like hell to give in, but discretion being the better part of valor, she was smart enough to know when she couldn't win. He helped her lay over his lap, positioning her with her toes still touching the floorboard.

Danni shivered as she felt her skirt being pulled up and her panty scraps being tugged down between her garters. The air felt cool on her bare cheeks and she was glad for the semi darkness of the car interior in case anyone should drive close enough to see anything at all. She felt Sanders' palm caress her buttocks, and she quivered in anticipation.

I will never grow tired of this view, he thought once again, stroking the pale globes that lay so enticingly over his thigh. He lifted his arm. "It's a good thing you decided to obey, miss brat," he remarked, bring his hand down with a resounding...SWAT!

"Oh!" squealed Danni, protesting. "That hurt, Sanders!" She pouted back at him.

"It was supposed to," he replied with another...SWAT!...to the other cheek. He loved the way her pert bottom bounced back and the red handprint immediately began to appear on the creamy flesh. "You didn't obey me, immediately, you made me have to count you down."

SWAT! SWAT! SWAT! His hand fell three more times in quick succession.

"Ouch!... Oh...OWWW!!...*Sanders!*" Protested Danni.

"Now then, when I tell you to get over my lap, are you going to obey?" he paused to massage her stinging bottom.

"Yes...yes!" she gasped. Those hard swats had burned into her tender flesh, and the tears swam in her eyes.

"Right answer," returned Sanders, satisfied. He then peppered her bottom with several lighter spansks, which left her squirming, but not protesting. He paused to survey his handiwork. Yep, nice and pink he grinned. With 5 red outlines from the harder spansks, his reminders in obedience.

He gently brought her lacy panties back into place, reluctant to hide the gorgeous view, but they could take this up later.

Danni laid still, her head on her hands, savoring the feel of her dress being smoothed back into place over her nicely warmed bottom. She was quite content to stay where she was for the moment. She sighed.

Suddenly, there was a tap on the window. She jumped in spite of herself and looked up. The windows were a bit steamy, but she could make out the outline of a figure with a joystick in its hand. "Oh god," she thought. "Not a policeman!" She groaned and hid her face in her hands as Sanders leaned over and pushed the down button for the window.

"Yes, officer?" replied Sanders smoothly, his palm resting on Danni's skirted bottom.

"Everything all right here, folks?" asked the uniformed officer, peering into the car. He chuckled when he saw the position Danni was in. "I see," he nodded to Sander's knowingly.

Sanders returned his grin with one of his own. "We're just having a little talk officer."

"I understand," he smiled encouragingly. "They are necessary once in a while aren't they?" He touched his fingers to his cap and winked at Sanders. "Sometimes, we get the kids up here wanting to look at the view and...other things. It's my job to see that they move along. You two take care, now." Whistling cheerfully, he continued his rounds of the parking lot.

"Oh gawwwddd..." groaned Danni, humiliated beyond belief. "I can't believe you did this to me, Sanders." There was a thread of laughter in her voice, in spite of her embarrassment.

Sanders patted her rear with enjoyment. "Anytime, honey, anytime. But, you better get up now. We do have a dinner engagement you know," he said solicitously.

That got her moving and she sat up indignantly. She couldn't help laughing at the satisfied male face that smiled into hers, though. "Oh, you!" she

protested, leaning up to give him a kiss. "You are so bad!"

"And, you love it!" he replied, smooching her quickly and scooting behind the driver's wheel again.

She really did, she reflected, even though she wouldn't give him the satisfaction of an agreement.

Fifteen minutes later, they pulled up in front of her parents' home. Showtime, he thought, as they rang the doorbell.

Carolyn Oaks was a well-kept woman. A lot like her daughter, she was a walking testament to what money could do to preserve youth. Her hair was cut in a short stylish fashion of course, denoting her age, but it was the same color as Danni's, as were her light blue eyes.

She had heard the doorbell ring and eagerly waited for Armand to show her guests into the family room. When Danni rounded the corner, she was struck again with a pang of regret at the years that had been lost to her.

"Danni!" She walked forward to greet her, taking her hands and giving her the perfunctory kiss on each cheek that never really met the flesh. "So wonderful to see you, darling." Her fingers felt the ring on Danni's hand, and she immediately looked down in curiosity.

"What's this darling?" she asked, her voice filled with excitement as she saw the grin on Sanders' face.

Danni glanced back at Sanders.

"Danni has done me the honor of agreeing to marry me," replied Sanders smoothly, placing his arm around her waist. "It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Sanders Linson."

"Oh no, the pleasure is all mine," assured Carolyn, hugging Danni and shaking Sanders' hand. "This is wonderful!"

John Oaks came forward then, his big voice booming. "This is indeed wonderful news my boy!" He pumped Sanders' hand and slapped him on the

back. Then, he kissed Danni on the cheek and said, "Congratulations sweetheart, you couldn't have made a better choice."

Danni stiffened at his touch, but she replied coolly, "Thank you, Father." Then she turned to her mother to show her the ring that Carolyn was demanding to see.

Sanders watched the exchanges between Danni and her parents, trying to assess her mood. She was so cold with her father, and guarded with her mother.

"May I offer my congratulations to the newly engaged couple as well?" interrupted a smooth voice from behind the bar. "If you'll tell me what you want to drink, we'll have a toast."

Danni's head jerked around to stared at her Uncle Byron, revulsion on her face. She hadn't known he was going to be here, or she wouldn't have come. She had avoided meeting or speaking with him since that incident in her father's study several years ago.

"What's he doing here?" she hissed at John Oaks, fire in her eyes.

She felt Sanders arm tighten around her waist and she glanced up to see the warning in his eyes. "Control your temper, honey," he murmured softly into her ear. "This will all be over with shortly."

Carolyn was puzzled. She wondered why Danni hated Byron so much. No one had ever said, and she was beginning to feel like a novice swimmer, trying to stay above dangerous currents that were all around her trying to suck her under. She wasn't too fond of her brother, herself, but she didn't actively hate him, she just didn't trust him. She knew he was a user and didn't have too many scruples when it came to getting what he wanted.

Byron overheard Danni's words to her father, and his teeth gleamed in a satisfied smile. "I wanted to congratulate you, of course," he responded silkily. "When Carolyn told me you were bringing Linson to dinner, I knew there had to be

something serious going on. You've never brought a man home before."

John Oaks sent him a warning glance. He didn't want Danni upset, not when there was so much to celebrate. Turning back to his daughter, he said, "I just thought it would be good to have the whole family here to congratulate you two, if not on marriage, then on the acquisition of Sanders as a third partner in OakHedges corporation. The fact that you two are getting married is a bonus in itself." His voice was filled with satisfaction as he positively beamed at the young couple.

Danni stared at her father's face, horrified at the words that had just come out of his mouth. There was a buzzing in her ears, and she felt like things were going black around the edges.

"Partner?" she croaked out the question, her mouth dry. She turned an accusing stare at Sanders; unable to believe she had heard correctly.

"Yes, darling," gushed her mother, "Sanders now owns one third of OakHedges Corporation, isn't that wonderful?"

Sanders watched her reaction warily. This wasn't quite how he had planned the evening, but since it was started, he might as well finish it. Danni had just better watch her temper, or she would answer to him later. He wasn't prepared for what happened next, though.

"You lied to me!" bit out Danni, her hand whipping up and slapping Sanders soundly across the face, tears coming to her eyes. "You told me you were not in business with my father, that you never would be! You are just as low and slimy as he and my Uncle." Her chest heaved with emotion as she spat out the accusations. She tore off the beautiful ring and threw it at him. "Keep it! I want NOTHING to do with any of you, EVER again! As far I'm concerned, you all deserve each other!"

"Danni!" gasped her mother, shocked at her daughter's reaction.

Danni turned to stalk stiffly from the room, but Sanders grabbed her arm and whirled her around. "This is NOT what you are thinking, Danni," he said evenly, his face bearing her handprint. And, I warned you to watch your blasted temper!"

"What the hell is wrong with you, Danni," ground out John Oaks, his face ashen at her reaction. "I know you don't respect me very much, but this is uncalled for!"

Danni whirled on him, the bitterness and torment she had been through for the last five years spilling over. "Uncalled for? You think this is uncalled for? How about David Nixon, my *dear sweet father*," she emphasized the adjectives as snidely as possible, "was he called for?" She jerked her arm out of Sander's grasp and advanced on her father. If he wanted to fight, then what the hell, Danni Oaks was ready to do battle! Maybe she should have had this showdown a long time ago instead of hiding in her pain and fear.

John looked at her skeptically. "What does he have to do with anything? You didn't want to marry him, so what? You didn't, and I never said a word about it, did I?"

"We both know why you didn't say anything about it!" Danni yelled. "Admit it...*father*," she sneered.

Sanders was furiously nursing his cheek. Danni had really walloped him, but there seemed to be something more going on here.

Her father was getting angry too, his face flushing and turning red. "I didn't say anything about it because you took off and left home in a snit because I had the audacity to want you to marry well. All I've ever really wanted was for you to be secure after I'm gone, but you won't give me a damn break!" he shouted back at her in frustration.

"Spare me the loving father routine! You know damn well what you did! You sent that sniveling man into my bedroom in the middle of the night to "get a little on account" and the bastard almost

assaulted me!" Danni was beyond caring who heard her by this time as she spit the words in his face, her pain and fury from the incident spilling over, finally, as she lashed at the man responsible. "I lived in hell for 5 years...5 frickin years because I thought he had! And, it was all for the sake of a frickin business deal! So, don't you DARE act like you don't know what's going on!"

"Oh my god," gasped Carolyn, her face going stark white as she stared at her husband.

Sanders' stomach recoiled in revulsion as he too stared at John Oaks. He hadn't thought the man could get any lower!

"What in God's name are you talking about?" roared John hoarsely, his hand shaking as he ran it through his salt and pepper hair. "I never sent Nixon anywhere. What kind of a father do you think I am? You are my *daughter* Danni, I would *never* do such a thing to you!" His face was turning ashen as he began to realize the depth of hatred Danni had for him.

"I don't believe you. He *told* me you sent him...he..." Danni shook her head, her father's reaction catching her off guard. She tried to clear her thoughts and remember back to the chaotic events of that awful night. They had all been there, her father, David's father, David...and...Uncle Byron! She jerked around to stare at Byron behind the drink cabinet. "He didn't actually say your name...he just said...*he* sent me. Naturally, I assumed it was you." She looked at her father uncertainly. Are you saying you didn't?" She rasped painfully.

Danni didn't know what to feel at that moment. She had never questioned that her father had told David to come to her. But what if he hadn't? And if he hadn't, then what had David been talking about?

Sanders appraised the beet red flush on Byron's face. His quick mind picked up the clues. It made sense. Byron had been the one who had assaulted Danni inappropriately when she was sixteen; it stood to reason he could have pulled something like

this quite easily. Glancing back at John's face, he could see he was figuring it out very quickly as well.

John strode over to Byron and grabbed him by the front of the shirt. "You did this, didn't you?" He shook Byron, and the man's head flopped back. "I never could figure out why Danni just up and left, but now it's beginning to make sense. I should never have trusted you, Byron. I gave you a second chance and look what you did! I want you out of this house...and out of the company!"

Carolyn clutched her throat, her face white. "My God, Byron, how could you?"

Byron broke John's hold on his shirt and snapped out furiously, "I'm not admitting anything! You've wanted to get rid of me for years haven't you, John? But you never had the guts to do any of the hard stuff did you? John Oaks, business man extraordinaire," he continued sneering, "but if it hadn't been for me, this company would never have gotten to the status it is today. Now that you have a rich son in law on the horizon and the company back on its feet, you think you can kick me out, is that it? Well, you won't get away with it that easily."

Byron came from behind the bar and strode over to Danni. "Your father put in the contract that Linson gets his share of the company when he retires in return for *marrying* you. Just thought you might like to know that," he sneered, wanting to hurt Danni and her father.

One second later, Sanders' fist crashed into Byron's face, and he hit the floor with a groan. "It's time I added my two cents to this conversation," he replied calmly, rubbing his knuckles.

But, the damage had already been done. Danni couldn't take anymore right then, and she turned and headed for the door, the tears running down her face.

"Danni, please don't go," sobbed her mother, heartbroken at the events that were unfolding.

"Danni," called Sanders, not moving after her. "This is not over. Will you please stay and listen to me? I did NOT lie to you---please?"

Danni stopped, but did not turn. She fought with herself as she hugged her middle, the pain slicing through her like a knife.

"I'm asking you to trust me, Danni."

Danni trembled. She wanted to believe Sanders so badly, but how could she? What could he possibly say that would refute the fact that he had bought into the company? Even if her father hadn't sent David Nixon into her room, that didn't change the fact that Sanders had lied to her.

She thought of the past several days that they had spent together and the love they had shared. She knew she would never love anyone the way she did Sanders. What choice did she have? Slowly she turned to face him. Might as well settle this once and for all.

"All right," she replied quietly. She walked slowly to the divan, and sat down on the edge of it, her fists on her knees as she waited for his explanations. Might as well let him truly hang himself, and then there would never be any doubt.

Sanders ran his fingers through his hair and took a deep breath. He was very relieved and proud that she had chose to trust him. He knew it hadn't been easy.

"I intend to destroy OakHedges Corporation," he stated baldly. "I own all the public shares, under other names of course, and now an additional 25 percent. That gives me 49 percent, and while I may not own the controlling interest, that's not necessary, as you well know. I have all I need to bring the corporation down and you, *John Oaks*, to your knees." He watched, as John grew pale once again and staggered to the nearest chair.

Carolyn squeaked in shock and rushed to her husband's side, concerned at the gray pallor of his face. Turning to Sanders, she stared accusingly at

him. "Why would you want to destroy my husband?"

Danni stared at him, her eyes wide in her face. Whatever she had been expecting, that wasn't it.

Byron sat up on the floor, nursing his jaw. "I don't care what you think you can do, you won't get away with it," he growled. Byron didn't intend to lose all *he* had worked for. Not for John, and certainly not for Linson. He had wondered why that name was so familiar. He knew he had heard it somewhere before as soon as John had mentioned him, but he had never bothered to check it out.

"Why, Sanders?" pleaded Carolyn again. "Why would you want to destroy John?"

Danni was impatient to know the answer to that question as well. "Yes, why, Sanders?"

"Because he ruined my father," exclaimed Sanders bitterly, his eyes dark with scorn. "You just take what you want, Oaks, without thinking about who you destroy, don't you? You forced him out of his company in a hostile takeover, then stripped it of its assets and put it on the public auction block like leftover trash. My father was never the same, and he died less than two years later, broken and ill."

"That's a damn lie," shouted John, his face going red. He shook his fist at Sanders. "I have never sanctioned that kind of business dealing. I never had too!"

"I know differently," disagreed Sanders, "my brother and I both know the truth. And it's not just my father that OakHedges has ruined; it's others as well. But Hagen and I have been working behind the scenes over the years. We bought back the Borderland and restored it to its former glory in spite of you and managed to sour a few deals of yours through the years. Now, we are ready to finally destroy you the way you destroyed our father." Sanders' voice was as cold as his eyes as he surveyed the angry man before him.

"When I found out what you and he," he flicked his thumb back at Byron, who had come to his feet, "did to Danni, I decided to keep it to myself and surprise her when the time was right. Although, it looks like you weren't guilty of the worst part, thank god! But I think we all know who was!"

Sanders walked over to Danni and pulled her to her feet. "When you told me what happened to you, honey, I decided right then and there that I would go through with your father's offer. If ever a man deserved to be brought down, it's him."

John Oaks was perspiring heavily, his thoughts flying ninety miles an hour. "The Borderland? Wasn't that the little ski resort in Sweden, Byron?" He stared at Byron's flushed face, and Byron nodded uneasily. John's steely gaze swung back to Sanders.

"That resort was badly in the red, but we thought with a little investment, we could bring it up to par and make some money with it. We paid a nice price for it, and the owner retired. But, the place was further in the red than we realized after we took it over, and it became a white elephant, just like the Stardust, and we had to get rid of it."

"That's a damned lie!" gritted out Sanders. "The borderland was virtually stolen in that hostile takeover, then systematically stripped of its cash and assets! My father had a popular, viable business going, and you ruined him, deliberately, just for the cash to invest in your own corporation, and I've got the records to prove it!"

John's gaze swung thoughtfully to Byron. "You handled that deal, Byron, and handed me the report. There was no cash from the Borderland to invest in OakHedges, in fact, OakHedges funded some \$100,000.00 as I recall trying to get it on its feet." He got up and walked over to Byron. "What's going on here?" he asked hoarsely, his arms folded across his broad chest as he stared down his brother in law.

"Obviously, he's lying," spluttered Byron, edging back from the bigger man.

John shook his head. "I don't think so, Byron. There's been a couple of times when I should have questioned your business ethics, but I let it go because you were Carolyn's brother." His quick mind was rethinking other deals that had cost OakHedges money, and they all had Byron's name on them. "What have you been doing, Byron? Stashing money away in Swiss accounts? Using the corporation to secure your own future?"

"I had to do something, John," snarled Byron heatedly. "You were so dead set on getting a rich son in law that you couldn't think of anything else! You never even gave Hammond a chance!"

Danni started when Byron mentioned Hammond. He was John's son; her cousin and about as toady as you could get. He had always given Danni the creeps, just like his father.

"You were willing to give the company away to someone who only married into the family instead of thinking of me or my son! Even when she wouldn't have anything to do with it, you still whined on like a weak idiot, hoping to change her mind someday." He scornfully waved his hand in Danni's direction.

"You're pathetic! If it hadn't been for me, OakHedges would have went under years ago. You never could make the tough decisions, I always had to do it and pretend it was all above board while you kept your hands clean, even though you knew what was going on," he accused bitterly.

"That's enough!" roared John, two red spots appearing in his ashen cheeks. "I have never authorized the kind of tactics you appear to have pulled on the Borderland! And, if I knew for sure you had sent David Nixon into Danni's room, I'd choke the life out of you myself!" He pushed his face into Byron's, and Byron shrank back, finally intimidated for once in his life. "I want you out of OakHedges, immediately!"

"I won't be forced into giving up my shares of the corporation," snarled Byron, determined not to be outdone.

"Wait, Dad," inserted Danni, coming to stand beside her father. "With Sanders owning 49 percent and you owning 26, don't you have the power to force him out?" She didn't flinch when Byron stared evilly at her.

"Yes, he does, Danni," added Sanders, coming to join them. "If that's the way you choose to play it, then I'll back you up." He gazed into her blue eyes and took her hand. "I have a feeling if we delve into it, we can come up with quite a few charges against Byron here, like fraud and embezzlement to start with."

"You can't prove anything," blustered Byron, glaring at Sanders then.

John stared at his daughter. It looked like his fate was in her hands. Would she believe him? He stood quietly while she assessed him. Carolyn walked up and put her hand on his arm and he responded by wrapping it around her waist.

Finally, Danni smiled tentatively at him and then nodded to Sanders. "Yes, that's the way I want to play it." She smiled at her mother and Carolyn smiled back, her eyes misting with tears.

John turned to Byron then and spoke gruffly. "You have a choice, Byron, you can sell your shares to me at a fair price and opt out of the company, or Sanders and I can force you out. If you opt out, nothing else will be said or done. If you choose to fight us, we will not only force you out, but a full investigation will be done and charges will be brought against you for any unethical business practices, as well as fraud and embezzlement, should we find it. I think we both know we would, don't we?" His firm unwavering gaze had Byron flushing and dropping his eyes.

"Are you going to let them do this to me, Carolyn," he whined, glancing up at her. "You're my sister, you surely can't condone this treatment."

"You may be my brother, Byron," answered Carolyn harshly, "but I have never trusted you. To think that you could be the cause of the mistrust Danni has felt for John and me, makes me sick. I just hope you weren't detestable enough to have actually sent David into Danni's room." She stared unwaveringly at him, her contempt obvious on her pale face. "You are not welcome in my house anymore."

"To hell with you all then," snarled Byron, heading for the door. "Draw up the papers, and I'll sign them. Anything to get you off my back!" He went out, slamming the door behind him.

Chapter Seventeen

It was several hours later when Danni and Sanders walked into her apartment. They had spent the rest of the evening with Carolyn and John having dinner, talking business, and tentatively establishing a fragile peace between the four of them.

Danni had spent quite a bit of time alone with her mother, talking and laughing and finally getting to know one another as woman to woman, as well as mother to daughter. Carolyn wanted to plan the wedding for her, and Danni didn't have the heart to deny her. They didn't have a date set yet, it was still under discussion, but Sanders wanted it as soon as possible. Danni wanted to wait until Damien and Marnie could be there. And of course, Eva and Nita would have to be bridesmaids. Monique could be the flower girl, she was so darling, and she would be perfect. And Sangen would be the ring bearer. They would work it all out later they had decided.

Sanders and John had decided to do a full-scale investigation into the activities that Byron had been behind in the corporation. It was time to clean things up. Sanders was really impressed with John's business acumen and couldn't understand how he could have let Byron do the things he did. John agreed he had turned his head too often because he was Carolyn's bother, but no more. With Sanders' help, they would soon have OakHedges back in tiptop shape, and preserved for Danni's inheritance and his grandchildren. He heartily informed Sanders that he wanted several and expected them to hurry up and get married so they could get started! Sanders wisely did not tell him they had already started!

Morris jumped into Sanders' arms when he sat down on the couch. "What is it with this cat?" muttered Sanders, stroking the orange ball.

"He just likes you, darling," laughed Danni, her eyes twinkling.

"Well, I'd much rather hold you," returned Sanders dropping Morris on the floor. "By the way, we have a little matter to discuss." He reached into his pocket and pulled out the engagement ring Danni had flung into his face. He held it up for her to see.

Danni had the grace to blush, remembering how she had slapped him and thrown it in his face.

"Remember this?"

"Umm...yes I do," she answered warily, not reaching for it. She was not sure what he intended to do, so she stayed still and waited.

"Seems to me, I remember warning a certain little snow bunny to watch her temper, didn't I?"

"Uh...yes, I guess so," she muttered, squirming a bit.

"You guess so?" The eyebrow went up.

"I was under extreme stress, Sanders," Danni protested, her lips dropping into a pout. She had been, too, and she was still not totally relaxed. The muscles in her neck were stiff, and she had a slight headache.

Sanders noted her rubbing tiredly at her neck and the misty pout. She was exhausted and he knew it.

"But, if it helps any, I'm sorry I lost my temper and threw the ring in your face, okay?"

Sanders picked up her hand and slipped the ring back on it, then kissed her palm. "I know you are worn out, honey." He pulled her into his lap to cuddle and snuggle with her. "I want you to know, that I think you deserve a spanking for slapping me and throwing my ring. And I deserve a *sincere* apology, not a pouty tired one."

She opened her mouth to protest his words but he put his fingers on her lips to still her.

"I'm not going to spank you, Danni...until YOU are ready for me to." He gazed tenderly into her misty blue eyes. "You are still upset with all that happened and are feeling like you were justified in

your actions, so to spank you now would be unfair to you."

He dropped a kiss on her rosy lips. "I want you to come to the realization that you were wrong on your own and then come to me. But I warn you; this time it will involve my belt. And it will hurt. But, I won't be too hard on you, unless it happens again. Then, it will be worse. So, you think about it, and let me know when you are ready, okay?"

Danni nodded, then laid her head on his chest. It didn't seem fair. Sanders should give her a break. Right now, she was too tired to think about it. She yawned deeply, and her eyes began to close as his fingers caressed her neck, and his chest went up and down under her cheek in a soothing rhythm.

The sun peeked into Danni's window and danced across her face, stirring her awake. She was backed up against something solid and warm and as she came awake, she realized it was Sanders. She stretched and yawned deeply. The last thing she remembered was laying on Sanders chest and him massaging her neck.

Then, she remembered their conversation about losing her temper. Boy, was he making a mistake she grinned to herself. If he thought she would ever come and ask for a spanking, he was mistaken! She congratulated herself on getting out of that one!

Still, a small niggle of worry seemed to be down there somewhere among her feelings, and she wondered just a bit, only a tiny bit, if she might have been wrong? Nah, she decided. She had a right. She thought he had lied to her. That still didn't make it right, the little niggle replied.

Danni pictured two little sprites, one on each of her shoulders. One telling her she was right and the other telling her she was wrong. She giggled, and named them Sprick and Sprack. Oh, brother! She threw back the covers and got up to stalk to the bathroom. She would not even consider that she might have been wrong! She flipped the imaginary

sprite off her shoulder with her finger and giggled at herself.

She was still arguing with herself in the shower when she felt Sanders slip in behind her.

"Oh...you startled me," she gasped as his arms went around her wet slippery middle.

"Talking to yourself now, honey?" he murmured in her ear. He was grinning because he had heard her muttering and caught enough words to know what it was about. It was only a matter of time he thought smugly. But in time, she would come to him.

"Just thinking out loud," she returned impishly.

"About what?" He nuzzled her neck, kissing the creamy wet skin beneath her ear. He cupped her breasts in both his hands, his thumbs playing with the nipples.

"Nothing important," she tried to speak airily, but with the things his hands were doing to her, it came out as a squeak. She reached up for the bath sponge and poured a blob of shower gel on it, then lathered it up, until suds were foaming from it.

Sanders took the sponge and began to soap her tummy, then moved up and down her front, sensually sliding the sponge over every delicious curve. Then he started on her backside. From the back of her neck to her feet, he slid the sponge up and down and around, bathing every inch of her, thoroughly.

Danni closed her eyes and moaned with pleasure. The slight roughness of the sponge left her skin tingling everywhere he went...and he went everywhere! Finally, he turned her to him and ran his hands up and down her body, rinsing the soap under the spray of the shower.

"Put your arms around my neck," he ordered gruffly, his voice rough with passion. Danni obeyed, and he slipped his hands under her naked buttocks and lifted her gently up to impale her on the hard length of his manhood. He groaned with pleasure as

her moist sheath tightly encompassed him almost sending him over the edge, immediately.

He held back for her sake until Danni was writhing against him, her hips thrusting and her breath coming in short pants. He began a steady rhythm then that soon had them both groaning. Danni peaked with a keening squeal, Sanders right behind her with a heartfelt groan of pure pleasure. He let her slide down his body, then, and they leaned into each other, limp and sated.

"I don't think I'll ever get enough of you, honey," he said huskily, kissing the tip of her nose. "But we better make that wedding pretty soon." He caressed her soft abdomen. We could already be getting ready for Sanders Jr. down there."

"What about a little girl?" she asked, chuckling at his actions. "Don't you like girls?"

He quirked his eyebrow. "Of course, I *love* girls," he replied wickedly. "Especially, this girl." He reached around and patted her wet cheeks and squeezed them. "And, I don't care what our first one is, I'll take either one."

"Well, we won't be having one just yet, darling," she added smugly. "I went to the Doctor and got birth control pills to take until we are ready to start our family."

"I'm impressed, honey, that was a good thing to do. I'm glad you thought of it."

"Thank you!"

"Although, I wish you had discussed it with me first."

"Discussed it with you?"

"Yes, what if there are side effects?"

"Side effects?"

"Yes, side effects! You know, things that could hurt you?"

"You don't think I'm smart enough to check that out?"

"Well, yes, but I would like to know these things too!"

"Sanders, I can make some decisions on my own you know!"

"Well, when they concern your heath, they concern me too!"

"You are an exasperating bossy man!"

"And, don't you forget it!"

They looked at each other and burst out laughing. Sanders turned her around and swatted her firmly on her wet bottom, three times on each cheek.

"Ow ow ow..." yelled Danni, dancing in the tub.

"Stop that, Sanders!"

"That's just so you remember who is boss," he said smugly. "Now get your little butt out of the shower." He emphasized his demand with two more sharp smacks as she stepped out.

She grabbed her cheeks and turned to glare at him, rubbing furiously. Backing away, she grabbed her towel and wrapped it around her, then stalked out of the bathroom, grinning to herself as she went. He was soooooo exasperating!

Now that she was not with Sanders, Sprick and Sprack were back, sitting on her shoulder and arguing with each other again. As Danni rummaged around for something to wear, she muttered to herself again, trying without success, to assure herself she had done no wrong. She finally settled on some sweats and a t-shirt to fix breakfast in. They could decide what to do with the rest of the day from there.

She pattered around in the kitchen, Sprick and Sprack still going strong until she was ready to murder them both! Sanders was just walking in when the biscuits came out of the oven.

"What do you want to do today, honey?" he asked, munching on one of the hot biscuits he nabbed from the pan.

"Uh...I'm not sure," she replied, a little disgruntled. "Let me think about it." She stalked off into the bedroom and flopped down on the bed. There was so much to do, the wedding to be

planned, Nita and the kids to take shopping, Eva and her mother to talk to...etc etc. But, she couldn't seem to concentrate.

She sighed and turned to her side. Every time she closed her eyes, she saw the red outline of her hand on Sanders' face. Fiiiiine, she told herself. Obviously, she was not going to get any peace until she cleared this up. She really did feel bad inside that she had hurt him like that and thrown the symbol of their love at him. It really wasn't right for her to hit him and not expect him to do anything about it. Her mother had taught her that it was just as wrong for girls to hit boys as it was for boys to hit girls. But then, mother had never told her that big girls got spanked too!

Sanders peeked into the bedroom and grinned. Yep, she had all the classic symptoms. Guilt was eating at her. Sneaking away to the living room, he sat down, and Morris hopped into his lap as usual. "So, how long do you think she'll take, Morris?"

Morris blinked up at him as if to say, "Oh, not too much longer, I imagine. Just be patient."

Danni glanced over at the bookshelf and spied the white rabbit Sanders had sent right after their first date. She got up and went over to pick it up. That ridiculous red tail looked so cute on it. It didn't feel cute, though, when it was her real tail that was getting reddened! Her buttocks clenched at the thought of a belt being laid across them...hard! She winced, and then sighed.

Dragging her feet, she decided she might as well get this over with. Obviously, she was never going to get away from Sprick and Sprack until she did. And, she couldn't plan anything else until this was resolved.

Sanders heard her coming, although he never took his eyes off the television.

"Sanders?" She called softly to him.

"Yes, Danni?"

"Would you please turn around?"

Sanders turned off the TV, stood up, and turned around.

Danni was standing there behind the couch, her hands behind her back, biting her lip.

"I...I want you to know that I was wrong to hit you," she whispered softly, her eyes getting misty. "And, I shouldn't have thrown the ring, either." She gazed pleadingly at him, but he didn't answer. He just stood there and gave her an encouraging smile.

"I...I feel really bad, and I can't seem to think about anything else." She walked slowly up to the back of the sofa. Holding his gaze, she slipped her palms inside the waistband of her sweats and gradually slid them down until they were around her knees. Then she leaned over the couch, resting her palms on the seat cushion below her. "W..would you spank me, please?" she ground out between gritted teeth.

Sanders was pleased and humbled at the depth of submission Danni was according him. He quickly walked around to her left side and placed his hand on the small of her back.

"Yes, I will, honey," he spoke softly to her and caressed her bottom with his other hand. She hadn't put on any panties, and he wondered if it had been intentional or unconsciously knowing what she would be doing.

Danni held her breath when she felt his hand on her rear. It had been the hardest thing she had ever done, to ask for this spanking. But she felt better, already...until the first swats came!

He began to land firm spanks against her tender buttocks, spaced and steady as she gasped and squealed. As the heat and burning began to build up, she began to kick her feet up and wiggle. She tried hard to stay in place and take her punishment like a big girl, but the swats were becoming more painful.

"Sanderssss..." she finally wailed, ending in a sob. He lectured her as he spanked, making her feel truly about two inches high. She was sniffing as she

listened and squirmed, trying to get her rear out of the range of the burning swats, but nothing worked.

Finally, he did stop, and she grabbed her cheeks with both hands, tears in her eyes and rubbing furiously.

"Stay there, Danni," came the firm order.

She did, but looked tearfully back at him to see what he was doing. When she saw him unbuckling his belt, her heart sank! She had forgotten about that part! "Nooo...Sanders," she whimpered, the tears trickling down her cheeks. Her bum was already on fire and she couldn't begin to imagine how much his belt was going to hurt!

"I'm in charge now, honey," he responded firmly, but not unsympathetically. "And, I did warn you what would happen." He pulled the belt out of the loops and folded it over.

"I forgot about the belt," she pleaded.

"Hopefully, you won't forget about it the next time you are tempted to slap me, or anyone else." Lifting his arm, he brought it down on her right cheek.

WHAAAAAP!

"OUCH!" she yelped, her back arching as the terrible burning sensation followed the stroke.

WHAAAP! The belt bit into her left cheek.

"OHHH!" She cried out again, beginning to sob in earnest.

Sanders moved to the side and brought the belt down across both buttocks at the same time. WHAAAP!

"OWWWWW" sobbed Danni as she began to dance around, trying to evade the fiery sting.

WHAAAP! The next one caught her across her lower buttocks, leaving a burning welt in her tender skin.

"AIIIEEE!" She screeched this time, standing up and clutching her aching rear. "Oh, god, Sanders, I can't take anymore!"

"You have six more to go, honey," he replied sternly. But he rubbed her bottom for her, easing some of the sting.

"I can't do it," she sobbed. "I can't!"

Sanders hesitated. She really had been through a lot; maybe he was being too hard on her. He hadn't really thought 10 would be all that many, but he knew they really did hurt.

On the other hand, if he let her off, she would think she could just cry hard, and he would always let it go. It wouldn't do either of them any good to set a weak precedent.

Danni held her breath, praying Sanders would relent. She had really had no idea that a belt could hurt like this. She should have known after that paddle though, that implements were 10 times worse than his hand!

"Yes, you can, honey, bend back over the couch."

Her heart sank! And, she got angry. How could he be such a brute? "I don't want to, Sanders," she lashed out at him. "How can you be so mean?" She just had to get through to him...she just had to!

"Bend over now, Danni, or I will add five more and hold you down!"

Danni stared at him, the tears rolling down her face. He was serious! Reluctantly, she bent back over the couch and gritted her teeth.

WHAAAP! WHAAAP! Two more followed in quick succession across both buttocks, leaving fire and pain in their wake.

Danni jumped and cried out, stamping her feet against the floor. She put her hands back and refused to move them.

"Move your hands, Danni," ordered Sanders, quietly.

She sobbed hard, but she finally obeyed him.

It was time to end this, Sanders decided. He moved to her left side and placed his hand on the small of her back to hold her in place. Then, he quickly delivered the last four stokes, two on her

cheeks and two on her sit spot. They weren't as hard as the others, but they were painful, nonetheless.

Danni collapsed over the couch, crying her heart out. "I'm so sorry, Sanders," she cried. "I'm so sorry," and she really meant it.

Sanders lifted her up and pulled her into his arms. "I know, honey," he replied, tenderly. "Its all right, I love you and you're forgiven."

He picked her up in his arms and took her into the bedroom, laying her gently on the bed on her tummy. He took the cream out the nightstand drawer and began to rub it into her burning buttocks and upper thighs.

Danni sobbed softly, enjoying the feel of the cool soothing lotion on her flaming backside. She really did feel so much better, in spite of the pain in her bottom. But, she was intensely glad it was over. She was quite sure she would never be slapping Sanders again, and part of her respected him because he had not let her out of her punishment.

As she lay there absorbing his ministrations, she knew she loved this man with all her heart and soul. He stirred a fire in her heart that matched the one he created in her bottom, and she knew it would always be so. She sighed contentedly, giving herself over to other fires that were beginning to kindle.

Sanders rubbed and massaged the soft burning skin, yet beneath the softness, the firm mounds of her buttocks were taut and pert. He would never tire of doing this for her, that much he knew. She was his little snow bunny, and no matter what the future held, he would always be turning her little tail red now and then, of that he was sure!

He stood up and quickly shed his clothes. Then slipping the t-shirt over her head, he lay beside her and tucked her up against him. He pulled the quilt up and cupped her breast, her hot naked cheeks pressing against his thighs and abdomen. He began to plant light kisses along the smooth skin of her

shoulder and she shivered and trembled in his arms.

Yes, the fox had his little snow bunny, and she was through hopping, except for the spanking dances of the future. He smiled his sly fox smile, and then began to devour her, morsel by tasty morsel!