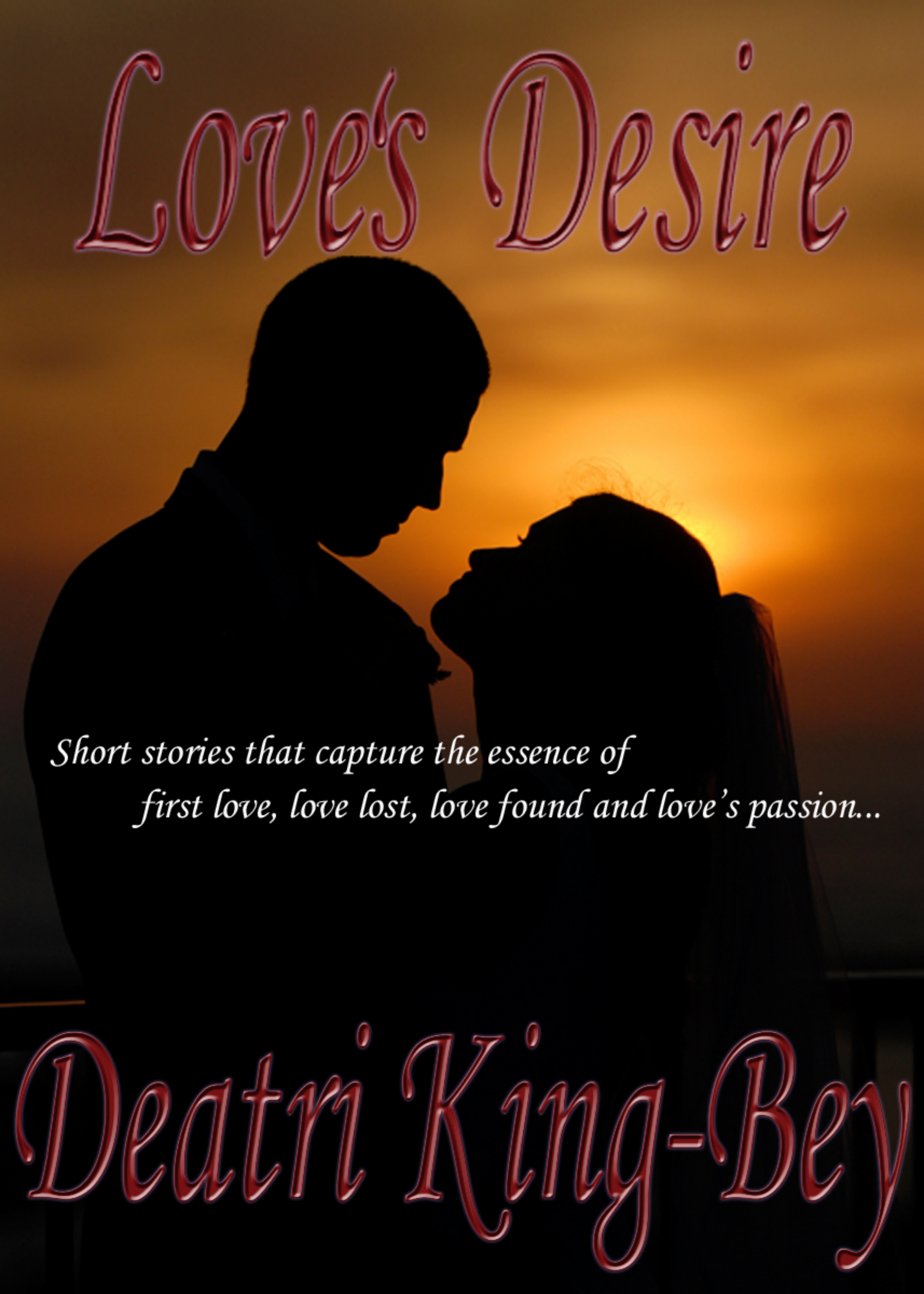


Love's Desire



*Short stories that capture the essence of
first love, love lost, love found and love's passion...*

Deatri King-Bey

Love's Desire

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Welcome Home

“Aw man...” Georgia drawled and checked the speedometer. Only going seventy-five in a seventy-mile-an-hour speed zone, she knew the squad car quickly approaching must've been

after the van that had just passed her. She glanced at the blinking lights in the rearview mirror as the officer rode up behind her.

Totally disgusted, she eased the car over to the shoulder. Three months she'd been gone, and this was her welcome-home party. She reached over to the glove compartment and took out the rental car's paperwork, then searched through her purse for her driver's license. *I'll bet he's only pulling me over because I have out-of-state plates.*

Anxious to get home to settle things, she forced herself to sit patiently for what seemed like hours. Movement in the rearview mirror caught her eye. *Oh, my God, it can't be.* Her heart rate increased with recognition of the one man she would ever truly love. This was not how she wanted to see him, not in his territory, not with his rules, his terms.

Eyes closed, she stilled herself. He'd be just as shocked to see her as she was him. *I can do this.* She inhaled and exhaled deeply. *I can do this.* She let her window down.

"You were speeding a bit, ma'am..." Malachi trailed off and bent low enough to see her, the excitement in his eyes quelled by pain.

Georgia knew pain. Leaving him was the hardest thing she'd ever done. At the time she didn't see an alternative. Now...now she didn't know if she'd made a mistake. She'd missed him so much, but could she live with...She shook off her thoughts. Now was not the time.

"Georgia," he sighed more than said. "You...look beautiful." He lovingly caressed her cheek, then weaved his fingers through her dark, shoulder-length hair. Her heart yelled this was where she belonged, but the pain that separated them fought for recognition.

"Thank you," she said softly.

"When did you get back?"

"Technically, I was on my way back when some cop pulled me over for going *five* miles over the limit." His robust laugh warmed her. Yes, she had missed him. Everything about him. "What are you doing out here anyway? You get tired of bossing folks around."

He rested his hands on the window seal. "Me, tired of being boss? Never! One of my men called in sick, so I decided to take his shift. It's not like I had anything else to do this fine Saturday afternoon. But now that you're back, I'm having second thoughts. Let's go home, baby."

How many Saturday afternoons had they spent in each other's arms, making love, being in love? Too many to count, but not enough to satisfy her. "I love you, but...I need a little more time to sort things out. I'm grabbing something to eat, then heading over to the fishing cabin."

"Okay," he said, disappointment clear in his voice. "Slow down, I don't want you in any accidents."

"I will, I promise."

He leaned forward and brushed his lips over hers, sending a sensually charged rush through her. "I love you, Georgia." He tapped on the roof of the car as he stood. "Now get before I take what's mine."



Food, glorious food, Georgia sang internally. After seven hours on the road, everything on The Country Kitchen's menu looked delicious to her. Unable to decide on a particular meal, she settled on the all-you-can-eat buffet.

"I'm so glad you've returned." Etta, the waitress, poured her iced tea. "We've missed you around here."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I've missed you, too."

“I’m glad you and Malachi have finally stopped letting a bunch of nonsense come between you. I’ve never seen two people more in love.”

Georgia didn’t have the heart to tell Etta the nonsense was still alive and well in their relationship. “Do you think love conquers all?”

“No one said it would be easy, but yes. True love does, honey.” Etta winked and went about her business.

During the course of her meal, several people stopped by to welcome her home and express their pleasure at her and Malachi’s reconciliation. Why she thought she’d be able to slip in for a quiet meal in the small town was beyond her.

Two platefuls of cabbage, corned beef and mashed potatoes later, she thought she’d burst. After she ate a serving of peach cobbler with vanilla ice cream on top, she knew she’d burst. Fat and fluffy, she left a sizable tip on the table, then went to pay for her meal.

“Well, look who decided to come out of hiding.”

Though Georgia had only heard this woman’s voice once before, she remembered it better than she remembered the meal she’d just eaten. She groaned internally and plastered on a smile as she turned toward the entrance. A few of the other patrons looked around to see what was happening.

“Hello, Brandy, nice to see you again.”

“Yeah right.” Brandy pulled her young son from behind her legs. “Go on over there and have a seat, Ronnie. Mommy has some business to take care of here.”

Jealousy and longing coursed through Georgia’s veins as she watched the little boy trot off to one of the tables along the wall. She had always wanted children, but when she was in her early twenties, she’d been diagnosed with uterine cancer and her uterus was removed. From then on, she only dated men who swore they never wanted children. Four years ago, she met, fell in love with and married Malachi. Four months ago, Brandy came to town and confronted Georgia, claiming Malachi was the father of her baby. Georgia knew Malachi would never cheat on her and told Brandy as much. Turned out, Brandy had conveniently forgotten to mention her “baby” was five.

Though leery of Brandy, Georgia had gone to her husband with the woman’s claim. Malachi had denied the child was his, saying they’d always used condoms. He had said Brandy was playing some sort of game and not to let her ruin what they had. And from the way Brandy had approached this “situation,” Georgia was inclined to believe Malachi. Then again, Brandy obviously liked to play games, so Georgia pointed out that she may have tampered with the condoms. In the end, Brandy wasn’t the problem. Not all Brandy, anyway.

Georgia watched Ronnie topple the saltshaker over. Etta rushed over to him and set a plate of chicken fingers and fries in front of him.

“He seems so sweet and is as handsome as can be,” Georgia said honestly.

“He’s getting more and more like his *father* every day. I hope you don’t think you can just walk in off the street and claim Malachi. He’s mine now and has a son to raise.”

Brandy had hit her mark, but Georgia refused to let on. Ignoring Brandy wasn’t an option. The woman was obviously the type to force herself on people.

“That’s nice. Have a great day.” She turned and waited in line to pay for her order. She’d been gone three months, but knew Malachi hadn’t strayed. He wasn’t that kind of man, and instead of the warm welcome she had received when she arrived at The Country Kitchen, people would have been more conciliatory. The mark Brandy had hit was the child. Malachi’s son.

She'd seen pictures of her husband when he was five, and the little boy across the room, dipping chicken fingers into ketchup, looked just like him.

She cleared her throat and moved up a position in line.

"What are you doing in town anyway?"

"Not that it is any of your concern, but this is where I was born, raised and plan to die."

The cashier giggled and took the sales slip from Georgia.

Brandy *tsked* and rolled her neck. "Listen, from what I've learned, you're a good person. It's just I have to do what's best for my child. Make that my and Malachi's child. He needs his father in his life, and thanks to you, Malachi has had time to grow to love his son. You need to do the honorable thing and just step out of the picture. I won't have your infertile ass taking your anger out on my son."

"Brandy!" Malachi snapped.

Everyone in the restaurant jumped and looked toward the entrance.

Ronnie flung his arms in the air and ran across the room. "Daddy!"

The rage on Malachi's face morphed to love as he picked up his son. "Hey, little man." He hugged him close to his body.

Overjoyed and heartbroken at the same time, Georgia wasn't sure how much longer she could hold off her tears. She had known Malachi would be a fantastic father if he only gave it a chance. That was one of the reasons she'd left town—to give him time to bond with his son.

"Go on back to your table and finish your dinner." He set the child on the floor, and Ronnie skipped back toward his seat.

"I've given him what you never can, a child," Brandy said smugly.

"Shut the hell up," Malachi bit out under his breath to keep Ronnie from realizing what was actually happening.

Georgia was through with this hateful woman. She set her payment on the counter and walked out, while Malachi continued chastising Brandy. Everyone in the small town knew Georgia couldn't bear children, but no one had ever used that fact to attack her.

By the time Georgia crossed the rock-covered lot to the car, her legs were ready to give out, and she was about to crumble.

"Georgia, wait!" Malachi called out.

Tears streamed down her face, and her body quaked. To make matters worse, she couldn't find the car keys in her purse.

"Baby." Malachi grasped her by the shoulders and turned her toward him. Worry, pain, sympathy and fear darkened his face. He drew her into his arms and held her close. "I love you so much, baby."

She felt secure enough in his arms to break down. The purse dropped to the ground, and her whole body went limp as she cried.

"I'm so sorry this is hurting you, baby. I want to make the pain stop, but I don't know how." He rocked her gently. "I promised never to hurt you, but...but...I feel like I've failed you."

He continued to hold her. Soaking in the love that surrounded her, time passed, yet stood still. This was a place she could stay forever.

"I love you, baby," he murmured. "If you give it a chance, I know you'll grow to love Ronnie."

Another onslaught of tears poured from her eyes and drenched his shirt. "That's the problem," she said shakily. "I'll fall in love with him. In my heart he'll be my child." She looked

into his eyes and saw hope burning. “Then every time I have to give him back, it’ll be like someone taking my child from me and my heart will be broken again. And don’t get me started on that...that...woman who had him. You know she’ll remind me every chance she gets that he’s not mine. That I can’t have a child as wonderful as he is. That I’m less of a woman. That she has given you what I never can, what I want to give you.” She shook her head and tried to back away, but the car stopped her. “I don’t know...It hurts...It hurts so much.”

A couple hurried past them to their car. Georgia didn’t even care who listened. This was her life on the line.

“I’m hurting, too.”

“I know. You’re in one wicked catch twenty-two.”

He rested his hands on the car roof, trapping her between the car and his body. “Do you know? I’m losing the love of my life.” He thumbed the tears from under her eyes. “I’m not letting you walk out of my life again, Georgia. We’re in love. I don’t know the answer, but this separation isn’t it.”

He reached down and retrieved her purse. “I’m taking you home. Get in on the passenger side.” He began searching through her purse.

“I need some time alone, Malachi.”

“I’m not letting you drive when you’re this upset. I’m dropping by the house for a change of clothes, then *we’re* going to the fishing cabin.” He pulled out the rental car keys and handed over her purse. “Get in the car. I’ll have one of my men pick up the squad car.”

“You are entirely too bossy.”

“Humph, that’s what you love most about me.” He escorted her around the car and opened the door for her. Once she was seated, he fastened her seatbelt, then gently cupped her face between his hands. “It’ll all work out, baby.”

Besides his call to the station, the ride to their home then cabin was quiet. She loved the quaint log cabin set a few yards from the lake—their lovers paradise.

As usual, he refused to allow her to help carry their bags in, so she sat on the porch swing and watched him work. He’d changed from his uniform to a dark blue T-shirt and shorts, but was still as sexy as ever. A smile crossed her face as she remembered how they’d met. He’d pulled her over and given her a ticket for speeding. It had taken him at least ten minutes to convince her that the posted speed wasn’t a “suggested” speed limit. Actually, she’d been stalling. She’d always been attracted to a man in uniform, and he wore his well. A week later, she’d bumped into the new police chief everyone had been talking about at The Country Kitchen, and he’d asked her out. Being the chief over nine officers wasn’t a big deal. The big deal was he was an outsider and only thirty-five years old.

He crouched down to lift the bags he’d taken out of the trunk and set on the ground. Such powerful thighs, she lamented. And his butt...She fanned herself. The few months that had passed had been a long time to go without the good loving she’d become accustomed to.

She opened the screen door for him as he hopped up the steps.

“I felt you checking out my butt,” he teased.

She covered her face with her hands and shook her head, then followed him into the house.

“It’s all right, baby. Look all you want.”

“I wasn’t checking out your butt, big head.” She closed the door.

“Of course you were.” He set the bags down and gave her another fantastic view of his firm round behind and powerful thighs. As he rose, he reached back, grasped her wrist and

pulled her close. “I’ve missed you, too,” he said huskily and nibbled on her bottom lip until she opened up for him. Many have tried and failed to master the art of kissing. With just enough give-and-take, Master Malachi kissed her into oblivion.

His taste, his feel, his scent... *Umm, how did I stay away so long?*

He ran his hands along her bare arms. “Feel how much I’ve missed you.” He pressed his hardness against her belly, causing liquid heat to pool between her legs. “I want to see you.” He lifted her simple cotton top over her head and tossed it to the side, then meticulously stripped each article of clothing from her, leaving soul-searing kisses everywhere he’d ventured.

Body tingly hot, she could hardly wait for her turn. “Strip.”

He looked up from the breast he’d been suckling and grinned. “And you call me bossy.” He stood, slowly lifting his T-shirt, revealing a six-pack and expansive chest. Now this was her type of welcome home! She reached out to touch, but he stepped away.

“I thought you wanted me to strip,” he teased and dropped the shirt behind him.

“You’d better be nice to me,” she purred, wrapped her arms around his waist and suckled along his chest.

“Umm, that’s it, baby,” he moaned, lifting her off the floor, drawing her against his hardness.

As she wrapped her legs around his waist, he fingered her feminine folds apart and lowered her onto his tip, which now poked over the brim of his shorts. First penetration... always so sweet... they both moaned. He held firmly onto her behind and helped her gyrate as he walked them to the bedroom.

He laid her on the bed, then quickly disrobed and joined her. He suckled the tender flesh of her inner thigh. All troubles forgotten, she swirled in ecstasy as he made love to her with his mouth. Her back arched off the bed, but he held her waist and continued to delve deep into her.

Body quivering from aftershocks, she grasped at his shoulders. His talented tongue or tip of his hardness wouldn’t do this time. “Please, Malachi, I need you...”

“That’s my baby.” He retook her mouth and positioned himself between her legs.

He lifted his torso and intently watched her face as he slowly penetrated her.

“Why are you torturing me?” she whispered as he filled her completely.

“I’m not torturing you,” he said huskily. She could tell by the slight tremor to his voice she wasn’t the only one having difficulty. “I’m loving you slowly, properly, as you deserve.” He moaned as he withdrew. “Oh God, baby, you’re so...” He bit his bottom lip and plunged in deep.

“Oh yes,” she cried out, meeting him powerful stroke for stroke. The slapping of flesh hitting flesh, the slurping of their lovemaking, their grunts and moans of sexual delight sang out in perfect harmony. Her body convulsed in orgasmic rapture as his seed poured into her.



Malachi pulled Georgia’s naked body close to his and kissed her gently. “Don’t ever leave me again. You’re my wife, my love, my life. You belong with me.”

She sighed. “You’re right. I shouldn’t have left. It’s just...” An image of Ronnie running across the restaurant with his hands in the air flashed before her. All the years she’d repressed her longing for children raged to life when Ronnie came to town. She teared up. No child would ever run for her, call her Mommy...

“I want to sue for custody of Ronnie,” he said timidly. “I love him, and all his mother cares about is running the streets. The only reason she looked me up was because the man she lived with kicked her out. I know you don’t want to deal with Brandy. Hell, neither do I...and I know I’m asking a lot.”

“Of course you should sue for custody.” She sighed and closed her eyes. “It won’t be easy, but I can handle it.” She opened her eyes. “We can handle it.”

“Yes, we can.” He brushed his lips over her forehead. “There’s one other thing. I never thought I’d want children, but...”

Tears filling her eyes, she backed away. He reached out and drew her to him. “I’m never letting you go again, Georgia. I know we’ll have a lot of adjustments to make for Ronnie, but... but I’ve been looking into adopting a baby.”

Her sorrowful tears quickly turned to tears of joy. “Are you sure? I mean, men want blood children.”

“I feel so guilty for denying you a child. I didn’t realize... Ronnie coming into my life has opened my eyes. I don’t care about blood. I want to give you the child you’ve always wanted.”

He brought his hand to his bare chest. “I want a baby, Georgia.”

“Savannah.”

“Savannah, it is.”

The smile that spread across her face radiated throughout her body.

“Welcome home, baby.” He kned her legs apart and entered her swiftly.

The End

Office Love (An Erotic Tale)

Steven couldn’t believe his ears. “What do you mean, Darcy quit? When was her last day?”

The secretary raised a warning brow. “Excuse you.”

“I’m sorry. It’s just...” he trailed off. He’d wanted a relationship with Darcy for over two years, but obstacles continually blocked him. Now that the path was cleared, he couldn’t find her. Wishing he had one last chance, he sighed and headed toward his office. “Good night, Carol.”

“Her last official day was yesterday, but I saw her a few minutes ago cleaning out her office.”

Overcome with emotion, he wanted to jump for joy.

“You’ve got it bad. You’d best get going before she leaves for good.”

He hugged her. “Thanks.”



Darcy leaned against her office window and watched the life of the city thirty-four stories below. Eleven o’clock at night, and the streets still buzzed with movement. *Don’t these people ever go home?*

She shook her head and returned to organizing the files she needed to leave for her former teammates. Thinking she couldn’t talk about them always being at work, she laughed at herself. In the last two years, she hadn’t been home much herself, and it was no one’s fault but her own.

First, she fell in love with a married man, but didn’t pursue because she wasn’t that kind of woman. Then after he divorced, it took her almost—disgusted with herself, she flipped through her calendar for the answer—fifteen months to figure out he wasn’t interested. If she’d followed her head instead of her heart, she’d be two years into her consulting business, instead of just starting out.

Finished organizing files, she set them on the shelf and labeled each pile, threw her calendar into a box, glanced around her opulent office one last time and closed the corporate world chapter of her life. Her head turned toward the soft *rap, tap, tap* at her office door. "Come in."

Her heart skipped a beat at the sight of Steven standing in her doorway proud, strong and as sexy as ever. She smiled externally, but cursed herself internally for allowing his presence to have such a great effect on her. "I was just leaving." His scrutiny set her nerves on end. She prayed the deceiving heat that coursed through her veins wasn't visibly burning in her eyes. "Did you come to say good-bye?" she asked shakily as she walked behind her now-empty desk to distance herself from his pull.

He closed the door and followed. No obstacle would stop him this time. He removed his suit coat and tossed it to the side. "You were just going to leave without saying good-bye?" Her pace quickened as if she were running away. "Darcy, stop."

Afraid of her feelings, she stood still and remained silent. If she spoke, she might make a fool of herself. She'd already been a big enough fool. All she needed to do was allow him to say good-bye, then continue her life without him.

He stepped behind her and caressed her bare arms, throwing her emotions into a tailspin. "I thought I'd missed you," he whispered. He wrapped his arms around her waist, drew her into his chest and rocked gently.

Enjoying the slow grind, she relaxed her back against his powerful chest. Her hands glided along his sleeves and rested atop his large hands. Their fingers interlaced. Wishing he'd shown interest earlier, she closed her eyes. Though she didn't want to, she stepped away. She was no one's booty call.

He rested his hand on her shoulder. "Look at me, Darcy." She turned slowly, and their gazes locked. He saw the usual desire, but where had the confusion come from? He stepped in closer and cupped her face with his hands. "I've been divorced for over a year now." He tenderly kissed her eyelids. "If you have someone, I'll walk away." He held her, hoping he hadn't waited too long.

"I...I haven't anyone."

"You do now." He descended on her mouth and claimed her as his.

The featherlike pressure of his hands unbuttoning her summer top had her blood pressure rising quickly in anticipation. She'd waited so long, was ready to give up, and then he shows up out of the blue. He slipped her shirt off and began gently kissing her shoulders. She inhaled deeply, but his masculine scent and loving caresses made relaxing virtually impossible.

It required every bit of control he could muster to keep from stripping and ravaging her. He'd waited so long. But he'd take it slow. He nodded toward the window. "I think we're about to give someone an eyeful." He crossed the room, unfastening his pants and closed the blinds. "I'm selfish." Liking the way her eyes traveled over his body, he finished undressing. "I want you to myself." He held his hand out for her.

His low, husky voice, his sweet, sexy ways, his everything called to her. He finished undressing her, then laid her on the couch. The moment of truth had finally come, and she felt like a skittish schoolgirl. He'd always been so proper in the office she didn't know what to expect, and she didn't want to offend him. All she knew was she loved him.

The feel of her quiver as he gently licked, kissed, and suckled the sensitive flesh of her inner thigh did the impossible, aroused him more. She moaned, gyrating as he slipped a finger into her. It was their first time together, but he wanted to taste her.

Unprepared for the wave of pleasure his tongue stroking her heat caused, she tensed.

Over the initial shock, she relaxed and allowed the euphoric charged sensations to flow through her body. He knew he'd caught her by surprise and continued making love to her with his tongue, relishing in the pleasure she took in him.

Body humming, the first climax drenched her. "Steven," she uttered, clawing for him to join her. She wanted to give him the pleasure he'd shared with her, but he had other plans.

He settled between her legs, brushing the head of his hardness over her heat. Pressing gently without penetrating, enjoying the warm spurts of pleasure shooting through him. The charged touch of her caressing his chest, waist then thighs broke his resolve to prolong the teasing.

He protected them both, then entered her hot, wet heat slowly, allowing her to become accustomed to his size. Overcome by a feeling of "ah," he closed his eyes and began stroking. Her body below him gyrating to his beat, with him, for him, around him...Umm, she was all he'd ever need.

She'd never felt anything so glorious in her life. With every stroke she could feel herself lifting further and further away from reality. He was everything she imagined and more. His strokes gradually became harder, deeper, faster. His body stiffened, and they both cried out as he spilled his seed and tossed them both into exquisite rapture.

Sated, he kissed her forehead, then held her close to his body.

She gazed into his eyes. "Why didn't we do this a long time ago?" She feared his possible answer. After all, she did love him.

He kissed her lightly. "Don't worry, baby. You're stuck with me now. I couldn't approach you as long as you worked for the company. You know the no-fraternization rule."

She cocked her head to the side. "You mean because you're a vice president we couldn't date."

"You mean you didn't know?" He laughed. "Boy, do we have a lot of time to make up for."

The End

Fight Against Fate

The wheelchair's breaks were set, the waist-high parallel bars ready and waiting, even Sophie's patient anxiously awaited taking his first steps since a severe car accident two years ago. According to the experts, Tony had a one percent chance of walking again. To Sophie, that tiny percent meant the love of her life would walk again. The other ninety-nine percent crushed Tony's spirit and led to Sophie's heart being broken.

Tony held the arms of the chair as he slowly stood. "Roll the chair to the other end, please."

"Are you sure?"

A soft smile tipped his lips as he looked over his shoulder. "It's okay, you'll see." He winked.

The last few months, Tony slowly became his pre-accident self, all the way to his playful flirting, but Sophie hadn't gone back to herself. Though glad he would have a full recovery, she had to protect her heart from further pain. At the opposite end of the parallel bars, Sophie's breath caught as Tony lifted his left foot and took his first step. *Steady, steady*, she thought and reached forward.

“Don’t worry. I have the best physical therapist in the world.” Hands to his sides for balance, he took a timid step. “I’ve known you’d be my wife since we were in grammar school. It’s fate.” He managed another step. “It just took a few years to convince you.”

The master of distraction had struck again, leaving Sophie completely discombobulated. Only twelve at the time, she hadn’t appreciated anyone claiming her as his, but secretly agreed with him. Times had changed and so had they. Turned out they were both wrong; they would never marry.

One step away now, he said, “I love you with all my heart.” He grasped the bars and took the final step, then lowered his forehead to hers. “When will you forgive me?”

Backing away, she said, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” She stood behind the wheelchair. “You’ve been cheating, haven’t you?”

He settled in the chair. “I may have practiced a little at home.”

“A little?”

“A lot.” He took her by the hand, pulled her around and onto his lap. The shock caused her to squeal. Being held in his strong arms felt too good, too much like old times, times that were long gone and would never return.

“I’m so sorry,” he whispered. “Forgive me.”

“I don’t know what you—”

“Why do you think I broke off our engagement?”

Choked up, she could barely say, “Because you didn’t believe in me or the strength of our love.” Drained emotionally, all she wanted to do was avoid this conversation at all costs, but she couldn’t run away. She needed closure; they both did so they could go their separate ways. The thought of life without Tony brought tears to her eyes.

“Why did you continue being my therapist after I broke our engagement?”

“Why are you asking all these questions?”

“Because the smartest thing I ever did in my life was ask you to marry me. Care to guess what the dumbest was?”

“So now that you’ll be able to walk the wedding’s back on?” she snapped.

“I should have never broken the engagement. I have always and will always love you. I want for you to be my wife.”

She wanted to be his wife, but... “If I were in an accident, would you walk out on me? If you have a setback, will you push me away again?” She fortified her defensive shields with past pain.

“Why did you continue being my therapist after I broke our engagement?”

She blew out an exasperated sigh. “I couldn’t leave you in the care of people who didn’t believe you’d walk again. No matter what, we’ll always be friends.”

“You stayed because you love me as much as I love you. I didn’t refuse your care for the same reason. I wasn’t thinking logically. I believed in you, in us, but I didn’t believe in me, and I didn’t want you burdened with a crippled husband.”

“I never saw you as a burden.”

“But that’s how I saw me, and I couldn’t do that to you. I love you too much.”

“Well, don’t love me so much.”

A nervous chuckle escaped him. “But it wasn’t love, it was self-pity.” He held her close. “Please forgive me.”

How many of her patients had done the same thing to their loved ones? Too many to count. But being in the situation... “There’s nothing to forgive.”

“I’ve known you’d be my wife since we were in grammar school. It’s fate. Will it take another fifteen years to convince you?”

“Who am I to fight against fate?”

He pressed his lips to hers.

The End

Spooked

Thick clouds covered the full moon just as Lucy neared the secluded post office. Why the city had decided to place the small secondary post office in the middle of nowhere was beyond her. Granted, it was only a few miles from her home, but the convenience of the location was almost lost in its eerie surroundings. If she could only get off a few hours earlier, so she wouldn’t have to check her box after dark. Working from 7 A.M. to 9 P.M. Monday thru Saturday had cramped a lot more than her mail-checking capabilities, but starting her own boutique was worth every moment.

As usual, the twenty-space customer parking lot was empty. After pulling into the spot closest to the door, Lucy quickly scanned the area. The trees and shrubs swayed in with the cool autumn breeze. No telling what kind of creatures were out on this night. She just hoped they were out somewhere else.

“This is silly.” Why it always scared her to check her box after dark was another mystery for her. It wasn’t like bad things didn’t happen during the day with tons of people around. Drawing in a few calming breaths, she scanned her surroundings one last time, turned off the car’s ignition and rushed into the post office.

Mind on checking her box and getting back to her car before her irrational fear took over, Lucy quickly opened her box. A hand reached for her. Pure unadulterated terror filled her from head to toe. Screaming, she stumbled and fell back, then everything went black.



Beeping slowly woke Lucy. Disoriented, it took her a few moments to realize the hand sanitizer dispenser on the wall, the curtain pulled between the bed she was in and what she assumed was another bed combined with the beeping meant she was most likely in a hospital, but why. Then it hit her. The hand!

Someone clearing his throat caught her attention. She glanced over and saw an incredibly handsome man who looked like he’d slept overnight in an extremely uncomfortable chair beside her bed.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t want to spook you again—”

“You’re the hand!” she cut in. “What...what happened? Why are you here? Why am I here?” Answers, she needed answers and needed them quick.

“Long story short, I was placing mail in your box at the same time you opened your box. It all happened so fast. I heard you scream one second and fall to the ground the next. I rushed out to check on you, and you were on the floor. I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“Oh no, you’ve done nothing wrong.” Embarrassed beyond belief she’d allowed her overactive imagination to get the best of her, she just wanted to hide her face. And why did she have to act horror-movie crazy in front of such an attractive man? Why couldn’t he be some old codger?

Brows furrowed, she asked, “Why are you here and why did they allow you to stay?”

A devilish grin tipped his lips and the cutest dimples appeared. “Well, I kind of told the staff I’m your boyfriend, so they let me stay. I couldn’t just leave you. This was my fault.” He took her hand into his, and it didn’t look scary at all. “I’m sorry.”

Her heart simply melted. “You are entirely too sweet. I’m the one who is sorry.” A nervous laugh escaped her. “Talk about overreacting. And you stayed all night. I feel so horrible.” Suddenly self-conscious of the mess she must’ve looked, she smoothed her hair behind her ears.

“I guess the least I can do is introduce myself.” He bowed his head slightly. “Justin Barns at your service.”

“Lucy Johnson.” She crumpled the edge of the blanket between her fingers. “I’ve already ruined your night. You don’t have to stay. I’m sure you’re tired. I’ll be fine. Really.”

“After you’re released, I’m driving you home. I know it’s none of my business, but why do you check your mail so late?”

“I opened a clothing boutique two months ago. I open and close the store, so don’t have another time I can come.”

The worry in his eyes threw her. She was a stranger to him, yet he’d come in to be her protector of sorts, and she liked it. Since she’d moved to the small town, she hadn’t had time to make friends or actually socialize.

“I’ll tell you what,” he began, “with your permission, I’ll bring your mail to your boutique each evening.”

“I’d never ask—”

“You’re not asking, and this gives me an excuse to see you again.”

“I’d like that.”

The End

The Lesson (An Erotic Tale)

Trevor skipped up the steps to reach his apartment for his last tutoring session and bumped into Grace as she descended. “I’m sorry.” Admiring the way her bright yellow sundress hung from her cleavage, he grinned, thinking he’d love to explore the rest of her shape by running his hands along her body. “Nice dress.” He picked up her books.

He’d seen her in shorts and knew the rest of her body was as spectacular. He was just glad others hadn’t been wise enough to take notice. Thinking his friends had no idea what fine was if they didn’t put Grace into that category, he watched the sway of her hips as he followed her to his apartment.

“Are you in a hurry today?” He sat beside her on the couch with his notebook. “If not, there’s something I’d like to talk about with you when we’re done.” He smiled at the confusion on her adorable heart-shaped face.

“I’m not in a hurry.” She gazed into his deep, dark eyes and wished he wanted her in all the ways she wanted him. “But I want to know now. I’ll be wondering all day if you don’t tell me.” She knew better though. His type wanted flash and panache, not humdrum and dreary. She looked away. Wearing a new dress wouldn’t make her a new person; the type of person he wanted to spend his life with.

He traced the outline of her face from her perfectly arched brow, along her jawbone to the tip of her chin with his finger. “Why do you look so distressed? We graduate in a few weeks.”

She shrugged off her longings. “Then don’t tell me.” She took his notebook and index cards. “But there’s something I need to ask you after we’re finished studying and you’ve told me what you wanted. That is, if you aren’t in a hurry.” She winked then sorted through his cards.

If he didn’t know better, he’d swear she was flirting. His dreams of making love with her affected his mind. They studied a few hours, but he found it hard to concentrate. If their conversation didn’t go the way he planned, he wouldn’t have an excuse to see her again. He closed his book. “Now what did you want to ask?”

Her lips tipped up at the corners into a devilish grin. “Me first?”

He held off the urge to kiss the grin off her face. Lately he’d had a hard time figuring out who was the pursuer, and who was being pursued. But he liked this game—even though it was all in his head.

Having second, third, and fourth thoughts, she backed down. “Never mind. I don’t want to say anything. You can go ahead.” They had a great friendship, why ruin it?

“You’ve been acting a little,” he hunched his shoulders, “odd lately. Is something wrong? You know I’m here for you. All you have to do is ask.” He brought her hand to his lips and gently kissed her fingertips. “Your wish is my command.”

Lord have mercy, if this man only knew what he did to her with his every touch. She inhaled deeply, counted to five, and then exhaled slowly. “I wanted to ask you a favor, but I don’t want to ruin our friendship in the process.”

His brows drew in. “What do you need? I’m serious. I’m here for you.” They’d known each other for six years, she’d helped him earn his bachelor’s and now his master’s, and she never asked for anything. He knew this had to be big.

Her lip quirked up to the side and one brow rose. “That’s what you say now. If you knew, I think you’d change your mind.” She sat back. “Go ahead and tell me what you wanted. Mine was stupid anyway.”

“Tell me what it was, Grace. Give me a chance here.”

“I don’t want you to feel pressured or anything.” She chewed on her bottom lip. “It’s just...I wanted to ask you to give me a lesson on making love.” His eyes just about popped out of his head, but she continued, rambling, “I’ve been taking the pill for three months now, and you are my best friend. I want my first time to be with...” she trailed off and covered her flushed face with her hands. “I’m so embarrassed.” She turned away. “Please forget everything I said, so I can die peacefully.”

He pulled his shirt over his head and tossed it to the side.

“What are you doing back there?”

He didn’t answer. They’d spoken before of her feelings on the subject, and he remembered every word of what she’d said. He knew she hadn’t changed her beliefs.

She felt his warm lips on her shoulder, and she wanted to melt. “You don’t have to do this, Trevor. I should have never asked such a thing.”

One hand covered her mouth, the other pulled her into his solid chest. “Shhh, I’m the teacher this time. You have to listen to me.” He nibbled on her ear. “Do you want me to stop?” Her half-sighed, half-moaned “no” cleared his way. “Turn around.” She complied. “Have you ever touched a man?”

Her eyes traveled along his athletic body and enjoyed every ripple. Not too large or too small, just right. She rolled her eyes and covered her face for her thoughts. He took her hands and placed them on his chest, rubbing. He closed his eyes. “Can I be your teacher?” He cracked his eyes open to see her reaction. She nodded slowly.

He leaned forward, kissing her lips lightly, nibbling until she opened, giving him freedom to roam the succulent corners of her mouth. He moaned; kissing she knew and knew well. He Eskimo kissed her, asking, "If you've changed your mind, this would be a good time to tell me."

She took his hand and walked toward the bedroom. Blood rushed to his loins. This was better than his dream. He pulled her into his hardness and walked with the sway of her hips.

Every kiss laid on her shoulder disseminated warm waves of passion throughout her body. He pushed her thick, lush, black hair to the side and lowered himself, kissing along her neck. She giggled.

"Ticklish there, huh?" he murmured as he turned her in his arms. He stepped away, taking in all her beauty. A sly grin tipped her lips, and before he knew what was happening, with one swipe of her hands her dress fell, and he was floored.

Now he really could fully appreciate her body. He stepped forward, running his hands down her long neck, around her breasts, tracing their dark areolas. He bent forward and took her sweet caramel covered peaks into his mouth licking, flicking, caressing her into full submission.

Grace grew weak in his arms. He'd melted her, and she couldn't believe it would get any better. He gently nudged her to the bed. As she lay down, his body was only inches away, kissing her as she'd never been kissed before. He sent emotions and feelings through her she'd never experienced or dreamed existed.

His fingers entered her and she froze momentarily. "It's all right, baby," he whispered. "You're hot and wet for me. Feel me." He took her hand and placed it on his hardness. "Don't be afraid to touch." She stroked him a few times with her hands, and it felt so good he had to back away and nibble her ribcage. This time they'd take it slow if it killed him.

His fingers continued doing their fancy work then his mouth joined them in a beautiful duet of ecstasy. With every flick and lick of his tongue, charged shards shot up her, sending her mind on a tailspin. She reached to grasp something, anything before she blew away. He held her waist down and continued his siege until her climax knocked her breath away.

Dazed, she pulled him up whispering, "Teach me how to do the same for you." She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him close for a deep passionate kiss. He eased his hand beneath her and spun them both over, so she'd be on top.

She began with his chest as he'd done her. Licking, flicking, caressing, and kissing him into the frenzy he'd put her in while stroking him. The feel of him throbbing in her hand excited her. She wanted to give him the same pleasure he'd shown her.

She lowered herself, examining him carefully. "I'm sorry, I've never been so close to a man like this before." She touched the top of his hardness with her tongue, swirling the wetness at the tip. "Umm salty." She licked off the rest then peeked up, connecting with his eyes. "Did I do something wrong? You look strained."

"No, baby." He caressed her back. "Continue exploring, it feels good."

She licked along his shaft then took him into her mouth. She'd seen this done, but actually doing it sent a rush through her. In, out, deeper, umm she could do this all night. She figured out how to stroke him with her hand and work her mouth and tongue at the same time. His hands laced through her hair, and he pressed deeper into her throat.

He wanted to explode. He pulled her up and flipped them over. "You are a fast learner." He positioned himself between her legs. "This may hurt a bit." He kissed her gently as he slipped into her tight, wet heat. "Umm," he moaned. First penetration never felt so good. He stayed shallow, allowing her to become accustomed to his body. "How is that?"

“Deeper,” she breathed. Each stroke probed deeper and deeper, until her maidenhead broke, and her breath caught.

He stopped a few seconds and tasted her sweet lips until she began gyrating beneath him. “That’s it, baby,” he whispered. “Pump with me.”

She drew in one of her legs, changing her angle. “Trevor,” she panted. “Umm this umm.” Implosion shouldn’t feel so good.

He trapped her knee under his arm and continued pumping. Her body sheathed him perfectly. Caressing, pulling, now tightening with each stroke. His gaze locked onto hers. His beauty. His queen. She gripped his arms in hopes of not flying away as she cried out, pushing him over the edge. Their climaxes ran together, merging, binding their souls together.

He gently kissed her eyelids. The glimmer of the sweat on her waist drew his attention. He wanted to begin a second round. But first they needed to talk. He could tell she was falling asleep, but this was important. “Grace,” he whispered.

She stiffened. The dream had ended, and he wanted her to leave. “Yes,” she murmured.

He tapped her chin with his fingertip. “One second.” He rolled over and reached inside his nightstand. “Close your eyes,” he said over his shoulder. She complied. He inhaled deeply praying she’d accept. “Open your eyes.”

She peeked open. “What’s going on?” she asked nervously.

“This.” He opened his hand, revealing an engagement ring. Her breath escaped with her voice, and it took her a bit to find them. “Well, I know this isn’t the most romantic, but would you marry me?”

She tugged on her ears. For a second there she thought he asked her to marry him.

“You’re making me nervous, Grace.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” she cried hugging him.

The End

Heart’s Desire

“I owe you an apology about the other night. I’ve put us both in an awkward position.” Feeling like an employee summoned to see the boss instead of the other way around, John glanced across his desk at Eric. Guilt ridden, John averted his gaze to the family pictures on the bookshelf in the distance. It felt as if all eyes were on him, judging him. He pushed away from the desk, the memories and the shame. “I’ve never acted so inappropriately. There’s no excuse for my behavior.” Wishing he’d remained seated, he rested his hands on the headrest of his executive chair.

Eric fidgeted with the stud trim of the leather arm chair. “What happens on the road stays on the road.”

“I appreciate your discretion, but I feel I owe you an explanation.” He held his hands up slightly. “Not excuses, but some reasoning.”

“You don’t owe me anything. Let’s forget it happened.”

“I wish I could.” His hands dropped to his sides. How could he explain something he didn’t fully understand himself? “Look at me: I hit the half-century mark a few weeks ago, any day now my gray hairs will outnumber my black hairs and Ben Gay is quickly becoming my best friend. I’m not blaming my behavior on a midlife crisis. I love my wife with all my heart, my business just entered the hundred-million-dollar club, my children are happy, and I have a grandson. My life is great, I have no complaints.”

An exhilarating rush flowed through him as images of Carmen undressing filled his mind. He turned toward the window. “I hate to admit this, but,” he smoothed his hand over his salt-and-pepper mustache, “it was great having a beautiful, twenty-year-old woman after me. For a brief period of time I was thirty again, young again, on the prowl again. Hell, you’re thirty. You know how it is.” He lowered his head into his palms and massaged his temples. “I just thank God I came to my senses before it was too late.”

“You mean you took her to your room, but didn’t have sex?”

John glanced over his shoulder into Eric’s perplexed face. “I won’t lie. I came awfully close, but couldn’t do it.” He released an anxiety laugh. “I know. I could have gotten away with it. I missed my chance.” He went through the pictures that sat on his desk. His favorite one of Leslie, his wife, was missing. Or had he taken it home as he’d meant to?

“You can tell me to go to hell. But why didn’t you do it?”

“I love my wife and the life we share,” he answered simply. He examined the young man who sat across from him. They’d been on several business trips together over the past year, yet he knew next to nothing about him. Eric would listen to him ramble about Leslie for hours, but never mentioned his own life. He corrected himself. He never allowed the young man to get a word in edgewise. “You’re about to go on vacation, right?”

“It’s Phoenix or bust.”

“We vacationed there the summer before last. Leslie’s people come from Flagstaff.” Seeing he’d veered the conversation to Leslie again, he stopped. An awkward silence filled the room. John could talk about Leslie or business for days, but he found simple small talk difficult at best. Leslie was their charisma. His heart warmed with thoughts of her. She made him complete. Maybe he’d take a few days off and attend a readers’ conference she’d been talking about with her. He wasn’t too excited about her leaving town without him anyway.

Eric finally said, “I’m glad you came to your senses. You have a beautiful wife and everything you’ve ever said about her sounds,” he hunched his shoulders, “I don’t know. I can tell you love her.”

“That I do.” He paused. “I know I’ve made you uncomfortable. I apologize for putting you in this position and for my behavior. Both will never happen again. Why don’t you take the rest of the day off? Beat that Friday traffic. Don’t worry. I know the boss personally.” They both chuckled.

“I believe I’ll take you up on the offer.” He stood. “I have packing to do.”



“Leslie.” John stepped onto the marble foyer of their palatial-ranch-style home. She didn’t answer, so he walked through the family room into the kitchen, turning on the lights along the way. She hadn’t left a note on the refrigerator, and dinner wasn’t prepared. He opened the door connecting to the garage and peeked inside—her car wasn’t there. His annoyance quickly changed to worry. It wasn’t like Leslie to leave without contacting him first or leaving a message.

He returned to the family room to check the caller ID. Her mother hadn’t been feeling well. Maybe she’d taken a turn for the worse, and Leslie rushed out. He scrolled through the numbers. Relief washed through him when he saw Leslie’s number. He played the messages, deleting the dozen he’d left before he came upon crying. He held the phone close to his ear. It was definitely crying, and it sounded like Leslie.

“J-John,” she finally choked out his name. “I.. I can’t...” The line went dead.

He frantically hit buttons to replay the last message. His Leslie was in trouble and needed him. The phone did everything, except replay the message. He threw the cordless phone across the room. It crashed against the wall and shattered to pieces.

He paced from the entertainment center across the room to the wet bar. What if she were kidnapped? After the feature article in *Forbes* magazine about his distribution company and family, every crazy person out there would know what she looked like and how to find her.

He ran his hands over his short wavy hair, calculating how much cash he could come up with quickly. He'd give anything to get Leslie back. He had three million readily available and had access to another twelve if needed. He bowed his head and prayed for her safety.

A sparkle in the hardwood floor caught his eye. He knelt to examine closer. He picked up her engagement ring. She wouldn't have taken it off voluntarily. He pulled his cell phone off his belt clip to call his brother, a detective for the Dallas police department, when he saw an overturned photo under the coffee table. He figured the kidnappers must have taken her picture to show her condition.

He reached forward, afraid she'd been harmed and the ransom would be more than he could raise. It didn't matter the price. He'd come up with the money somehow. He hesitated before touching the photo. Maybe Robert, his brother, needed to dust it for prints. He took the handkerchief out of his front breast pocket and used it to cover his hand. He picked up the photo and flipped it over.

Hands trembling, he held the picture of him sitting in the corner of the hotel bar kissing Carmen. "Oh, my God," he gasped. If Leslie saw the picture she'd think he... "Shit!" What if there were more pictures? He couldn't finish the thought. He had to find Leslie and explain.

He dropped the picture and ran to the bathroom off his bedroom. Her toiletries were gone. "No, no, no!" He rushed into their bedroom and yanked the drawers out of the dresser. Her underclothes were gone. "Please, God, make it stop."

Breathing ragged, he staggered to the bed. Realizing he still had the cell phone in his hand, he used what little faculties he had left to speed dial his brother.



Autopilot carried Leslie from the Dallas Fort Worth Airport to her hotel room on the edge of Upper New York Bay. Autopilot fully engaged, she checked in and unpacked her bag. She could see the Statue of Liberty from her room, but she wasn't interested in sightseeing. She closed the heavy drapes.

A surreal Leslie stared into her dark eyes from the restroom mirror: not happy, not sad, not... She ran cold tap water in the sink and splashed her face. It should be safe to turn the autopilot off now. She was over the shock. She filled one of the short glasses sitting on the counter with water.

She brought the glass to her lips. An image of John slow dancing with a young woman came to her mind. The still water in the glass rippled, as if a small pebble had been dropped into a calm lake. John sitting in the corner kissing the young woman, drawing his hands through her hair increased the ripples to waves. John leading the young woman into his hotel room. She couldn't breathe. The waters splashed over the rim of the glass. The pictures were so clear. She could see into his room: the woman stripping, him kissing her body, him smiling as he closed the curtains. The sharp clank of her glass tumbling about the sink echoed off the bathroom walls.

Chest constricted, even the slightest inhalation gripped her. She crumpled to the floor. This had to be a heart attack. Where was that autopilot when she needed her? She couldn't depend on anyone. She crawled to the bed and lay lifeless, waiting on death to take her.



“Has Leslie Gibson checked in yet? I believe she may be under the name John Gibson.”

The clerk checked her terminal. “Yes, sir.”

“What room is she in?”

“Sorry, sir, but we don’t give out our guests’ room numbers.” The clerk motioned toward a large black phone on a marble topped pedestal near the end of the check-in counter. “You may use the house phone to connect to guests’ rooms.”

“Thank you.”

She handed his credit card back to him. “Enjoy your stay.”

“I will.”



Robert tossed his cell phone into John’s lap. “How could you cheat on Leslie?” He sped his Lexus down the highway to John’s office. The defeated shell of a man who sat beside him couldn’t be the brother he’d always looked up to.

John watched out the passenger window as the sun rose over the city. “I swear I didn’t.”

“Correct me if I’m wrong, but that is you in the pictures kissing someone other than your wife. Hell, they even got shots of you in the hotel room.”

“I swear to God.” He sorted through the damning pictures. “After I closed the curtains, I came to my senses. I didn’t do it.”

“Well, you should have because no one will believe you didn’t. You were set up.”

“I can’t believe this.” He stared at the stack of photos. “Who would do such a thing? No this can’t be.”

“I know you like to think you’re the big mac daddy and all, but my contact in LA confirmed Carmen’s a con artist. Who stands to gain from throwing your family into upheaval?”

Defeat rearing its ugly head, John fought back. He picked up Robert’s phone. “I’ve got to call Leslie and explain. I can’t lose her.”

“Oh no you don’t.” He snatched the phone from John. “You’ll be lucky if you get one chance with her. When you speak to her, we’ll have all of the evidence. No matter what, your ass was wrong. You shouldn’t have fallen for the trap, but maybe you’ll get lucky and she’ll consider the extenuating circumstances to your lax in judgment. The other day you were talking about buying out some small Internet firm. Maybe one of the partners doesn’t want to sell. Everyone knows Leslie’s your life. If you’re busy chasing her, you’ll forget about them.”

John shook his head. “That sounds flighty. This whole thing’s a mess.”

“I don’t know the who or why. I do know that someone set you up, and we need to figure out who fast or you’ll lose your business and your wife. Have you angered your assistant?” He merged onto the off-ramp.

“Sheila isn’t involved in this. You’re letting the cop in you go overboard.”

“Who else knew your whereabouts? Someone had to give Carmen and the photographer the information.” He stopped at the light, then turned right.

“At least a dozen people knew what hotel I’d be staying at.”

“Have you noticed anything out of the ordinary at the office? Anyone acting strange?”

He shook his head. “No. I can’t think of anything. Except.” He shrugged. “Never mind. It’s nothing.”

“What?” Robert turned into the parking garage.

“One of Leslie’s pictures is missing.”

“Who the hell would steal a picture?” He pulled into a parking space.

Fear returned with a vice grip. “What if someone is after Leslie?” John bolted out of the car. “What if she’s in trouble? I’ve got to find her.”

“Slow down.” Robert followed close behind. “You’re too emotional. I’ll handle this.” He grabbed his brother’s arm, stopping him. “Put your faith in me. I know what I’m doing.”

John ran his hands over his face. “If anything happens to her...” he trailed off. “I love her. I can’t lose her.”

Robert prayed he’d never see his brother so broken again. He embraced John. “You two love each other. It’ll be a lot of work, but you two will make it through this. First, we need to find out what we’re dealing with.” He released his brother. “Come on. We need to snoop through Sheila’s desk and anyone else who knew your whereabouts.”

“I have to tell her I love her.”

“Stop forcing yourself on her. You’ve already called four times since I’ve been with you. She needs time alone. She would have answered had she been ready to speak with you.”



Leslie stared at the room phone. To answer or not answer rumbled through her mind. She’d known John would find her eventually. Decision made, she’d let it ring two more times, then answer. The ringing stopped. “Coward,” she called herself. The phone began ringing again. He’d never give up. She drew in and released a deep breath, then answered the phone with a calmness she didn’t feel. “Hello.”

“Um, I’m sorry, but is this Martin Harris’s room?” asked a smooth male voice.

She felt like the weight of the world had been removed from her shoulders. “Sorry, but you have the wrong number.”

“I apologize, but I’m glad.”

She cocked her head to the side. “Glad? Okay,” she drawled out.

He chuckled. “Yes, glad. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have heard your lovely voice.”

Totally embarrassed, she flushed. She had no idea what to say.

“May’s come in with a bang,” he continued. “It’s beautiful outside. I hope you aren’t stuck inside all day.”

The only light in the room escaped between the drawn drapes. Hiding from the world wasn’t working. Feeling sorry for herself wasn’t working. “I hope you get out to enjoy this beautiful day also.”

“I will. Good-bye.”

She hung up then opened the curtains. Sun rays poured into the room, blinding her right after she’d seen how correct the man was about the day’s beauty. He’d actually complimented her voice like she was a radio personality or something. She wondered what the woman kissing her husband sounded like. She grinned as the sound of chickens clucking came to her mind.

Leslie strolled along the boardwalk toward the Statue of Liberty. Happily married twenty-one years then bam. When had things gone wrong? Why hadn’t she seen the signs? They argued from time to time, but nothing out of the ordinary. Leaning against the railing, she prayed for composure. She’d never felt insecure before, but was making up for lost time in the insecurity department now. Why wasn’t she enough for him? He’d always been enough for her.

Her eyes burned and throat tightened. Settled on one of the benches, she watched ferries of tourists enjoying the bay. She loved John with all of her heart, but was old enough to know that love wasn’t enough. She deserved—no—demanded that along with the love came trust, respect and commitment.

A couple nodded as they passed. The man was older and had the woman on his arm like a trophy. John was ten years her senior. She could remember the times he'd paraded her around. She'd thought their relationship was deeper than the superficial, but he obviously wanted to throw the old trophy in the closet for a brand new shiny one.

Past sick of feeling sorry for herself, she gave herself sixty seconds to wallow in self-pity then she had to quit. She looked at her watch. Sixty seconds passed. She didn't feel better, but she did head back to the hotel. She'd left Dallas in a hurry and needed to go shopping for more clothes. No matter how much she wanted to crawl into a hole, she had to keep living life. She wouldn't fall apart. She'd make it through this rough patch.



He downloaded the new images from the digital camera onto the laptop. Soon they'd be together again. He pushed away from the hotel room desk, then went to the closet and took out his briefcase. He sorted through the binders inside until he found Helen's obituary. He lightly brushed his index finger over his wife's picture. He knew she'd find a way to come back to him. They could kill her body, but the spirit lives forever.

He returned to the computer with the obituary in his hand, then viewed the pictures he'd taken of Leslie as she walked along the boardwalk. She looked so sad, defeated. "I'm sorry I've caused you this pain, but you don't remember. As long as John was in the picture, you'd never remember. I'll make it up to you. I promise." He gently stroked the image of Leslie looking over the bay. "You've only improved with age, my sweet."



After Leslie unpacked her shopping bags, she went into the bathroom to wash her hands and face. She smiled at her reflection. John loved her long hair, so while out, she'd had hers cropped short. It looked good if she did say so herself. She fingered the tiny curls that framed her face. The stylist had asked to dye her hair, but she'd earned her few gray hairs and wasn't about to hide them. She couldn't be twenty again, and if that's what John wanted, well he'd better look elsewhere.

Finished refreshing herself, she flicked on the television. Every channel seemed to play something to remind her how alone she was. It was Saturday. The day she and John had always celebrated as their day. No matter how busy either of them was, they'd spend Saturdays together. She needed a distraction, anything to take her mind off John. She took the novels out she'd bought while she was out. None of them held her attention.

She sat a murder mystery on the nightstand and noticed the message indicator light was on. Her heart floated above the clouds. Even though she'd e-mailed John telling him not to contact her and refused to answer the million messages he'd overfilled her voice box with, she got a kick out of him looking for her. It made her feel wanted.

With recognition of the voice on the machine came a heavy heart. It wasn't John. He wasn't looking for her. "Hey, Martin, I checked in last night. I'm in 1707. Call me as soon as you return. It's important."

Ego bruised, the confidence she'd rebuilt slipped away. It wasn't like it was hard for John to find her. The hotel room was in his name also. He obviously didn't want to find her. She wiped away her tears. When she'd left Dallas, she hadn't intended on this being a chase. This wasn't a game. She was running away from the pain. But now she was hurt that he hadn't cared enough to come after her and proclaim his undying love. She laughed at herself for sounding so romance novel, but those were her true feelings. Had she been so wrong? After over twenty

years, had she meant so little to him? Now that their children were grown, he didn't need or want her any longer?

She stared at the phone a long while. John wouldn't be calling. The least she could do was call the guy who'd left the message and tell him he'd had the wrong room. He'd said it was important. She picked up the phone and dialed to connect to 1707.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello. You don't know me, but you accidentally left a message on my room phone for Martin to call. I just wanted to let you know, so you wouldn't be waiting for him."

"Umm, but I do know you. You're the one with the lovely voice. Now I see your heart is just as lovely. Thank you. I'm in your debt."

She flushed at the man's flirting. And Lord help her, she didn't mind. At least someone wanted her, even if only to hear her speak. She brushed the imaginary wrinkles out of her sundress. "It was nothing. I hope you haven't been stuck in your room all day, waiting on his call."

"Oh no, my sweet, I took a short walk earlier."

Sweet, he called me his sweet. She laughed internally. No one had flirted with her this way in years. If he knew she were a grandmother, he'd be singing a different tune. "Well, I don't want to keep you. Have a good evening."

"I will if you join me. How about dinner?"

Her mouth dropped wide open. She was tempted to say yes. John didn't want her, but here was a man who wanted her sight unseen. "I'm flattered, but I'll have to pass."

"Oh, you're married, aren't you? I apologize. I didn't mean to offend you." He chuckled nervously. "I don't usually ask strangers out on dates. There was just something about your voice. I'm sorry."

She bit on her bottom lip. He sounded nice and was obviously from out of town. He probably didn't know anyone besides the illusive Martin and was lonely. "Actually, I'm recently separated. Very recently."

"I'm sorry to hear that. This must be a difficult time for you."

"I've been better." She tangled the phone cord between her fingers. "I have a novel calling my name. It was nice speaking with you again. I hope you catch your friend. Good-bye." She hung up. It was true. She was separated from John. She'd been married more years than she'd been single. She didn't know if she even knew how to be single.



Robert paced about John's office. "Who else knew your itinerary?"

John leaned back in his executive chair. "I'm tired of snooping on my employees. Maybe you're wrong about an insider. I want to find Leslie. It's Saturday. We always spend Saturday together."

"You can't go to her until we know what happened. Everyone's suspect until we figure out what's going on."

"Fine. We'll do one more, then you're helping me find Leslie." He called the security desk, again, for them to unlock the door and drawers.



Leslie found a seat in the hotel lounge. An outgoing person by nature, she thought being surrounded by people having a good time would help break her out of her depression, eliminate some of the loneliness or at least take her mind off John. But she just didn't have the will to mingle. She watched the couples, wondering what else she didn't have in her and why her

husband turned to another woman. She knew she wasn't the most beautiful woman in the world, but she could hold her own. They had the same interests, she stayed in shape and they both enjoyed sex. She leaned her elbows on the table then lowered her head into her palms. Why did he want this woman? What was wrong with her?

Someone clearing his throat caught her attention. She lifted her head and saw a handsome young man standing before her. She didn't feel like being bothered. She wanted to finish feeling sorry for herself. She offered a polite smile.

"May I have this seat?" he asked.

Her smile turned into a genuine smile. "Well, hello there, Mr. May I Speak To Martin Harris. Fancy meeting you here."

He returned the smile as he pulled out a chair and sat beside her. "Hello, Ms. Loveliest Voice Anyone Will Ever Hear."

If she weren't already smiling, she would've plastered a big ol' goofy grin on her face. Fear trickled through her. She brushed her hands over the risen hairs on her arms and the fearful feelings away as insecurity. She hated this new insecure person she'd become.

Being alone after all those years was scary. She turned away from the man's dark, penetrating gaze and watched the doorway. She wanted to escape, wanted her old life and wanted John. She sighed and drew her fingers through her short cropped hair. It hurt like hell, but John didn't want her and in all honesty, she didn't want to change who she was. She liked her old self. She wanted to be that self-assured woman again. She closed her eyes, affirming that John was a major part of her life, not her life.

"I'm sorry," came the man's soft voice then the gentle touch of his thumb to her cheek.

She opened her eyes and could barely see him through the tears.

He drew her into his arms and allowed her to sob on his shoulder.

She didn't know what was worse: crying on a complete stranger's shoulder, crying in public on a complete stranger's shoulder, or actually feeling comforted by a complete stranger's embrace. Humiliated, she didn't want to raise her face. "I'm the one who's sorry. You're too kind." She took a napkin from the table and nervously patted it on the shoulder of his Yankee T-shirt, trying to dry her tear marks. "I don't even know who to thank."

He gently took the napkin from her, then held her hands in his. "I don't know your pain, but I know pain." Their gazes locked. "The pain of my wife's passing..." he trailed off. "It's been ten years, but sometimes..." He shook his head. "The pain will always be there, but it becomes bearable. You'll make it through this."

She chastised herself for wallowing in self-pity when this man had lost his wife. "I'm truly sorry for your loss."

"I'm fine, just as you will be someday." Hand held out, he stood. "I think we could both use some fresh air."

She laced her arm around his. "Sounds like an excellent idea. Since I've blubbered all over you, the least I can do is introduce myself. Leslie Gibson." They walked out arm in arm.

He looked down into her eyes. "Erickson Davis."

"Thank you, Erickson. For everything."



"I'll kill him!" John hurled Eric's office chair across the room. It smashed into the bookshelf and crashed to the floor. "I'll break his fucking neck!" He shoved everything off the desk from the computer to the missing picture of Leslie.

Robert tackled his brother to the floor and held him in a bear hug to keep him from destroying the office and harming himself. Though fifty, John was a large man and in excellent shape. “Stop this.” He held on tightly, refusing to release John until his body relaxed and he calmed.

John pushed his brother away, drew in his legs and rested his head on his knees. After a long while, he mumbled, “Oh, God, I know I’m not one of your favorite five right now, but please...” Tears fell from his eyes. “Please protect Leslie.”

Nothing could be said, so Robert remained silent. Eric had pictures of Leslie stashed in the bottom drawer of his desk: her walking into and out of work, at the grocery store, taking her morning stroll, going into and out of the gym, in the yard... Hundreds. He also had additional pictures of John and Carmen and a few shots of women they didn’t recognize.

“What are we going to do?” John asked.

“Get your wife back.” Robert helped his brother stand, then went to the desk and called in a few favors. He needed to know everything about Erickson Davis from his birthplace to his present location. He also called John’s credit card company to see what the last purchases were.

“The good news is she’s in New York.”

“What’s the bad news?”

“It’ll take a while to get information on Eric and locate him.”

John snatched the phone off its base. “Well, you can stay here. I’m warning Leslie and heading to New York.” He dialed then held the phone to his ear. “Shit!” He deleted all of the messages on her voicemail, then left one telling her he loved her and was sorry. After he rambled on about Eric, he called the hotel in New York and left a message in her room.

“What are you doing?” he asked Robert.

Robert put his thumb over the receiver of his cell phone. “Making our flight arrangements.”

John nodded at his brother, then redialed the hotel. “Could you tell me if Eric Davis has checked in yet?” He slammed the phone down. “Shit!”

Robert ended his call. “Our flight leaves in three hours.”

“Three hours! He’s in New York. Hell, I’ll charter a plane. I need to get to Leslie before that bastard hurts her.”

Robert held his hands out. “Slow your roll. I know three hours seems like an eternity right now, but by the time you charter a plane, we could already be in the air. I’m about to say the impossible, but try to calm down. She’s been shopping and at the beauty parlor most of the day. He probably wants to wait a few days for her to get over the shock before he approaches.”



“Thanks for keeping me company and walking me to my door,” Leslie said. “You’ve been too kind.”

Erickson glanced at his watch. “It’s barely eight. Let’s order a movie.”

On the surface, allowing a man into her room sounded like a bad idea, but they’d talked for hours, and he was a genuine nice guy. She could see her ordeal with John already had her leery of men. She wondered how long before she became captain of the “Men Ain’t Shit” brigade. She stepped to the side. “A movie would be nice.”

“I’m starved. Room service time.” He sat on the edge of the bed and picked up the phone. “My treat. What do you want? I’m having steak.”

Nerves on edge, door still open, she looked from Erickson to the hallway. She didn't know when she'd become so paranoid. She laughed, thinking great, now she was a paranoid, insecure, unwanted, old broad. She closed the door.

"What's so funny?"

"I lost my mind for a few seconds there." She opened the television cabinet and took out the remote control. "A salad would be nice. Preferably one with grilled chicken and Italian dressing, no bacon. Thanks."

"You need some real meat. I'll share my steak with you."

"Thanks, but I don't eat red meat." She surfed through the channels, assessing the situation. Erickson had been a true friend when she needed one, and she liked him. She scrolled through the movie selections. There was nothing wrong with eating dinner and watching a movie with a friend.

She glanced over her shoulder. The desire in his eyes before he cloaked his feelings took her by surprise. She knew he was attracted, but this was stronger. She quickly returned to scrolling through movies. Men had shown interest in her before, but no one had looked at her like that since—she bit on the edge of her nail—since a really long time. She didn't know when John stopped looking at her the way he looked at the woman in the pictures.

After they finished eating, Erickson went to place their food trays on the outside of the door.

"Oh please set them on the desk," Leslie said. "I can't stand it when people leave the trays out there on the floor. It's just a quirk I have."

"No problem." He set the tray on the desk, which was beside the door, then returned to the bed. He'd already kicked off his shoes. "Scoot over."

She hesitated then scooted over, so he'd have room to sit beside her, their backs against the headboard. He programmed the movie and they watched. Well, he watched. Her mind continually drifted to John.

Had she lost the desire for him? Had he missed seeing it in her eyes, so he searched elsewhere? Were they still in love, but had fallen out of lust? She snuck a peek at Erickson. She could remember when John was thirty. She closed her eyes. He was always handsome, but now... The thought of his touch caused her to flush. Her heart still raced when she heard his footsteps nearing. No, she hadn't lost the desire for him. If anything, it had been stronger than ever. She sighed, admitting her desire for him was still strong. Why couldn't John want her the way Erickson did.

Yes, she wanted love, trust, respect and commitment, but she also wanted passion. She wanted John to have a burning desire for her and only her. But she couldn't and didn't want to change. She wanted to be loved as she was, just as she loved him.

She felt a soft brushing on her face.

"Don't cry," Erickson whispered.

She hadn't realized she'd teared up. She opened her eyes. "I'm sorry. You must think me a loon."

He drew her into his arms. "No," he said softly. "There's nothing wrong with you."

"Then why doesn't my husband want me anymore?" She sniffed.

He tipped her chin up with his knuckle. "Because he's a fool." He brushed his lips over hers. "A complete and utter fool."

She closed her eyes and mind to the pain of John and allowed the acceptance of Erickson to take over. He wanted her. He'd take the pain away. She lowered her defensive shields,

allowing him to explore her body. She looked into his passion-filled eyes as he settled between her legs, knowing soon she'd wake from this nightmare. John hadn't cheated on her, she hadn't run away and she wasn't in bed with a stranger.

Erickson's penetration was swift and harsh. Leslie silently cried as she plummeted to reality. This wasn't what she wanted. Tears filled then overflowed her eyes as Erickson continued thrusting inside of her.

"I know, baby." He kissed her tears away. "It's so good." He threw his head back and cried out as he hit his climax. He kissed her forehead, then lay beside her and drew her close to his body. "I've missed you so much."

Leslie was too distraught to catch what he'd said. She couldn't believe how far she'd fallen so fast. How could she allow this to happen? She felt nauseated. She darted out of the bed into the bathroom. Erickson followed close behind.

She increased the heat of the shower to its hottest setting, but she couldn't wash off the stains on her soul.

Erickson flushed the used condom, then tried to step into the shower with her.

She shook her head vigorously. "Please don't. I can't," she cried. She felt so weak she could barely stand. She leaned against the shower wall. "I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have..." She slid along the wall into a crouched position. The water flowed over her.

He backed away with his hands up slightly. "Don't worry, my sweet. I know you're confused right now." He turned on the sink tap. "I don't want to leave you alone like this, but I understand you need time to adjust." He cleansed himself at the sink, then wrapped himself with a towel. "I'll check on you in the morning."

He continued talking, but she couldn't understand what he was saying. She couldn't understand anything. How had she ended up in this place? Why hadn't John come to save her?



Dawn finally arrived. John stood in the hotel window, staring through the Statue of Liberty instead of at it. He glanced over his shoulder at Robert who was printing out another attachment and talking on his cell phone. John leaned his head against the window. He'd never felt so lost and helpless in his life. He wouldn't survive without Leslie. How could he have taken what they shared for granted? He silently prayed for her to give him the chance he didn't deserve.

Robert hung up the phone, then rolled the chair around to face John. "Eric's wife died about ten years ago in a car accident. He was the driver. He had a nervous breakdown after that." He released an exasperated breath. "He was tried for stalking. He got off on a technicality and the woman went into hiding. He was accused of stalking a second time three years ago. This time the young lady ended up dead."

John gasped. He had to save Leslie. He crossed the room to leave, but Robert stopped him. "Wait a second. You can't go off half-cocked."

"The hell I can't!"

"We need to talk before you go. Please. Just give me two more minutes."

John's blood pressure had shot so high his ears rung. He needed to regain control of his emotions before he saw Leslie. He stalked over to the bed and sat. "I can't lose her."

"You won't, but what if she's already slept with him or someone else?"

He shook his head vigorously. "My Leslie wouldn't do that."

"That's just it. She's been with you most of her life. She is literally your Leslie. Can you imagine what she's been going through since she saw those pictures? She's got to be on an

emotional rollercoaster. Everything she's believed in was snatched from her. Her reality is gone." He momentarily lowered his head into his palms. "I made a mistake. You should have come immediately and told her in person you love her."

"I'm here now." He stood.

"What are you going to do?"

"Reclaim my wife, my life!"

"What if she's been with someone else? Can you forgive her?"

"Forgive her? I'm the one who needs to be forgiven. Me." He crossed the room. "She'll wake to take her morning stroll soon. I want to catch her before she leaves."

"Be careful. The extra pictures in Eric's office were of the dead girl. Hopefully, we'll have a warrant for his arrest soon."



After getting a keycard to Leslie's room from the hotel clerk, John let himself into their room. The first thing he noticed was the food tray had bits of steak left on it. He grimaced. Eric loved steak. He ordered it every time they'd gone out. He saw a scribbled note from Eric on the desk saying he loved her.

John subdued his rage then looked around the room. The chaise lounge was pointed toward the window, and the bed was an empty, crumpled mess. The thought of Eric and Leslie having sex made him sick. He rushed into the bathroom to get a glass of water. It must have killed Leslie seeing him and Carmen together. He'd never forgive himself for hurting her.



Leslie woke to the sound of water running in the bathroom. She could have sworn she'd turned the tap off. She stretched then kicked her legs off the chaise. She looked at the bed. She couldn't bring herself to sleep in it last night.

John stepped out of the bathroom, startling her. She automatically held her robe closed tight but heated as his passion-filled gaze traveled over her face and body.

He crossed the room, reaching for her. She backed away from his touch. "What are you doing here?"

"I've come for you."

She crossed her arms over her chest and raised a brow. "I don't want you," she lied. "Go back to your little girl."

"One minute for each year of marriage is all I ask. Please." He motioned toward the chaise. Folder in hand, he knelt before her on the floor. "I'm sorry." He set the folder aside and rested his hands on her bare thighs.

She pushed his hands away. "Sorry isn't good enough."

"You're right. I can never make up for what I've done, but I wanted to tell you everything." He told her about Carmen and Eric and showed her the photos, police reports, and news reports.

She couldn't stop trembling. "Oh, my God. What have I done?" She ran into the bathroom, convulsing with dry heaves.

He forced her to stand, then held her tight. "I'm so sorry, baby. This is all my fault."

She shook her head. "But you don't understand. I...I...I..." She couldn't say it. She was too ashamed. "I don't know what to think." Her husband was easily snared by a beautiful woman, and she'd made a fool of herself with a psychopath. Her life had spun completely out of control.

“I know what happened between you and Eric. He manipulated you when you were in a vulnerable moment. I don’t blame you. I blame myself. Please forgive me.” He wiped the tears from her eyes.

A knock at the door caught their attention.

“Leslie, open the door,” Eric said. “I’m sorry about last night. I shouldn’t have rushed you. Please let me in.”

She stiffened in John’s arms. He released her, but she held him tightly. “Don’t go. I’ll call security.”

“Stay here.” He kissed her gently, then went to answer the door.

John flung the room door open.

Eric’s gaze traveled from John to Leslie back to John. “No! You can’t have her!” He snatched the steak knife off the tray and stabbed at John.

Taken off guard, John barely moved in time to miss the slash. Leslie ran to help John. He pushed her out of the way of the second slash, but caught it in his shoulder. “Stay back!”

She ran for the phone and frantically pressed buttons for security.

Eric lunged. John grabbed his arm and yanked it down, around and behind Eric’s back.

The knife plopped to the floor. John shoved Eric into the wall with such force the tray on the desk rattled. Guests came out of their rooms to investigate. People stood in the doorway and hallway as John proceeded to pummel Eric.

“Security! Move out of the way.” Security and Robert forced their way through the crowd and ran into the room.

“Stop this!” Robert ordered.

John, straddled over Eric rearranging his face, froze at the sound of his brother’s voice. He pushed away from Eric and went to his crying wife, embracing her.

The security guard looked between the two battle-scared men.

Robert took out his Dallas police badge. “I’ll take care of this, if you don’t mind.” The security guard seemed more than happy to step aside.

“I need time alone with Leslie,” John said as he rocked her gently. It felt so good to be in his arms, she never wanted to move.

“I’ve got you covered. Call my cell when you’re ready.” Robert cuffed Eric and dragged him out while explaining to security what was going on.



On her knees, Leslie washed the wound on John’s shoulder, thanking God the cut wasn’t very deep. She held the damp cloth to his shoulder, ensuring the bleeding had stopped.

He took the cloth from her, placed it on the nightstand then took her hands into his. “I love you, Leslie,” he said softly. “I’m so sorry I hurt you.” He drew his fingers through her hair. Missing his caress, she moved into his touch.

“Can you still love me after what I’ve done?” he asked.

“I love you, but...”

“I’m willing to do whatever you think we need. If it’s counseling, I’m there. Anything.”

“Counseling won’t make you desire me again, like you did that woman.”

He tipped her chin up. “My indiscretion had nothing to do with you. There’s no excuse for what I’ve done, but I was feeling old and insecure. You’re my heart’s desire. Only you.” Their gazes locked. The desire burning in his eyes sent her heart racing and her temperature rising.

He gently kissed her lips once, twice. “Let me love you.”

Stroke after powerful stroke she knew John was her one and only and she his. Their lovemaking rose to heights neither had imagined. Afterward, both sated, he cupped her into his body.

“You are my heart’s desire,” he whispered as they drifted into sleep.

The End

Question of the Night (An Erotic Tale)

“Okay, folks. We only have time for one quick call.” She pressed the button for line three. “WKRZ, you’re on the air with Jay Lynne. So what ya got for me?”

“Oh, am I really on the air?” screeched the voice of an excited young lady. “I can’t believe it. I listen to you everyday. My name is Donna.”

“Why thank you, Donna. I’m glad you enjoy the show. We only have sixty seconds.”

“Oh, I know, I’m sorry. I even wrote down what I wanted to say, so I wouldn’t forget when I got on air.” Jay could hear paper crinkling over the line. “Here we go. I want you to answer the question of the night?”

Jay laughed. “Me? Honey, tonight I ask the questions, others answer.”

“Oh please. I know everyone wants to know. Let me see if I have it right. I’m nervous, so forgive me, but would you like to meet...I mean, what would you do if you met someone whose sexual pull on you was so strong that when they stepped in the room you became wet with anticipation?”

Jay fanned herself. “Whew, I feel like I’m on the hot seat here. I’m not as brave as most of the callers, so I’d run the other way.”

“Somehow I don’t believe that, Jay. You don’t seem to back away from anything.”

Glad it was time to call it a wrap, she said, “Well, you have me there, don’t you? I hate to answer and run, but my time is exhausted. Tune in tomorrow at ten, and we’ll do this again. Good night, everyone.”

Jay walked down the darkened hallway toward her small office, flowing through the evening’s calls in her mind. Shocked it took so long for someone to ask her to answer the question of the night, she grinned. *I almost made it.*

“That’s my girl,” came a soft, low rumble of a voice from out of the darkness.

Her breath caught. “What are you doing here?” She could feel him coming closer, but she refused to turn around. Mere memories of his strong, dark masculinity raked havoc on her mind. If she looked at him, her chances of resistance were futile. “I told you not to come here.” No, instead of facing him, she’d stare at her office door and act like he didn’t affect her.

He loved these games of cat and mouse. “You asked me to come.” He placed either hand on the door, surrounding her with his body, yet not touching her. He inhaled deeply, allowing her aroma to caress his senses. “Umm, my favorite perfume.”

She closed her eyes, but couldn’t close her mind to his presence. “I’m not wearing perfume,” she murmured.

He lightly traced her ear with whispers of “I know” and promises of what was to come. Her heart raced, she wanted nothing more than to succumb, but she wouldn’t. “I didn’t ask you mmm,” she moaned as his hands rested on her thighs and pulled her into his slow grind.

He throbbed for her, ached for her. He knew that soon she’d be his. “You asked by the topic.” He brushed her braids out of the way and kissed her neck lightly while continuing to

grind. “You called to me, so I came.” He opened the door and walked into the office, never losing contact with her body, then kicked the door closed.

She hated the way he could make her moist with a simple whisper. It wasn’t fair for one person to have so much allure. “I can’t do this.” She turned in his arms, hoping her eyes hadn’t had time to adjust to the tiny bit of moonlight that seeped into the room. “Not here.”

He brushed his lips over hers. “How about here?” He kissed her lips, but pulled back before she could get a full taste. “Or here?” He made tiny circular massaging motions with his tongue along her neck. “Let’s not forget here.” He skimmed over her hardened breasts with his flattened hands.

One of his hands found its way down her skirt and into her panties where he found her liquid heat. Her head rested on his chest. So many wonderful sensations flowed through her body, she couldn’t figure out why she resisted. She pulled off her shirt and tossed it to the side.

A rush of ecstasy urged him forward. He helped her finish undressing, then quickly disrobed himself. His eyes had become accustomed to the lack of light, and now he enjoyed her curvy silhouette. “Come here.”

She stepped to him, and his hands cradled her protectively as they knelt to the floor.

“You teased me four long hours.” He situated himself so the head of his hardness pressed gently against her heat, throbbing in the moistness that escaped. She gyrated under him, but he wouldn’t penetrate. “Can you go four hours?” he teased. She ran her nails along his spine to his shoulders. “You’re not playing fair,” he murmured.

She couldn’t wait any longer. She wrapped her arms around his neck to pull him down to her mouth while at the same time coiling her legs around his thighs. His strength kept her from accomplishing her goals, but his need for her gave her the results she wanted.

His penetration was harsh, yet sweet. She took him into her body and enveloped him with her soul. With every glorious stroke, he could feel his soul reaching out to hers.

Breathing ragged, she could barely cry out his name. Pleasure engulfed her, then pulled him in. She drew her legs back, tilting her hips, and he drove in deeper, harder.

She knew she’d burst like a hot water balloon, but didn’t care. It felt so good.

He could feel her climax flow over him and mix with his. “Oh ssshit,” he cried, thinking how could anything feel this fantastic. He drew in several long breaths before he could slow his body. He kissed her lightly, then lay on the floor and pulled her to lie on his body.

Still tingly inside, she whispered, “You’re gonna get me fired.”

He brought her left ring finger to his lips and kissed the second half of his wedding band set. “You started it.”

The End

Final Arrangements

“Have you made the final arrangements?”

Tracey straightened in the uncomfortable pleather arm chair. Chin held high, hands crossed neatly in her lap, voice steady, and nerves a wreck, she fought to cover the fear and anguish she truly felt. “Tomorrow.” She focused on everything in the office, except the man who had been her physician, and more importantly, a family friend since she could remember.

“I’m sorry, but we’ve run out of tomorrows.” The wrinkles adorning Dr. Simon’s face deepened as his gray brows furrowed. “We can’t put this off any longer.”

“We!” She drew in a sharp intake of air. “We!” Tears suddenly filled her eyes, but she refused to allow them to fall. “Not we. Me!” She lowered her face into her palms. “I’m sorry,” she whispered. “I...I’ll be fine.” She combed her hands through her shoulder-length locs.

“It’s all right.”

“No. It’s not. It will never be all right.” She resituated herself in the chair. “But there’s no excuse for my behavior. I apologize. I’m thirty-six and was taught better.” She inhaled then exhaled deeply. “You’re right. I’ve run out of tomorrows.”



Thomas nodded at fellow parishioners as he entered the church. He hadn’t attended services at Gospel Tabernacle since Tracey abruptly broke off their engagement three months ago, and he wouldn’t be there today if Reverend Green hadn’t insisted.

He walked thirteen rows down then slid into the pew he, Tracey and the children had shared many a Sunday. He scanned the faces in the almost-filled church, hoping to catch a glimpse of Tracey and the kids—his family. He blew out an exasperated breath, missing them greatly. Tracey had allowed him to see the children whenever he wanted and speak to them on the phone, but she wouldn’t allow him to have more than superficial contact with her. When he’d pick up the children, he’d see the pain in Tracey’s eyes, see that she wanted to join them on their outings.

“Good to see you, Thomas.” Mrs. Berkley turned her wide body in the pew in front of Thomas, knocking her grandchildren to the side.

“It’s good to see you, too.”

“I’m so glad that you and our little Tracey are gettin’ along again. She hasn’t been the same since...” she trailed off. “Oh, never mind. I’m just glad you’ve come. Welcome home.” She faced the front.

The church filled, but no Tracey, and the children were not in sight. The couple seated to the left of Thomas must have thought the same as Mrs. Berkley, because they left extra space.

Services progressed as normal. Though Reverend Green’s sermon was interesting and short, which Thomas was grateful for, he didn’t see why his presence was needed.

The reverend stood at the pulpit, but didn’t say a word. People looked at each other with a thousand and one questions in their eyes, but remained quiet. The organist waited on his signal to play, and the choir fidgeted nervously.

“Bear with me, my children,” Reverend Green finally said. “Lord, help me.” He lowered his head in prayer.

An encouraging, “It’s all right, Rev,” and “Take ya time,” came from the “Amen” pew.

“Humph, can you believe I’m at a loss for words?” His eyes momentarily settled on Thomas.

“We’re here for you, Rev,” Mrs. Berkley said.

“These past few months I’ve been counseling one of our flock in a manner...” He cleared his throat. “I apologize,” he said, voice cracking.

Tracey stood. “It’s all right, Reverend Green. This is something I need to do.” All eyes were on Tracey as she walked from her front-row seat and to the right of the musicians, up the six stairs, then joined the minister behind the pulpit and hugged him. “Thank you.”

Thomas shook his head. He’d been so busy looking at the back door for her to enter he’d missed her in the front row. She was as beautiful and regal as ever in her royal-blue blouse and black, flouncy skirt. He frowned slightly at her weight loss. When he’d picked the children up, she had always worn the most horrid sweats.

“Good afternoon, church,” she said with a slight shake to her voice.

“Good afternoon,” they replied.

She gripped the sides of the podium, then glanced over her shoulder at the reverend, who was standing directly behind her.

“It’s all right, child.” He rested his hand on her shoulder.

She returned her attention to the congregation. “I’ve come to ask a favor of you.” She paused. “My family...I love my children and...” She sniffed.

“It’s all right, honey. Take your time. Take your time.”

A feeling of dread overcame Thomas as Tracey tried to regain her composure.

She inhaled deeply and squared off her shoulders. “Three months ago I was given six months to live, and I’m in search of a loving home for my children.”

The church came alive with “awws,” “No Lawd,” “Jesus Christ,” “Oooo,” “Oh, my God.”

She waited for the murmurs to calm down and folks to settle. “I cannot die in peace worrying that they may be separated.” She lowered her head. “You’re all the family I have... And I love you all.”

Though tears streamed down her face and her voice quivered, to Thomas she was the strongest person he’d ever seen. His heart overflowed with pride, sadness and anger: pride in her courage, sadness for her situation, and anger that she hadn’t confided in him.

“As you know, the twins are ten.” She offered a weak smile. “Ready to hit those terrible teens.” She swiped her tears. “This morning I explained to them that I’m dying. I know this won’t be easy. They were only five when their father passed, and now I’m...” Her gaze lowered, then as if she felt Thomas’s presence, she lifted her face and looked directly at him.

He could feel her calling to him, pleading for him. He stood, and Tracey ran out the door to the left of the choir stand. Though Thomas hadn’t moved, people immediately moved out of the pew to let him out.

Mrs. Berkley turned in her seat toward him. “Don’t you let that girl run no more.”



Tracey rocked in the executive chair behind Reverend Green’s desk, biting on her nails. Disgusted Reverend Green had betrayed her trust and invited Thomas, she prayed Thomas wouldn’t follow her. She couldn’t face him.

The door opened slowly, then Thomas peeked around the corner. Her heart lifted, as it always did when she saw him, but the reality of her life quickly submerged her in a now-familiar depression.

He fully entered the office, closed the door, then stood before the desk with his arms folded over his chest.

Tracey looked at the built-in bookshelves that lined the walls as if she’d find the answer to his questioning gaze in one of the books.

He shook his head, then grabbed the armchair from the reading area and set it beside Tracey. He turned her seat, so they’d be sitting knee to knee and lifted her face so she’d have to look into his eyes. “Why don’t you believe in me?”

The pain in his voice and displayed on his face hurt almost as much as her having to ask for someone else to raise her children. She knew he’d be there for her if she’d told him, but she didn’t want him there.

“I’m sorry.” She lowered her head in shame for not being straight with him. He was a good man and deserved to know the truth.

She could feel him rest his hands on the arms of her chair. "I'm so angry," he said silently.

"I do believe in you."

"No. You don't. Hear me out." He drew in a deep breath, released it slowly. "I'm angry because you didn't trust me." He held his hand to his heart. "Angry because you would ask others to raise the children I love. Angry because you chose to go through this without me." He wiped the tears from her cheeks with the pad of his thumb. "Angry because I love you. Angry because you've given up on the life we have left to share. I'm angry..." he trailed off.

"I...I love you too much to ask you to give up your life to raise two children."

He drew her into his loving embrace. "Don't you know that you and the twins are my life? I haven't given up anything."

It felt so good to be in his embrace again, like she was home again. "I've been so scared."

He rocked her gently until she stopped crying. "I love you," he whispered into her hair. "Will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" she squealed.

He stood with his hand held out to her. She took his hand and allowed him to lead her into the sanctuary. To both of their surprise, the congregation was still there.

Thomas, chest puffed out proud, chin held high, with his lady love on his arm, proclaimed, "We're getting married!"

The organist played "Oh Happy Day," the choir and some members of the congregation sang, others cheered, while still others clapped.

Reverend Green walked over to the happy couple and embraced them.

"Thanks for not listening to me," Tracey said.

Reverend Green grinned at the two. "I believe we have final arrangements to make for a wedding."

The End

Roadside Assistance

Isaac slammed the trunk closed and pulled out his cell phone. Last week his nephew borrowed the car. When he returned the car the following day, sparkling clean with a tank full of gas, Isaac had been suspicious, but decided not to act like the paranoid uncle and inspect every inch of the car. Now he was stuck in the middle of the desert with a flat tire and no spare. It had to be at least thirty minutes since he passed the last sign of civilization, and he had no idea what lay ahead.

"Oh great..." Not even one bar on the cell phone was lit. Nothing but Joshua trees, cacti and various desert plants were as far as the eyes could see, and the oppressive heat of the afternoon sun was stifling.

Leaning against the car with his head down, he mumbled, "This is not happening." The sound of a truck pulling up lifted his spirits. He turned in hopes that whoever was in it would help. Seeing the driver was a female, he worried his six-foot-plus stature would scare her off. With so many nuts out there, he knew if he were an attractive woman alone in the middle of nowhere, he'd be leery of strangers.

"Did I just see you at the gas station in Surprise?" She exited her SUV. "Actually, I saw your car. I want a Lexus."

He had stopped at the gas station, but had missed this beauty. Now he worked overtime not to gawk like some silly teen who had never seen a stunning woman before, but her soft eyes, kissable lips and a body that would fit perfectly with his made it difficult.

She held out her hand. "Hello, I'm Darcy."

Not shy in the least bit, he liked that. "I'm Isaac." The shake was more than hand touching hand. If he were a woman who believed in that romance goop his sisters went on and on about, he'd say he felt a charge pass between them. The shocked look in her eyes told him she'd "felt" the same thing.

"Unfortunately, my car has a flat, I have no spare and my phone doesn't have a signal. Do you have a cell phone I can barrow for a second?"

"My cell never gets a signal out here. I live about ten minutes from here. You can use the phone at my place."

"Thank you." As soon as he entered her Escalade, he saw why she wasn't fearful of approaching him. Two of the largest, meanest looking Rottweilers he'd ever seen were in the back.

"You're not allergic to dogs, are you? I can let the windows down."

"Oh no. Have they eaten lately," he teased.

"Don't worry about Get'cha and Got'cha. They're protectors, not attackers."

By the time they arrived at her ranch-style home that set back a ways from the main road, the dogs had decided they liked Isaac, and he'd decided he wanted to know everything there was to know about their owner. During the ride, she'd had him laughing and opening up in ways he had never thought possible. His sisters always accused him of being a "tightwad" who "needed to loosen up," but somehow he felt free with Darcy.

"You know better," she warned the dogs away from the entrance of the house as Isaac followed her indoors. "The phone is over there." She motioned to the end table beside the couch.

The décor of the house was as kind, warm and inviting as Darcy. They'd had such a nice time, he feared asking her out might change the dynamics and chase her off. He called for roadside assistance, then hung up and gave her the bad—or good, depending on how you looked at it—news. "Since I'm not out in the sun baking, they said it will be at least three hours before they can change my tire. I hope you don't mind that I told them to use the number that showed up on their caller ID"

"Of course not. I reckon you're stuck with me for a few more hours. Water, tea, soda?"

"Water works for me." He followed her into the kitchen. "If my next question makes you feel uncomfortable at all, I swear, I'll stay with the dogs until my car is ready, but I have to ask."

"Go for it, and I doubt anything you ask will relegate you to the backyard," she said with the cutest smile.

"Why aren't you married?"

Laughing, she pulled a bottle of water out of the refrigerator. "You sound like my mom. Seriously though, I don't meet too many men out here, and those I do meet want the fast life of the city."

"Their loss is my gain. How about dinner?" he asked before thinking.

"I'd love to."

The End

Missing You (An Erotic Tale)

Unable to find warmth, she snuggled under the fluffy down comforter. *Another night alone.* She sighed. Before she married she'd spent many nights alone; but now she'd gotten used to his touch, his warmth, his scent, his love, him. Missing him terribly, she hugged the pillow close and fell asleep dreaming of his return.



Grateful he was able to wrap up business two days early, he placed his briefcase in the living room then climbed the stairs to their bedroom. He'd been totally exhausted, but thoughts of who awaited him rejuvenated his weary body. Still unable to believe he could have such strong feelings, he chuckled lightly at himself.

Not wishing to wake her, he slowly opened the door and stepped into the room. The little sliver of moonlight escaping between the blinds fell softly across her bare back. He smiled, thinking she'd turned the heat up past high, had several comforters on the bed, yet slept in the raw. He shook his head and covered her with a light blanket. Hot-blooded, she always kicked the comforters off, so why put them on and turn up the heat? He stripped, thinking some things weren't meant to be understood.

Filled with devilment, he undressed then disappeared under the cover. She woke slowly to him gently kissing and licking the hollow behind her knee. Strangely arousing, she wasn't sure if she liked it or not. Once she became accustomed, she decided she liked it. "Umm. When did you get home?" she asked sleepily.

"Shhh." He slowly pulled the cover down, continuing with her second hollow. He'd never thought of kissing a woman there, but it seemed like a good idea at the time, and her reactions showed it was definitely something for a repeat performance. He pulled himself up higher kissing, licking, suckling, and caressing her inner thighs. In a few more inches, he would be back home where he belonged.

She squirmed beneath his grip, loving the tingling sensations he sent through her. When he started kissing the base of her lower back and his fingers slipped into her, she freely twirled within the whirlwind taking her away.

They'd spoken on the phone daily, but he missed her touch and taste so much over the past few weeks. He hadn't imagined it would be like this.

His hot lips and tongue blazed a trail along her spine. She desperately fought to return to earth, but then he curled his arms under her shoulders, braced himself, entered her slowly, and began stroking.

She didn't stand a chance. "Let loose, baby. This one's for you," he whispered as he took her earlobe into his mouth. Basking in the elation encapsulating his body, he moaned. He'd intended on making this all about her, but the pleasure he felt as her moist heat caressed his hardness with each penetrating stroke pushed him to the edge and urged him to jump.

His words, his touch, and his love knocked out what little control she had left. She pressed her rear against him, forcing him deeper. Harder. She gripped at the bed, accidentally pulling the sheet loose. He laced his hands over hers, allowing her to squeeze as they both plunged happily into the pits of ecstasy.

The End

The Right Ticket

Who really gives tickets for going five miles over the speed limit on a highway! Carla thought—fumed—as she finished off her steak-and-baked-potato dinner. Granted, the officer had

only issued a warning, but the principle of the matter still had her steamed. *Too bad such good looks were wasted on a jerk.*

“Will you be having desert, apple pie perhaps?” asked the server, breaking Carla out of her musings.

“No thanks, I’ll just take the check.”

“The gentleman has already taken care of it for you.” She motioned a few tables over and walked away.

An automatic smile touched Carla’s lips as she turned to see who had been so sweet. The site of the all-too handsome officer who had pulled her over earlier wiped her smile away.

He had changed from his uniform to jeans and a T-shirt, but he was still entirely too sexy.

Carla reached for her purse to pay for his meal. No way would she accept his kindness.

“Still mad at me?” He set his burger, fries and drink on the table and took the seat beside her, so she couldn’t get out without climbing over the table, kicking him out of the booth or asking him to move. Asking him to move was her least favorite of choices.

“Are you stalking me?”

“Yep, you’re still mad at me.” He chuckled and took a bite of his burger. “You’re cute when you’re angry.” He handed her a fry. “So what are you doing when you’re not speeding down the highways?”

“I’m a web developer. “ A charming jerk was an oxymoron if she’d ever heard one, but something about Officer Safety drew her to him, which she hated. “Haven’t you heard of the ten-mile rule? Drivers are given ten miles over the posted speed limit on the highway. I was only going five over.”

Brow raised, he said, “I must have missed that memo. And I didn’t give you a ticket, I gave you a warning. I was looking out for your safety.” He took another bite of his burger.

“Sure you were. And what are you up to now?”

“I’m enjoying the evening with a beautiful woman.”

Heat rushed to her face.

“You’re cute when you’re embarrassed also.” He ate a fry. “Are you dating anyone?”

“Kind of forward, aren’t you?”

“I’m a man. It’s part of who we are.” He motioned to the server. “Could you please get the lady another whatever she was drinking.” He turned to Carla. “Do you want something else to eat?”

“No thanks.” A man’s man, she liked that. “My dad’s a retired cop. I’ll ask him to send you the ten-mile-rule memo.”

He laughed. “Oh, the lady is forgiving me. Things are looking up. Since you don’t seem to want to answer my question, I’ll start.”

The waitress set another tea on the table in front of Carla.

“Thank you.”

Once the server moved on, he continued with, “I’m a single father of the cutest three-year-old little girl in the world. My wife died in a car accident a year and a half ago.”

Hands to her face, Carla didn’t know what to do. “I’m so sorry. Where’s your daughter?”

“I’ll be picking her up from my mother’s after we finish up here. I like to unwind a bit before I get her. What about you, any children, a husband, boyfriend?”

“No on all accounts,” she said softly. She had actually considered dating him, but his having a child changed things drastically. Any man Carla dated had to have future-husband potential, not that she was looking to marry any time soon. She just new she wanted to marry

some day, so why waste time dating men she knew weren't right for her? Yet something about Officer Safety told her he was the right ticket.

"If you act right, your no's may be turning to yes's soon."

Another smile touched her lips. She'd bet she hadn't smiled this much in...in ever. He had this way with him she couldn't explain. "If I act right?"

"I have to make sure you aren't a stalker or anything."

Laughing, she ate one of his fries. "You are too much..." she trailed off. "I'm sorry, but what's your name?"

"I'm winning you over." He winked.

"Never mind. I already know. It's Officer Arrogant."

"Close, but not quite. Craig Matthews at your service. Where would you like to go tomorrow?"

"I'm not sure. I mean...what about your daughter?"

"I'm not asking you to marry me, yet." He flashed a quick smile. "Let's get to know each other and see where this leads."

Unsure, yet excited about the possibilities, she said, "Let's see where this leads."

The End

The Call

"Grapes, the breakfast of champions." Sharon popped a red seedless grape into her mouth and continued deleting e-mails. She'd been sent to e-mail jail, yet again, and couldn't receive or send e-mails until she cleaned out her folders. The phone rang, giving her a slight start. Only 8:45, she hadn't expected any calls, especially on her cell phone.

"Hello, Sharon Armstrong speaking."

"Good morning, Miss Armstrong..."

The sexy, low voice on the other end of the line took her away from the here and now. It wasn't what he was saying, but the rich timbre, tenor and tone that had her heart racing and ear glued to the phone for more.

This is crazy, she thought as he finished explaining he was the regional manager of the dealership she'd purchased her car from. People didn't fall for a voice like they did with love at first sight. Truth be told, she didn't believe in love at first sight either, so this was impossible.

They completed discussing the detailed review she'd written on the dealership she'd purchased her car from, then ventured into other areas. Conversation flowed so easily she pinched herself to ensure she wasn't dreaming.

"I see you have a Loop area code," he said. "I was transferred from Chicago a year ago."

"No way. I'm new down here also." Though she lived in Dallas, she maintained her cell number from Chicago.

A million and one things ran through her mind simultaneously, the main one being could she ask him out? Since this was a "business" call, she knew he wouldn't ask her out no matter how interested in her he was. So the ball was in her court. She'd never asked a man out before, and this was someone she hadn't actually met. What if he was married or dating? What if she were imagining this attraction between them?

She didn't want the call to end, but it must. There was no way she could have fallen for this man so easily. That wasn't like her. "I guess I should let you get back to work. It was nice meeting you, Jerry." *Ask him out!* raged loudly in her mind, but she held fast. So what if he had

the same outlook on life as her? So what if they shared the same dry sense of humor, love of books and travel? So what if every fiber of her being yelled, *He's the one! Don't let him slip away!* All that mattered was he was no more than a voice at the other end of the phone line.

"It was nice speaking with you, Sharon. If you need anything, you have my number."

Awkward silence filled the void in conversation as she fought her apprehension of asking him out. "Have a great day, Jerry." *You're such a chicken.*

After she disconnected, she examined every word he'd said over their hour-long conversation that should have taken five minutes—tops. The rest of the day, Sharon was no good. She had begun dialing his number several times, but couldn't complete the call. A simple conversation shouldn't be affecting her this way. *Simple...not quite so simple.* Here it was half past six, and she was still in a state of shock.

"What's wrong with me?" she mumbled, watching the last of her work-a-holic coworkers leave for the day.

Tired of the see-saw she'd placed herself on, this time when she dialed Jerry's number she actually hit the last digit and allowed the call to be placed. In a way she hoped he'd already gone home for the evening.

"Hello, Sharon."

Was that cheer or her hopeful imagination she heard in his voice? Heart beating faster than a hummingbird's wings flap, she drew in a non-too-calming breath. "I know the end of the day has passed, but umm, would you like to catch a movie? I mean if you aren't married or dating or anything like that," she rambled.

Seconds passed. Too many seconds. Face heated with embarrassment, she stammered, "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have called. I—"

"I'm sorry," he interrupted. "I'm just in a little shock. I've been praying you'd call back all day, but didn't truly expect it to happen, then..." He chuckled. "I'm sorry. This has never happened to me before. I'd love to go out to a movie, but I missed my lunch. Hate to admit it, but I was hoping a certain young lady would call and didn't want to miss her. Would you like to grab a bite to eat first? My treat."

"Oh, believe me when I say I know exactly how you feel." Still in a state of this-is-not-happening, she answered, "I'd love to."

"Then it's a date."

The End

Shy Love (An Erotic Tale)

Dear Diary,

Every day for the past three weeks he's come by my door, but I've been too shy to say what is really on my mind. We joke, laugh, and play around, but I'm just too shy, or maybe I'm afraid.

Afraid he's just being friendly and doesn't have the same attraction for me I have for him. Afraid he is humoring someone he considers lonely as opposed to alone. Afraid he sees me as anything besides the loving, sensual, sexual woman I am.

There's the doorbell. We'll have to finish this entry another day.



"Oh," she uttered, totally surprised. "Come in." She stepped back and allowed him in.

His eyes traveled hungrily along her bare legs, thighs, then stopped to enjoy the contrast in color between her creamy silk robe laying against her sun kissed skin. He'd found her sexy in her baggy jeans and T-shirt, now this. He subconsciously licked his lips, causing a flash of heat to bolt through her body.

She flushed and looked away. "I'm sorry. I didn't expect anyone." Though already tied, she clutched the robe closed. She chastised herself for answering the door in such a state and not cutting off the soft jazz playing in the background. What must he think? He nodded a hello and stepped in. She closed the door behind him. "What can I do for you?" She convinced herself to be brave, gazed into his deep brown eyes, and resisted the urge to melt.

Her soft, sultry voice caressed his manhood to a state of full arousal. He watched her cling to the robe, and his heart smiled. When had he fallen in love with her? He cupped her face in his hands, bent, and brushed his lips over hers.

His light yet potent brushing touched her core, leaving her wanting, needing more. Her heart raced to keep fear from gripping her. When he'd licked his lips, she'd wished she could taste him. Afraid of rejection, she slowly lifted herself on her tiptoes and suckled gently on his bottom lip.

He moaned his satisfaction in her boldness, wrapped his arms around her and pulled her into his body where he took control of the kiss. She opened freely, allowing him to taste every succulent inch of her mouth.

He pulled away and stared down into her confused eyes. This isn't what he'd come for. He came to tell her he'd fallen in love with her. He closed his eyes, praying to cool the fires within.

She looked at the strong man before her. The man she loved. This was her shot. It was now or never. She drew in a deep breath, released it slowly, untied her robe, then placed his hands on her small waist. The feel of his fingers gliding over her smooth skin rippled passion waves through them both. He peered into her eyes and saw a desire and love that matched his own.

Her small fingers slipped under his shirt and crept along his chest, lifting his shirt and temperature. He tossed his shirt to the side, displaying his expansive chest with matching six-pack. She bent slightly, gently kissing and suckling every ridge of his abdomen. The fire of her lips and tongue worked their way down, blazing a trail south. Her finger caught in the waist of his pants and tugged lightly.

He glanced over his shoulder for the couch, then pulled her along. He began unzipping his pants, but she stopped him. She'd never undressed a man before and wanted to put the shyness in the cupboard for a time and try a new approach. She pulled down this pants and briefs, kissing, licking, suckling, and driving him wild along the way.

The rush of ecstasy pulsating through his veins was like none he'd ever felt before. He leaned back, permitting his shy love to have her way. She viewed him greedily. Where to start? She caressed his chest with one hand and held his hardness with the other. Keeping her eyes locked on his, she licked along his shaft from base to head and around.

He released a slight sigh and began gyrating slowly, caressing her shoulders and back. Then his fingers entered her heat and dallied in her soft moistness. She took him into her mouth, massaging with her tongue, suckling, enjoying the pleasure she gave. The excitement of his throbbing member in her mouth and his finger play had her own private parts wet with anticipation.

He never imagined his shy love would have no inhibitions in bed. He'd decided to accept her as she was. He moaned, thinking he couldn't take much more. As if she could read his mind, she released him from the oral bliss and straddled him.

"Wait a second, baby." He loved her, so he ensured they wouldn't be having children before they were both ready. Condom in place, he lay back on the couch as she straddled him again.

"Umm," he groaned. First penetration never felt so sweet.

She set a slow steady pace, savoring every glorious inch. He held onto her buttocks, coaxing her to take in more, harder and faster. She suckled his neck, pumping, and forcing more pressure on the nub of her heat.

He wanted to supply her every need. In a blink of an eye, he braced her back, then flipped them both so he'd be on top. She laid her head back, her eyes pleading for release. He propped himself on his arms for leverage, then began stroking long and deep.

She matched his rhythm, and her legs wrapped around his thighs, pulling him deeper. "Harder," she murmured. She didn't have to ask twice. The sound of flesh hitting flesh filled the room. She lay beneath him, taking all he had to offer and giving everything in return. He could feel her tightening around his hardness.

She unconsciously held her breath, not wanting it to end.

"Relax, baby, let it flow." He could feel himself nearing the edge. Her back arched, and she cried out in euphoric rapture, pushing him over the top.

They lay together, neither saying a word.



Dear Diary,

Sorry it's been so long, but I've been on my honeymoon. I'll tell you about it later.

The End

Blind Date

How complicated was it to accept a simple donation? Trisha thought from the backseat of the limousine. Her best friend had organized the fundraising event, thus couldn't participate in the bachelor auction, so she had begged Trisha to. Purchasing some strange man for a date didn't sound the least bit appealing to Trisha, but she gave Britney a \$2000 donation for the charity.

Try to do a good thing and bam! Britney had entered Trisha into the auction and won "time" with some guy who couldn't get a date through traditional means. She chuckled. Okay, so the charity had screened the men and each was to be an affluent, upstanding citizen who was doing his part to help a worthy cause. Either way, she still didn't want to be bothered, but agreed to attend the photo shoot. At least she was getting a good meal out of the deal.

The limousine stopped in front of a luxury condominium complex. "Is there a restaurant inside?" Trisha asked the driver.

"No, ma'am." He glanced at the clock. "We're running a little late. The photographer should already be there."

If it weren't for knowing Britney was on the up and up, there was no way Trisha would have walked into the building. *Gumbo and crab cakes...Nose don't fail me now!* Trisha thought as she stood outside the condominium door. Cajun food was her favorite.

Inside the palatial, southwestern-designed abode, the photographer stood ready and waiting. She clicked a few pictures of Trisha in the living area.

“Dinner’s ready when you are,” said the most handsome man Trisha had ever seen in her life. Before she could respond, he disappeared into the kitchen.

“When is…” Trisha trailed off. She’d wanted to ask the photographer when her date would arrive, but had forgotten to open the stupid envelope with his profile in it that Britney had given her, so she didn’t even know the guy’s name.

“You can go ahead and eat. Your date was tied up and can’t make it.”

“Oh no he didn’t.” She laughed. “I guess it serves me right.” She pushed up from the sofa. “Come on. No sense in letting good food go to waste.”

“Nah, you go ahead. I want to snap a few shots of the view from the balcony.”

“Suit yourself.” In the kitchen, Trisha drew in a deep breath. “This is the most delicious meal I’ve ever had the pleasure of smelling. I think I’ve died and gone to heaven. Do you need any help?” she asked the chef.

“I’m good. Take a seat.” He held a chair out for her.

Cute, considerate and could cook, who could ask for anything more?

“I’m David Bell.” He returned to the pot of rice, which she’d bet was sticky just the way she liked it. Britney had done a bang-up job of telling her “date” her taste in food.

“I’m Trisha Swanson. You aren’t going to make me eat by myself, are you?”

“Are you sure you don’t mind?”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way.” She motioned to the seat across from her. “There’s plenty of room.”

“In that case, I’d love to have dinner with you.” He plated their food and joined her at the table. “You really didn’t want to hold up your end of the auction, did you?” He set her food before her.

“This was Britney’s way of setting me up on a blind date. She seems to think all women should be happily married.” The aroma wafting up from the gumbo warmed her heart. “Yeah, I’ve died and gone to heaven.”

He chuckled. “You are an excellent ego booster. I’ll need to cook for you more often.”

Flirting, he was actually flirting with her and she liked it. He had this charm about him that just drew her.

“Don’t you ever want to marry?”

“I’m definitely open to the possibility, if the right guy comes along.” The two finished their meal over easy conversation and continued well into the night. Eventually the photographer popped in to say good-bye.

As they cleaned the kitchen together, Trisha didn’t want their time to end, and David seemed to be in the same predicament.

“Well… I guess the next meal is on me.”

“Sounds delicious.”

She broke out pen and paper to write a thank you to her missing host. Embarrassed, she asked, “This will sound horrible, but could you please tell me the name of my auction date?”

With an adorable smile, he took out his business card and handed it over.

After reading the card, she burst into laughter. “I’m so pleased to meet you, Mr. David Bell, Attorney at Law.”

“Sorry for the deception.”

Still laughing, all she could do was shake her head. “Now this was my kind of blind date.”

The End

A Message From The Author

I hope you enjoyed this collection of short love stories. I know with my busy lifestyle sometimes I just need something short and sweet. If you'd like to discuss this compilation, any of my titles or would just like to say *HI*, you can contact me at deatri@deewrites.com. Be sure to sign up for my newsletter at <http://deatrikingbey.com> for details on my past and upcoming titles, contest, and other goodies.

Until the next novel,
Much Joy, Peace and Love
Deatri King-Bey