

The Long Arm of the Law

and other Short Stories

**By
Celeste Jones**

The Long Arm of the Law

and other Short Stories

**By
Celeste Jones**

**A Newsite Web Services Book
Published by arrangement with the author**

All rights reserved.

Copyright 2006 © by Celeste Jones

This book may not be reproduced in whole or part,
by mimeograph or any other means, without
permission of the author or Newsite Web Services,
LLC

Published by Newsite Web Services, LLC
P.O. Box 1286, Loganville, Georgia 30052 USA

disciplineanddesire@hotmail.com
disciplineanddesire.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Long Arm of the Law	
Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	13
The Education of Professor Warner	23
The Senator Takes a Bride	38
Lesson for the Teacher	50
e-Dating.com	62
The Summer Place	75
Dinner at the Club	87
The Wedding	100
Puss in Boots	113
Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall	125
The Assignment	137
Marcie's Luck Runs Out	149
A Ride in the Country	162

The Long Arm of the Law

Chapter One

Della rushed down the marble corridor of the courthouse, the heels of her sling back pumps clicking rapidly against the floor. She burst through the doors of courtroom number one and breathlessly took her seat at the defense table. She was unaware of the curious, yet relieved, look on her client's face. Her attention was focused on the judge.

"Ms. Mason, you are late." The words, spoken precisely and enunciated clearly, pierced the courtroom, and Della felt her stomach tighten.

"My apologies to the court, your honor. I certainly meant no disrespect."

The judge went on, "you know this court will not tolerate a disruption in its schedule. I'm finding you in contempt and fining you five hundred dollars. Make sure you pay the clerk before you leave."

She opened her mouth to protest, but one look from the judge told her that further protestations would only add to his foul mood. She sat down and opened her brief case.

"One more thing, Ms. Mason." Della looked up at the judge again. "I'd like to see you in my chambers after this hearing."

"Yes, your honor." Her shoulders slumped briefly, and then she straightened herself and focused on the judge who was addressing her client.

"Ms. Hanford, the grand jury has indicted you for pandering. The indictment states that for a period spanning at least six months prior to your arrest you were engaged in procuring women to perform sex acts for money and that you profited from those activities. In this state, pandering is a fourth degree felony, which carries a maximum possible sentence of two years in the state reformatory for women and a maximum possible fine of five thousand dollars. How do you wish to plead to these charges?"

Della felt her client tense in the seat next to her and heard her soft gasp when the judge stated the possible sentences. Della rose quickly to her feet. "Your honor, my client pleads not guilty. We will waive the formal reading of the indictment. My client wishes to assert her right to a speedy trial and to a reasonable bond."

At the mention of bond, the prosecutor, Johnny Simpson, rose to address the court. Because he was usually detached and unemotional, Della was surprised to see perspiration glistening under his thinning brown hair.

"Your honor, the state believes that the defendant, Ms. Hanford, is a flight risk. She has considerable assets at her disposal and no extended family in the area. For that reason, the state requests that bail be set at one million dollars."

"A million dollars?" The words were out of Della's mouth before she realized what she was doing. She clamped her mouth shut and looked at the judge.

He glared down at her from the bench and said through clenched teeth, "Ms. Mason, would you care to respond to Mr. Simpson's statement?"

As she stood to address the court, Della smoothed her skirt and squared her shoulders. Her fifteen years of experience kicked in to give her the confidence and poise that had earned her a reputation as one of the best criminal defense lawyers in the state. She spoke clearly and directly to the court.

"Yes, your honor, I would. Mr. Simpson's request for one million dollars bond is outrageous. Clearly, it is based upon the publicity that this case has generated rather than concern for the safety of the community. My client is charged with pandering, and despite the headlines in the paper that make it seem like a major criminal offense, pandering is a low level felony. There are no allegations of violence or weapons. My client is not a threat to the safety of the community. She has business dealings in the

area as well as significant real estate holdings. She is married, and her husband has his own business, which makes it even less likely that she would flee. She has no prior record and there is no indication that she is a flight risk. Therefore, the defense requests that she be released on her own recognizance."

"Bond is set at one million dollars. Court is adjourned." With that, the judge slammed down his gavel and left the bench. As he did so, he turned back to Della, "Remember, Ms. Mason, I wish to see you in chambers."

Della's stomach tightened again, and her jaw clenched as she anticipated yet another confrontation with the judge.

As the courtroom emptied, Della followed her client into one of the adjoining conference rooms. After they were seated and the door was closed, Della introduced herself to her client. "Peggy, I'm so sorry that I was late and didn't get a chance to speak with you before the hearing began. When your husband called yesterday to retain my services, he didn't have a lot of information about the case. What can you tell me?"

Della studied her client. The dumpy orange jail jumpsuit could not hide the fact that she was quite lovely. Her beautiful complexion and toned body were a testament to the benefits of weekly facials and regular workouts with a personal trainer. Peggy Hanford looked to be in her early thirties.

Peggy took a deep breath. "Nothing like this has ever happened to me before, but you probably hear that all the time. I employ a number of young women who provide companionship to gentlemen, and most of my girls are in college or graduate school, so they need the extra money. I like to hire students because they can make the money they need in a short amount of time, and my clients want attractive and intelligent young women who can accompany them to social events or simply to provide companionship for a nice dinner. There are

also rooms at my house that they can use if privacy and discretion are needed. That's what my company, Jolie, provides. If the girls and the gentlemen who have engaged their services for the evening come to some other agreements for additional services, so be it. That's not what we advertise or provide...technically."

Della noticed a deputy lingering outside the door waiting to take Peggy back to the county jail. "I'm sorry that the judge set your bond so high. I am assuming, based upon what your husband told me, that you could use one of your homes as collateral in order to bond out today. Once you are home, call my office and we will make an appointment to go over all the details. I haven't even had a chance to go over the police reports or the search warrant. Della patted her client's shoulder as she stood, "Please don't be concerned. I'll talk to you soon. But, as you know, I really must go and meet with the judge."

Della tapped on the judge's door and entered. His chambers were large and masculine in their décor. There were overstuffed chairs near the antique desk, and photographs of the judge as a college football player sat amongst the law books on the shelves. A large, well worn, leather couch occupied one whole wall.

The judge was standing in the middle of the room. Though he no longer played football, he still looked nearly the same as when he was in college, thanks to regular workouts and good genes. Only the slight graying at his temples gave any indication that he was old enough to be the father of three teenage sons. He removed his robe and laid it across one of the overstuffed chairs. Then he crossed the room, and closed, and locked the door. He turned slowly to look at her, and Della held her breath as she waited for him to speak.

"Della, how could you be late on today of all

days? Did you see the news trucks outside and the reporters in the courtroom today? They're going to be looking for anything to make a story out of this case, and my own wife shows up late!" He paused to gain control so that his secretary would not hear his raised voice.

"I'm sorry, darling. You know I am, but I couldn't help it." The words spilled from Della's mouth. "The dog jumped on me on my way out of the house, and I got a big run in my stockings. I had to go back into the house and change—and since I didn't have any more pantyhose, I had to put on that silly garter belt and stockings that you got me for my birthday. It all took so long that I was late."

"Your excuses will not be tolerated, young lady. We've had this conversation so many times that I can't count them all. You know that in order to practice in my court we must both show the highest level of professionalism in order to avoid accusations of favoritism. I know that the five hundred dollar fine might seem harsh, but I have to make it clear that you are not receiving any special treatment."

Della knew Steven was right, and she hung her head. He was a good judge and didn't deserve the problems she was causing him.

Her husband walked toward Della and wrapped her in his strong embrace. "I know you're sorry, darling," he said, kissing the top of her head. "But, you cannot flaunt the rules of court—especially not the rules of my court. You must be punished."

With that, Steven sat down on the leather couch and pulled Della across his knees. She was caught by surprise, and a small squeal escaped her lips.

"Now, sweetheart, you know I can't have my staff hear you. So be a good girl and take your punishment quietly." Steven pulled his wife's silk skirt up around her waist and the corners of his mouth turned up in a small smile. "I see you didn't have time to find any panties this morning either.

You know how I feel about my wife flaunting herself. Despite the fact that I am enjoying the view, that will cost you five more."

As he spoke, the judge's hand came down hard on Della's exposed backside. Her stocking clad legs churned in response to the sudden, intense pain. Within a few minutes, the black silk of his wife's stockings provided a stark contrast to the red hue of her obviously stinging rump.

Della bit her lip to keep from crying out. Tears stung her eyes, and she gasped to catch her breath. She clung to the arm of the couch to keep her balance. "I'm sorry, Steven...really I am. Please stop! I have another hearing in an hour, and I'll never be able to sit through it. You know how hard those wooden chairs in Judge Shaw's courtroom are."

The determined judge continued to redden his wife's nicely rounded bottom and shapely thighs. "Sweetheart, you know very well that I cannot allow your behavior to go unpunished. You'll just have to hope that Judge Shaw doesn't go on another one of his long-winded tirades while you are seated at counsel tables."

When he finally finished meting out Della's punishment, Steven smoothed her skirt back in place and turned her over to hold her in his arms. Della snuggled her face into her husband's neck and breathed deeply of his scent—a heady combination of male strength, cologne, and a bit of sweat. She drew in a ragged breath as he ran his hand down her spine and gently cradled her close.

Slowly, the judge moved his hand down Della's thigh and up her skirt. "I guess going without panties does have some advantages," he said, smiling as his hand found its target.

The well-spanked woman wriggled in delight as his fingers moved inward and expertly stroked soft pink flesh until she was wet and panting. She kissed Steven's neck and tugged at his earlobe with her teeth. Laying her down on the couch, the judge

stood to kick off his shoes and remove his pants. Moments later, Della's stinging hiney was pushed against the leather cushions of the couch, her skirt again up around her waist as her husband knelt over her. Reaching up, she loosened her husband's tie and unbuttoned his shirt. She ran her hands over the soft hair of his chest, down and around his hips to give his rear end a squeeze, and then back to the front to clasp his large and familiar erection with both hands. The heat created by Steven's hard right hand was quickly spreading through Della's body.

"Oh, darling, I'm sorry that I got so mad," Steven said as he unbuttoned his wife's blouse and released the front clasp on her bra. "I'm just under so much stress." He ran his hands over her breasts--still firm and lush, even after three children---and teased at her nipples until they were pink and swollen. Where his fingers ventured, the judge's lips quickly followed.

Della felt a sudden thrill as he pulled at her nipple with his teeth. Claspng her hands in his thick, dark hair, she bit her lip to keep from crying out. Steven raised his head and kissed her. Softly at first, and then deeper. His tongue, which had been rough against her breast, was warm and sensuous as it probed her mouth and played with her tongue. When he pulled away, Della was gasping.

"I know you're under a lot of stress, dear. And, truly, I'm sorry I was late." Della reached down and stroked his generous erection as she spoke. Her hand slid up and down from root to tip and back again. "Mmmm. You just need to release some of this stress, Your Honor."

Della bent her head and touched her tongue to the tip of Steven's throbbing penis. She ran her tongue around the tip, thoroughly lubricating him before he groaned huskily and pushed her back into the soft leather. He pushed her thighs apart with his knee and lowered himself to enter her.

Della grasped Steven's shoulders and buried her

face in his neck to keep from crying out at the pleasure he gave her. The stinging in her butt as she wriggled it against the soft leather couch in order to take him deeper inside only added to the pleasurable sensations whirling around her. Wrapping her legs around him and pulling him close, she moaned soft encouragements until Steven released the pressure of the day into her welcoming heat.

Della left her firm's check for five hundred dollars with the clerk of courts and walked outside to return to her office. Even the unbearably long hearing with Judge Shaw could not take the spring out of her step as she remembered her tryst with her husband that morning. She was, however, glad that she had not worn panties when she felt the cool fall breeze blow under her skirt and cool her uncovered bottom. Those hard wooden chairs in Judge Shaw's courtroom had done nothing to relieve the assault on her shapely rump that her husband had meted out that morning. At least, her silk skirt was cool against her bare skin.

She was glad to have the opportunity to walk back to her office. It gave her a chance to think about the events of the morning. Much as she had enjoyed herself in Steven's chambers that morning, she was also a bit curious. She and Steven had always had a healthy sex life, though three active sons and two busy careers sometimes made it difficult to have the rowdy romps they had enjoyed in college. Because even the lustiest of love lives can get a bit mundane after ten or more years, the two of them had agreed several years before to practice domestic discipline after Della read an article about it on the internet. Though she had never quite pictured herself as someone who would enjoy such things, Della and Steven had both been intrigued by the idea, and she had been surprised by how much excitement it added to their sex life.

The part that had her curious now was that they had never engaged in discipline practices outside of their home before. Even at home, it was always done either when all of the boys were away, or behind locked bedroom doors. Della was a bit surprised that Steven had extended the practice to his workplace. They had made good use of the leather couch in his office before, and had even christened his bench shortly after he was elected to his first term as judge, but their after hours activities in the courthouse had never before included the newest part of their sex lives.

She continued walking along, lost in pleasant thought, when she saw Johnny Simpson, the prosecutor, skulking along on the other side of the street. Her mind shifted away from the pleasures of the flesh to the reality of earning a living and providing legal service to her clients. Della had known Johnny Simpson for many years, and didn't like him. They had butted heads on many occasions---naturally so, given the nature of the relationship between prosecutors and defense attorneys---but most opposing attorneys were able to set aside whatever differences they had in the courtroom and maintain cordial relationships. Johnny Simpson, however, took it all very personally. He hated to lose...especially to a woman.

As she watched Simpson from across the street, Della was reminded of his unusual behavior that morning at Peggy Hanford's hearing. Although he took his work personally, he rarely showed emotion in the courtroom. That's why Della had been surprised to see that he was sweating in court that morning. The request for a million dollars bond was also out of character. In the world of criminal law, things were not always as they seemed, and Della had a feeling that something about Peggy Hanford and Johnny Simpson just didn't pass the smell test.

"Della, you've gotten phone calls from both city

newspapers, three radio stations, the local ABC affiliate, and Dr. Ruth. They all want to talk about Peggy Hanford." Della's secretary, Darlene, greeted her with a stack of phone messages. "And, speaking of Mrs. Hanford, the messenger picked up the police reports on the raid of her place. They're on your desk." Darlene lowered her voice to a whisper, "There's also a woman waiting in your office. She insisted on speaking to you concerning your newest client. It seemed best to have her wait in your office, rather than the reception area."

Della's brow furrowed with curiosity as she entered her office. A well-dressed woman stood to shake her hand as she entered. "I'm sorry to barge in on you, Ms. Mason, but it's very important, and I didn't want to tell anyone else why I was here. I'm Carla, and I work for Peggy Hanford."

"Please sit down, Carla. What can I do for you?" Della took a seat behind her desk and studied the younger woman. She was probably about twenty-five, with shoulder length blonde hair and beautiful green eyes. She had shapely legs that were set off by heels that were just a bit too high and a skirt that was just a bit too short for a law office. Della imagined that she was probably very popular with Jolie's clients.

Carla sat in a chair across from Della. "We've all just been so upset since Peggy was arrested, yesterday. It's just...wrong. She's a wonderful boss and treats us all so well. She never makes us do anything that we don't want to do, and she really does her best to help us. She even loaned me the money for next semester's tuition. I lost my scholarship, " she confided, "when the school found out that I was working for Peggy."

"Mrs. Hanford seems like a nice person, but is there a more specific reason why you're here?" Della asked. She wanted to be polite, but she also had a desk full of files that needed her attention. She couldn't spend all afternoon holding this girl's hand.

"Oh yes. I'm sorry. I do have something that I think will be of interest to you." She pulled a manila envelope out of her bag as she spoke. "I've been with Peggy longer than most of the other girls, four years in December. Most girls work for a year or two until they get their degree or finish grad school. Anyway, since I've been there the longest, I also know the most about the inner workings of the business. When I read the paper this morning, I was terribly upset about everything---including the possible loss of a well paying job---and I just didn't know what to do. Then I saw this picture in the paper." She pointed to a photo of Johnny Simpson next to a quote from him about being tough on crime. Della leaned forward. Carla had all of her attention as she continued.

"Not everyone knows this, and I'm sure that it would cost us some clients if word of this got out, but there are surveillance cameras all over Peggy's house. Well, at least in the rooms that are used for the business, the living room, and three of the bedrooms. One of the things that Peggy's husband does is save a still photo of every client, just in case. When I saw this picture in the paper, I knew right away that there was something familiar about the guy. Frankly, it gave me the creeps. So, I started looking through the still photos that were on file. This is what I found."

She slid the manila envelope across the desk, and Della, filled with curiosity and a bit of excitement, opened the flap and pulled out a photo. It was a bit grainy, but it showed a man wearing a bad hairpiece, and nothing else. Della had spent enough time sitting across the courtroom looking at Johnny Simpson to know him, even without his customary business suit. He was sitting on the edge of an opulent bed while a barely dressed Carla was bent over in front of him, grasping her ankles. Upon closer inspection, Della could see that Johnny was holding a leather paddle in his hand.

Della looked up at Carla with a quizzical look on

her face. "What can you tell me about this man?"

Carla wrinkled up her nose and said, "He's creepy. That was the only time that he ever came to Jolie. I told Peggy that he made me feel uncomfortable, and when he came back a couple weeks later, she turned him away. Two days later, she was arrested. Peggy probably didn't recognize him in court because of the hairpiece. It's really bad, isn't it? It slipped off at one point, so I got a look at him without it. I guess the adhesive couldn't stand up to all the sweating that he was doing. He sweats a lot. Do you think that this will help Peggy?"

"Yes, Carla, I do think this will help immensely. Thank you so much for bringing this to me. I'm sure that once I show a copy to the prosecutor, and assure him that I intend to enter it into evidence at trial, he'll do whatever he can to make sure that this case never goes that far. That will be very good news for Peggy."

Carla smiled with pleasure as she stood to leave. When she shook Della's hand, she said, "He just kept wanting to spank me. Isn't that creepy?"

After Carla left, Della closed the door to her office and sat down at her desk. She picked up the picture of Johnny Simpson in one hand and her phone in the other. "Darlene, would you get me Johnny Simpson on the phone, please?" Della sat back in her chair with a satisfied grin as she heard Johnny Simpson pick up on the other end.

Chapter Two

An hour after she hung up the phone with Johnny Simpson, Della was seated at a conference table in her office with her client, Peggy Hanford, seated next to her. Since Della had seen her in court that morning, Peggy had posted the million dollars bond imposed by Della's husband. She was freshly showered and made up and wearing a flawless taupe linen suit with matching suede pumps and handbag. Della was a bit envious of the shoes and purse.

Across the table sat Johnny Simpson...sweating. When Della spoke with him on the phone earlier, she had simply told him that she'd met his "friend" Carla and that it was important for him to be at her office within an hour. Della had left him waiting in the conference room for fifteen minutes, in part, so that she could meet with Peggy, and in part just to make him squirm.

Without saying a word, Della slowly slid a manila envelope across the table to the prosecutor. She could see that Simpson's palms were damp as he reached for the envelope and opened the flap. As Simpson slid the picture out of the envelope, Della watched the color fade from his face while more sweat beaded up on his forehead and spread across his scalp.

The seasoned prosecutor didn't say a word. The defense attorney watched as he glanced at the photo that showed him naked, wearing a bad toupee, and poised to spank one of Peggy Hanford's most popular "escorts". Simpson slid the potentially career ending photo back into the envelope and laid it on the table. He licked his lips, and looked up at Della. "What do you want?"

Della stared at him evenly; "A dismissal of all charges and a public apology for my client...and you get the photo and the video from which it was taken."

"A public apology? Are you nuts? There's no way that I am going to publicly apologize for prosecuting Peggy Hanford."

Della shrugged her shoulders and started to rise from her seat. "Suit yourself. I'm sure that a properly worded public apology would be much less humiliating than seeing this photo on the front page of the paper. Aren't you up for re-election this year? How's the campaign fund looking?"

The prosecutor knew that Della had him right where she wanted him, and there was nothing that he could do about it. The defeated man sighed and stared back at opposing counsel with as much dignity as he could muster under the circumstances. "You win," he said with resignation.

Della stretched out her left foot and turned off the hot water tap with her big toe. When she and Steven built the house early in their marriage, the Jacuzzi tub for two seemed like quite an extravagance, but as she slid further into the warm water and breathed deeply of the lavender scented bubbles, Della once again assured herself that it was money well-spent.

After she left the office, the busy mother had dropped her youngest son, Zach, off at a friend's house to spend the night. The twins were out with friends, so Della was alone to soak to her heart's content until Steven arrived. Candles flickered around the edge of the tub while she sipped a glass of wine. She set the empty wineglass on the floor next to the tub, stretched out, and closed her eyes.

The lawyer chuckled to herself, as she thought about the picture of Johnny Simpson, naked except for that nasty hairpiece, poised to spank the lovely rump of the young and charming Carla. Although Della didn't particularly care for Johnny Simpson, she had never considered him to be foolish, so his behavior was puzzling to her. Why was he so

determined to prosecute Peggy Hanford when he knew that he had been a client? Did he actually believe that no one would recognize him in that cheap toupee? Della sipped her wine again and continued to ponder the prosecutor's odd behavior.

It had been a long and eventful day. Professionally, it had been one of the best days of her legal career; a complete dismissal of the charges for her client, a public apology from the prosecutor, and the opportunity to let Johnny Simpson know that she held his career in the palm of her hand. All that, plus Peggy Hanford insisted that she keep the entire retainer fee. All in all, it hadn't been a bad day's work.

Personally, Della was not so optimistic. She felt the storm clouds brewing and knew they were blowing in fast. The lawyer knew that it would be devastating to Peggy Hanford's business if word got out that her clients were being video taped while they visited with her "girls". Therefore, it was in the best interest of both the prosecution and the defense for a confidential settlement agreement to be signed and sealed. Della had prepared the documents herself and knew that the notice of dismissal of all charges against Peggy Hanford had been taken to Steven's courtroom for filing late in the afternoon. She was well aware that her husband, the judge, would be sure to see the dismissal before the end of the day, and would not be happy about the fact that one of the cases on his docket had been resolved without any notice to him. The fact that the Peggy Hanford case had been on the front page of the newspaper for the last two days didn't help.

Della felt torn between her professional ethics and her duty to her husband. Within the profession, her reputation was untarnished. Her fellow attorneys knew that when she gave her word, they could count on it. But did that negate her obligation to her husband? She and Steven had agreed long ago that they would not keep secrets from each

other—no matter how painful. The fact that they were still happily married after more than fifteen years was due in large part to their pledge of complete honesty. Where did their arrangement fit in when it came to professional ethics and her agreement with the prosecutor?

Of course, it was also the “no secrets” policy that had led Della to confide in her husband about her secret desire to try domestic discipline. She had stumbled upon an Internet site by accident and stayed up half the night reading people’s stories about the pleasure of pain. For weeks afterward, she had been obsessed with the idea of feeling Steven’s broad hands reddening her backside, and she snuck off to the secret web site at every opportunity. Steven, noticing her distraction, had compelled his embarrassed wife to tell him what was on her mind, reminding her of their pledge. Although he was initially stunned by her confession, Della’s lover was also intrigued. That night had been a turning point in their relationship. It had actually increased the trust and intimacy between them. As she thought about the first stings of Steven’s hand across her rear end, Della began to wriggle with pleasant memories of her introduction to a whole new world of sensual pleasures.

Her right hand slid from behind her head and brushed down her side in the silky water. She slowly reached over to her left nipple and plucked at it until it was hard and protruding from the scented bubbles in the tub. Della closed her eyes and sighed as her hand skimmed over her stomach and between her thighs. The tired lawyer plunged her fingers into her own warmth and rubbed at the hardened nub of her desire. Within moments, the built up pressure of the afternoon was released as Della brought herself to climax.

The satisfied woman stretched her arms over her head, slowly opened her eyes, ---- and looked directly into the stony stare of her husband.

“Having fun, dear?”

Della's state of relaxation vanished as she sat up in the tub. "Steven! How long have you been spying on me?"

"Spying? How can it be spying if it's my bathroom too?"

Arguing with a lawyer can be so annoying...particularly if he's your husband.

"Well," Della stammered, "you shouldn't have snuck up on me. You know I hate surprises."

Della's husband arched his brow at her. "Surprises? You know I hate them too...especially when they come in the form of a dismissal of charges just a few hours after I've set bond in a high profile case. And, let's not forget all the news trucks that were outside the courthouse waiting for a comment from me about the fact that the charges against Peggy Hanford had been dismissed as part of a confidential agreement," The irritated judge paused for effect, "It was a bit awkward for me, not to mention the fact that I feel like I was blind-sided by my own wife!"

Della felt a shiver go down her spine. She wasn't sure if it was caused by the look on her husband's face or the fact that the water was getting cold. She wanted to get out of the tub, but was hesitant to leave the security of her watery fortress. When her teeth started chattering, however, the sudsy woman knew it was time to get out.

"Steven, darling, could you hand me a towel? I seem to have forgotten to get one from the linen closet."

The man of the house slowly stood from his crouched position next to the tub and walked to the linen closet. He pulled out a large, fluffy, white towel and walked back to stand over his wife. Della stood to get out of the tub and reached for the towel at the same time. She slipped on the wet porcelain of the tub, and fell forward onto her husband's muscled frame. Instantly, his crisp shirt and pleated pants were soaked.

In another situation, Steven might have found

this humorous, even pleasurable. Tonight, however, it only added to his foul mood. He grabbed his lavender scented wife, seated himself on the wide edge of the tub, and for the second time that day, pinned her face down across his lap.

"Twice in one day...I think this is a new record for you, Della. Of course, I don't know when you've ever been so blatant in your disrespect for me, or our marriage. I hope this isn't going to become a habit."

Della wriggled under the strength of her husband's arm that pressed against her back and turned her head so that she could see him over her shoulder. "Steven, you're right. I just didn't know what to do. Johnny Simpson and I entered into a confidential settlement and agreed for it to be sealed. It was in the best interest of my client, plus it would be a violation of my professional ethics if I disclosed the contents, even to you. I hate keeping a secret from you...especially this one, because it's really rather entertaining,...but what else can I do?" she pleaded.

The judge was not sympathetic. "Didn't we both agree that our marriage came before our careers?"

"Y-y-yes."

Steven continued his cross-examination, punctuating his questions, and his wife's answers, with swats to her wet rear end.

"And didn't we also agree that we would not keep secrets from each other?" Water splashed off of Della's cheeks as her husband's hand came down across her buttocks and the tops of her thighs.

"Yes." Della stammered through clenched teeth as her husband continued his onslaught on her scarlet rump.

"Wouldn't you agree, Mrs. Mason, that not telling your husband, the judge, about the dismissal of a high profile case in his court would cause him to be subjected to questions for which he was unprepared and possibly make him look like he didn't know what was happening in his own

courtroom?"

"Yes." Della inhaled sharply as Steven's hand came cracking down again.

"Della, I've always been your biggest supporter. You're a great lawyer, and I'm proud to be your husband. I'd never want to do anything that would compromise you professionally. If you don't want to tell me the contents of the agreement, that's fine. What upsets me is the fact that you didn't let me know what was coming. It left me unprepared for the questions from the press and, more importantly, it made me think that you didn't trust me enough to tell me what was going on." Steven continued, "I think that you got a little bit caught up in your own success, and the fun of winning one against Johnny Simpson, and lost track of your priorities."

Della's mind was whirling with conflicting thoughts and emotions. She'd worked so hard to become a lawyer...three years of law school, the bar exam, years spent paying her dues as a clerk, not to mention the many obstacles that she'd faced as a woman in the male dominated world of criminal defense lawyers. Why shouldn't she put all of that ahead of her marriage, just this one time?

Sensing her continued resistance, Steven got his stubborn wife's attention when he reached behind himself and pulled the bath brush out of the tub. Della inhaled sharply as its wooden handle cracked across her already reddened buttocks. Her feet kicked up and down and she instinctively tightened the muscles in her derriere.

"Sweetheart...no, please stop. Why are you being so mean to me?" Della pleaded.

"Mean? Darling, you know this isn't about being mean. We both agreed that this was how we wanted our marriage to be, and I think that you know that it was a wise choice for us. I don't want to punish you, but I do need to make a point, and it doesn't seem to be sinking in."

Della's irritated husband sent his point home with another crack of the bath brush against her

stinging butt. He continued, spurred on by her hardheaded refusal to submit to his leadership. The bathroom was silent except for the sound of the wooden handle crashing into the unrepentant woman's crimson backside, her husband's harsh breathing, and her own soft whimpers.

For Della, time stood still. She had no idea how long it had been since she had gotten out of the tub. She could see that the bubbles had all dissolved and the candles around the edge of the tub were nearly burned out. The iron-willed lawyer had lost track of the number of times the bath brush had stung her flesh.

Suddenly, the spanking ended. There was a pause, and then Steven gently lifted his wife to her feet and stood her in front of him. He picked up the long forgotten towel and lovingly wrapped it around his shivering mate. Della was caught off guard by his sudden tenderness and glanced at his face. She looked into his eyes and was taken aback by what she saw---sadness and hurt.

Della's husband spoke to her quietly, "I'm going to get out of these wet clothes and go downstairs to start dinner. It should be ready in about half an hour. While I'm doing that, I suggest that you spend some time thinking long and hard about what's important to you." He stood and kissed her softly on the top of her head, then silently walked into his dressing area.

Alone in the dimly lit bathroom, Della tried to make sense of what had transpired. She waited until she heard Steven walking down the stairs to the kitchen and then headed for the bedroom---deep in thought.

In all the years that she'd known Steven---and she'd known him for nearly twenty---she'd never seen him look the way he had when he'd wrapped the towel around her.

Della walked to her closet and pulled out a thick terry cloth robe. She dropped the towel in the hamper and replaced it with the white warmth of

the robe. It's softness felt especially good against the screaming flesh on her backside. She pulled the robe tight and touched the embroidered crest on the left breast pocket---a souvenir from a resort she and Steven had visited on their anniversary last year.

Lost in thought, the pensive woman slid her feet into matching terry cloth slippers and slowly padded around the bedroom she shared with her husband. It was a large room with an antique king-sized four-poster bed against one wall, centered between windows that looked out over the large backyard. Della ran her hand slowly down one of the mahogany posts at the head of the bed as she looked out the window. She glanced down into the yard and wistfully remembered lazy summer afternoons spent swinging in the hammock with her sons, reading stories, and eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. The corners of her mouth turned up in a slight smile thinking about the time that all five of them were snuggled in the hammock, and the dog jumped in too, bringing the whole thing crashing down in a mess of giggling pre-schoolers, canvas, and frightened dog.

The proud mother turned from the window and looked at the photos and momentos displayed on the bookcases that lined the wall closest to the bathroom. Pictures from family trips, pencil holders covered with glued-on macaroni from a long ago Scout project, and a smattering of sports trophies intermingled with a variety of professional awards which she and Steven had acquired over the years.

Della reached up and pulled down a framed photo. She looked into the faces of the couple, dressed in their wedding finery, and saw so many things---love, trust, excitement, a zest for life and whatever the future might hold for them. The bride looked down at herself and her groom and remembered how she'd felt that day, knowing that she had found her soul mate---her life partner---the man who understood her so well. The faces in the

picture became blurred as the tears, which had not fallen before, began to sting her eyes.

Steven's wife gently replaced the precious photo and lay across the bed with her face buried in her arms. The tears, which had begun as a trickle down her cheek, quickly soaked the terry cloth sleeves of her robe. She wept for shame at the way she had treated her husband, how she had put her own ambition and spite toward Johnny Simpson ahead of honoring the man who meant everything to her. Sobs wracked her body until there were no tears left.

Della must have fallen asleep, because she awoke when she felt her husband's weight on the bed next to her. Hesitantly, her red eyes met his. This time, when she looked into her husband's eyes, she saw the same love and understanding that she had known for so many years. She burrowed her face into his chest and begged his forgiveness. Della's soul mate wrapped his arms around her and kissed away her tears.

"Oh, Steven," the repentant woman whispered. "I'm so sorry. I got so caught up in the fun of getting one over on Johnny Simpson that I completely forgot about how it would affect you. It would have been so simple for me to have given you a quick phone call to at least tell you that the charges against Peggy Hanford were being dismissed. Then you wouldn't have been caught off-guard by the press when you left the courthouse."

"That is what I would have expected you to do," her husband answered as he kissed her tear-dampened cheek.

His mouth moved slowly from her cheek to her lips for another soft kiss. Della reached up and stoked the side of his face with soft, familiar fingers. The soft kiss deepened as Steven slid his hands inside of his wife's terry cloth wrapper. Soon, the robe was tossed to the floor in a heap. Della felt the cool softness of the down comforter under her naked flesh as she rolled onto her side to face her

husband. For the second time that day, she unbuttoned his shirt and ran her hands over the tautness of his chest. Unlike the hurried tryst in the judge's chambers that morning---where they'd had lusty, partially clothed sex fueled by passion and tension--- this time, the couple took their time and paid proper homage to their love. Della slowly removed her husband's shirt and loosened his belt. Her loving gaze followed him as he stood next to the bed and removed the rest of his clothes. His desire for her was evident in his smoldering eyes--- and other places as well.

The well-built man pulled back the comforter and slid between the silk sheets. He pulled his wife into the satiny cocoon, and she moved to straddle his waist. Steven raised lazy hands to grasp his wife's breasts and kneaded them to pink hardness. Della wriggled her hips downward and eagerly sheathed her husband's erection. She sat back and felt his length move deeper inside her. Steven reached around his wife and grasped her rear end in order to push himself further into her heat. He pulled his hands back quickly when he saw Della wince at this touch.

"Oh, darling, I'm so sorry. Did I hurt you? I know that I was pretty hard on you earlier." The concerned husband touched his wife's hand as he spoke.

"It's no more than I deserved for the way that I treated you. And, frankly, if you hadn't stopped and made me think about it, myself, I would have continued to hold out and think that you didn't want me to be a successful in my own right. After I thought about it, though, I knew that you were right. I had lost track of my priorities. Nothing could be more important to me than our marriage and making you happy."

Della leaned down and kissed her husband with the same passion she had felt for him on their wedding night. He returned her kiss with the same fervor. When she pulled away from Steven's warm

mouth, Della reached up and grasped the same post on the bed that she had been holding earlier that evening. Using the post for support, she raised herself almost completely away from her husband's straining length, and then once again drew him into her moist heat. Della positioned herself slightly forward in order to achieve maximum contact and pleasure for both of them. She repeated the up and down motion with increased speed until she clung to the post, and pleasure shuddered through her body. Della looked down at her husband and knew that their timing had been perfect. The spent woman moved slightly, so that her body covered that of her satisfied husband and rested her sweat-dampened forehead on his shoulder.

As she regained her composure after the sweeping emotions of the last couple of hours, Della suddenly felt hungry, and realized that she'd missed the dinner that Steven had prepared. She untangled herself from her husband's arms and stood to put on the terry cloth robe. Steven reached over and touched her arm. "Where are you going?"

Della smiled down at her lover. "I seem to have worked up quite an appetite. Can I bring you something from the kitchen?" she asked as she headed toward the door.

Della's husband returned her smile. "No, thank you---wait, you never did tell me what the big secret was that caused all this fuss in the first place."

Della turned away from the door and walked to her briefcase. She pulled out a manila envelope and handed it to her husband. "Remember, you aren't allowed to tell anyone about this, no matter how much you might want to."

She closed the door to the bedroom and headed to the kitchen. As she walked down the stairs, Della heard her husband shrieking with laughter.

The Education of Professor Warner

"Welcome aboard, David. We're glad to have you here. I know this is your first teaching job, so please feel free to ask me or any other members of the department if there's anything that we can do for you." John Warner, Chairman of the Mathematics Department at Kennon College, shook the younger man's hand and walked him to the door of his office. "I've been at Kennon College for fifteen years, and I'm very happy here. I hope you will be, too."

John watched the newest member of his staff walk down the hallway and was reminded of his own first days on the faculty at the prestigious women's college. I wonder if he'll have any students like Lisette, the chairman thought to himself. A wistful smile crossed his face as he remembered his first teaching assignment.

It was springtime in New England when John Warner, along with his freshly minted Ph.D., arrived at Kennon College. He could hardly believe his good fortune in getting the short-term teaching assignment. His advisor had approached him just a week before he received his degree and told him that his friend, who was the chairman of the Mathematics department at Kennon, had phoned with an urgent request for a professor to finish the semester after the regular faculty member had been put on bed rest for the balance of her pregnancy. John was flattered to have been recommended by his advisor, and was thrilled to have the opportunity to list the well-known college on his resume, if only for a three week stint.

John packed his meager belongings in his old car and headed for New England. He was filled with a mixture of excitement and trepidation as he headed for his first job as a full-time professor. He was

fairly confident in his math skills---he was a bit of a prodigy in that area. He graduated from high school at seventeen and had completed his Ph.D. by the time he was twenty-four.

The trepidation came from the reputation that the school had for educating some pretty wild and worldly women, and John found that more than a little intimidating. While most men his age were spending spring break judging wet T-shirt contests, John had been toiling away on his dissertation. He knew a lot about numbers, very little about women.

He arrived in the small college town two days before his first class. It didn't take him long to get settled in the temporary faculty housing provided by the college. Although he spent the next two days visiting Carol Malkin, the bedridden professor whom he was replacing, and meeting with the department chair, he was still a bit worried about facing a classroom of women who were, essentially, his own age.

On the day of his first class, John spent the morning going over his notes and left his office right after lunch for the afternoon class. He hoped that a stroll across the campus would calm his nerves. In addition to educating some of the brightest women in the country, the school was also well known for the beauty of its campus, especially in the spring when the lilacs were in bloom. The stateliness of the ivy covered dormitories, the splendor of the gardens, and the clear waters of the small lake across from the library were all lost on the mathematician who was deep in thought and rehearsing his opening comments while he made the short walk from his temporary office in the library to the classroom in the math and science building.

The students were all in their seats and chattering amongst themselves when he arrived. It was a small campus and gossip traveled like lightning, so the students already knew that

Professor Malkin would not be completing the semester. They probably were not expecting her replacement to be so young---or so good looking.

While he had been crunching numbers in an effort to complete his education, John had gone from gangly boyhood to broad-shouldered manhood. Aside from the fact that he had outgrown most of his shirts through the chest and shoulders, he had not noticed the transformation in his body and never considered the possibility that women would find him appealing. If he'd taken a close look in the mirror, he would have seen that his little boy face and braces had been replaced by a square jaw and a smile that made women's stomachs do flip flops. But, he was unaware.

John had never really fit in anywhere before. With students his own age, he was a nerdy math whiz, and with students who were his intellectual equals, he was just a kid. Now, he was standing in front of a roomful of smart and energetic college women. He knew he didn't fit in there either.

As he stepped to the lectern at the front of the class, a hush fell over the room, and he felt a slow blush beginning at the collar of his shirt and working its way upward. When he set his briefcase on the desk next to the lectern, he knocked over the pencil can. Writing instruments scattered across the hardwood floor of the old classroom. John's cheeks went from pink to scarlet. He got down on his hands and knees to gather up the contents of the can. The professor was so intent on his task that he didn't realize what he was doing until he found himself staring at the shapely curve of a very feminine ankle peeking out beneath a pair of faded dungarees. John froze. His eyes traveled up the denim-clad leg that was attached to the ankle and continued until they met up with a pair of large brown eyes surrounded by thick, dark lashes. Full, red lips smiled down at the professor and a delicate hand held out a pencil to him. John stammered a "thank you" to the student and stood up.

He composed himself and addressed the class. As he spoke, his gaze was drawn to the student whose ankle he had examined just moments before. Though there were many attractive women in the class, she stood out from the rest. John noticed a subtle air of sophistication about her that set her apart from her classmates. He knew that the school had many students who were the daughters of foreign dignitaries and he suspected that she was one of them.

John introduced himself and explained that he would be continuing to follow Professor Malkin's syllabus for the few classes that remained in the semester. Although there wasn't anything particularly humorous in his words, he noticed a few students attempting to stifle laughter. Their gazes seemed to be fixed on his knees, and despite his efforts to continue his remarks, he couldn't help himself. He looked down. Apparently, the janitor had not been in the classroom for several days because the knees of John's khaki pants were covered with dust and dirt that he'd picked up from the unswept floor while he was collecting the spilled pencils.

He reached down and brushed the dirt away as best he could, then turned to the chalkboard and began to write an equation. The mathematician felt himself begin to relax once he had the familiar feeling of a piece of chalk in his left hand writing numbers on the board. The numbers and letters of a complicated equation sprung from the chalk onto the board. The room was quiet and he could hear the students copying the information from the board into their notebooks.

The silence was broken by a breathy voice. Though he could not see the speaker, John knew that it was the girl with the eyes and the ankles. "Escoose moi, mon professeur," apparently she was French, "I cannot read what you have written on zee board."

John looked back at his writing and saw that it

was all smeared. Can this get any worse? he thought to himself as he realized that he had run his left forearm through the chalk as he wrote. There really was nothing else do to but laugh, and so he did.

John turned to the class with a sheepish smile. "I'm sorry class. You'd think that after all the years that I've spent writing on a chalkboard I'd know that as a left-hander I need to be careful about smearing." John brushed the chalk from his left sleeve and went back to the beginning of the equation. "I hope I'm not going to have to do laundry after every class," he grinned at his students and a couple of them felt their stomachs flip, then flop. "Let's start over."

To John's surprise, the series of blunders broke the ice with the class and the rest of the hour went fairly smoothly. He gathered up the homework papers that had been turned in, along with his notes, and left the classroom feeling better than when he had entered.

The rest of John's first week went by without incident and he was feeling rather pleased as he entered week two. The students were warming up to him, and he was beginning to learn their names. The only potential problem was Lisette, the one with the breathy voice and accent that did funny things to his insides and caused him to lose his train of thought. For one thing, she was on the verge of failing the class. And for another, John was totally distracted by her. It wasn't like she was trying to be distracting; in fact, she usually wore fairly casual clothes to class, especially compared to her classmates. John had noticed that a number of his students had begun wearing progressively more suggestive clothing at each class, but not Lisette. Unfortunately, at least for John's ability to concentrate, Lisette's oversized white t-shirts managed to cling to her breasts in all the right places and her jeans showed the firm curves of what John thought was a very lovely rear end. Even

cardigan sweaters, which were quite sensible on anyone else, were an erotic concoction of softness straining to contain her breasts. John wasn't sure if he would have been able to last through an entire semester.

On Monday morning of John's third week of teaching, he happened to see Lisette walking across campus to the library. He was relieved to see that she was dressed sensibly in a pair of loosely tailored slacks, a shapeless sweater, and low-heeled shoes. He approached the afternoon class with a feeling of calm that he hadn't felt for several days.

John nearly dropped his chalk when Lisette walked into class that afternoon. Apparently she'd had a riding lesson sometime between going to the library and heading for math class because she arrived dressed in tight beige riding breeches, boots, and a crisp white shirt. Her hair was pulled back into a ponytail and she had a smudge of dirt on her cheek. John had never thought that dirt could be so sexy. He caught himself thinking about kissing the smudge on her cheek and then working his way down into the deep V of her starched shirt. As she walked across the classroom, John watched her bottom strain against the breeches. He felt a similar strain pressing against the zipper of his pants.

John swung around to the chalkboard in order to avoid a public display of his arousal. He started writing frantically and by the time he had calmed his breathing, and his you-know-what, he wasn't even sure what he had written. He exerted the last of his frustration by thoroughly erasing everything on the board. He turned back to the class. "The final exam is on Friday, so I thought that we could spend the last few classes reviewing. Does anyone have any questions?"

Several hands shot up, including Lisette's. Of course, Lisette did not just raise her hand, it floated in a delicate sway as she leaned forward and nearly popped one of the buttons on her blouse. John

looked away and called on a student on the other side of the room. He managed to get through the rest of the class without calling on Lisette, despite the plea in her eyes each time he was brave enough to look her way.

When class was over, John headed to his office to prepare for the next day's review session. He wasn't sure how she'd managed to get there so quickly, but Lisette was leaning against the door waiting for him when he arrived.

"Bonjour, mon professeur," the breathy voice lilted toward him. "I have some questions about zee mathematics, and you did not allow me to ask zem today. Are you mad at me?" Large brown eyes looked up at him through the thick fringe of her lashes.

John stammered and cleared his throat while he searched his pockets for the keys to his office. "No, Lisette, I'm not mad at you. Why would you think that?" He held the door for her and as she brushed past him into the cramped office, he caught a whiff of her perfume. How could someone who just came from a stable manage to smell so good? John didn't know many women, but he was sure he'd never met anyone like Lisette.

He hesitated before following her into the room. He had a feeling that he was on the verge of getting in way over his head.

"If you are not mad, zen why did you not look at me?" She sat down in a chair at the front of his desk and pouted her lips at him. "Do you zink that I am ugly?"

John was definitely in over his head.

"No, Lisette, I definitely do not think you are ugly," the professor gave his student a rueful smile. "In fact, sometimes you are very distracting to me because you are so beautiful." John was shocked by his candor.

Lisette beamed and moved to a chair next to his desk.

"But," John went on, "I am still your professor

and despite the fact that I find you attractive, it would be inappropriate for me to behave in any way other than as your professor. Do you understand what I am trying to say?"

The pouting lips came back.

"Besides," the professor continued, "I'm glad that you stopped by my office because I'm very concerned about your grade. If you don't get at least a C on the final exam, I'll have to fail you."

"I am zo stew-peed." Lisette looked forlorn and genuinely concerned. "What can I do? If I fail, my father will be very angry." She leaned toward John and lowered her breathy voice to even more of a whisper. "Will you spank me if I do not get a good grade?"

John's eyebrows popped up into his hairline. He'd never heard of such a thing. "Lisette, what are you talking about?"

"Mon professeur, in France, the teachers at my boarding school were much more, how do you say it?" She searched for the word. "Ztrict. They were very ztrict and often use the rod on their students to make a point."

John was stunned. "Lisette, you are a grown woman. I'm not going to spank you. How old are you?"

"I am twenty-three. But, it is not so awful," she answered. "And, when I have done wrong, it makes me feel better to be punished for it zo that I do not feel guilty about my bad grade."

John had no response, so he said, "Well, why don't we work on a few problems and see if we can avoid the whole situation by making sure that you pass the class?"

Lisette looked pleased and moved her chair so that she was sitting right next to John at his desk. John tried as hard as he could to concentrate as he went over the equations with her, but between the press of her thigh against his, the tantalizing glimpses of her breasts as she leaned toward him to see what he was writing, and the scent of her

perfume...well, let's just say that John was glad to have the camouflage that the desk provided for the mounting pressure that was forming a tent in his pants.

Despite his initial discomfort, John found Lisette to be an eager student. She was bright and clever and learned quickly. She was also quite funny and made several jokes at her own expense. John found himself relaxing and enjoying himself. When he looked at his watch, he couldn't believe that two hours had passed.

They continued to work together every afternoon that week and John found himself looking forward to their tutoring sessions. The professor felt confident that his student would do well on the exam.

He was wrong. John couldn't believe his eyes when he graded her test—she missed so many problems that they had worked on together. He had been sure that she knew how to solve them on her own. Maybe I'm just not cut out to be a teacher, the disappointed professor told himself.

He heard a soft tap on his door and Lisette peeked her head around the corner. "Mon professeur," she looked concerned, "I failed, no?"

John motioned for her to enter his office and nearly fell off his chair when he saw what she was wearing---a short pleated skirt, strappy sandals, and a cardigan sweater. John could have handled the skirt and the sandals, but he felt sure that the sweater would be his un-doing. It was made of cashmere in a pale shade of blue---it reminded him of a robin's egg---it's deep plunge revealed the creamy swells of her breasts. Apparently, Lisette had been tanning in the French tradition, because though the sweater dipped low enough to reveal the pink fringes of her nipples, there were no discernible tan lines. Even though John felt like he was sweltering in the small office, it must have been cold because her nipples pushed through the softness of the sweater and protruded like small

pebbles. John imagined his tongue sliding across them. He swallowed hard and felt his mouth go dry.

Lisette looked at his desk and saw her exam with the big red F on the top. She turned to John, and he saw her eyes begin to puddle. Maybe he could deal with the sweater, but John knew that there was no way he could deal with tears. He popped out of his seat and said, "wait here, Lisette, I'll get you some water." He took off out of his office and down the hall to the faculty lounge where he grabbed two bottles of water. He pressed one bottle against his forehead in the hopes that its icy coldness would calm his nerves. The professor steadied himself and opened the door to his office.

He dropped both bottles of water.

Lisette was stretched across the length of his desk, her breasts were pressed against the blotter, her panties were down around those ankles that he had admired on his first day, and her bare backside was perched on the edge of his desk. He closed and locked the door behind him.

"Lisette," his voice squeaked when he said her name. "What are you doing? Cover yourself!"

Lisette looked at him over her right shoulder. "No, mon professeur, you must punish me. It is the only way." She stretched her hand toward him, and he saw that she was holding a ruler.

"Lisette, I am not going to spank you."

Lisette was resolute. "Mon professeur," her brown eyes were pleading, "the only way to keep me from making zee zame bad grade again iz for you to spank me. It is zee only way zat I can learn."

John stood there and surveyed the scene in his office. A beautiful woman who had been invading his thoughts---not to mention a couple of very graphic dreams---for nearly three weeks was stretched across the top of his desk, her creamy cheeks were fully exposed to his view, she was handing him a ruler, and begging him to spank her.

In that instant, all rational thought left his mind. John didn't care if he never got another college teaching job for the rest of his life. In fact, if he had to spend the rest of his career as a substitute teacher in Siberia, he knew that it would be worth it.

The professor reached out and took the ruler from his student.

Three days later, John was filling boxes and preparing to vacate his office. He didn't have much to pack since he hadn't been there long. He was nearly done when he saw the ruler lying on top of the desk. He ran his fingers slowly over its length and felt a familiar stirring in his loins as he remembered how it had cracked against the sweet curves of Lisette's bottom. He knew that the ruler belonged to the school, but he dropped it in one of the boxes anyway.

John's mind began to wander, and he recalled the sharp red stripes the ruler had made across his student's upturned derriere and her muffled squeals as she accepted the punishment that she had demanded of him. His thoughts were interrupted by a knock on his door. Professor Reynolds, the chairman of the department, walked in.

John snapped out of his reverie and focused on the chairman. He had a guilty feeling that Professor Reynolds knew what he had been thinking about and felt his heart rate increase when the older man said to him, "I had an interesting phone call this morning from the father of one of your students. His name was Jean-Paul DuMange. His daughter, Lisette, was one of your students."

John felt the color leave his face. "Y-yes. She was one of my students. Unfortunately, she didn't do very well in my class. In fact, she failed."

"Well, John," the chairman continued, "it turns out that Jean-Paul DuMange is not only the parent

of a student, but he is also a member of the board of trustees."

John saw his promising career heading down the toilet.

"Strange as this sounds, Mr. DuMange was actually impressed that you failed his daughter."

John's eyebrows made a quizzical arch, but he could not find his voice. Finally, he was able to squeak out, "Impressed?"

"Mr. DuMange is a very strict man, and he appreciates a professor who has the guts to fail a student if that is what she deserves. As a trustee, he has been a most vocal opponent of grade inflation."

"Are you saying that I impressed a trustee because I flunked his daughter?" It really was an incredible notion.

"Yes, that is exactly what I am saying." The chairman smiled at him. "And, what's more, it turns out that Professor Malkin had her baby a few days ago and has decided that she wants to be a stay at home mother. That means that we have a full time position open here in the math department, if you are interested."

John could hardly believe that it had been fifteen years since that conversation with the former chairman of the department. Who would have thought, way back when he spilled that pencil can on the floor on his first day of teaching, that fifteen years later he would be the chairman of the department?

He had come a long way from the cramped office in the library. Now he had a large corner office with leather wing back chairs, a state of the art computer, and several sunny windows. His desk seemed a bit out of place in the opulent surroundings, and no one could understand why he had insisted on bringing the old desk from his first

office into his new office. They also couldn't understand why he had an old ruler in a place of honor on his bookshelf.

John's secretary buzzed him and cheerfully announced, "Your wife is here for your lunch date."

John stood to greet his wife as she entered the office. She walked toward him and stroked her fingers across the old desk. The woman, who still made his pulse race when she wore a sweater, glanced at the ruler on the shelf and said with a mischievous smile, "Mon professeur, I have been a very naughty girl zis morning."

The Senator Takes a Bride

"Oh, yes. Right there. A little lower and a little harder...that's it." Charlene's husky voice rang out in the soft candle light of the hotel suite. She moaned softly and expelled a deep breath. "That feels wonderful."

The masseuse continued to work her way down through the knots in Charlene's back. Finally, her client began to relax.

Charlene closed her eyes and let her mind wander while the hotel masseuse worked her magic. In just a few hours, she was going to become Mrs. Senator Daniel Josephson. She smiled with contentment as she pictured herself growing old with her beloved and slowly drifted off into a gentle sleep on the massage table.

Earlier that day, things had not looked so bright.

The day had started out well enough. Sunshine streaked through the gap between the heavy hotel curtains and woke the bride-to-be. She stretched out under the crisp sheets and downy comforter for a few minutes to gather her wits about her for the busy, and stressful, day ahead, then slipped on her robe and went out to the terrace. The room service breakfast she'd ordered the night before had been delivered, and was waiting for her on a silver cart next to the wrought iron table. She peeked under the lid and chose a blueberry muffin and a small cup of fruit, poured herself a cup of hot coffee from the silver coffee pot, and sat down to have a look at the day's newspaper.

Her eyes grew wide when she saw her own photo near the bottom of the front page and read the headline: Senator to Wed Kindergarten Teacher Today.

Charlene tossed the paper onto the chair next to

hers. She didn't need to read the story. She was living it.

The gentle kindergarten teacher could understand the public's fascination with the story. It really was like a modern day fairy tale. In fact, she would have found it hard believe too if she hadn't been there.

When little Ryan Josephson had proudly announced that he was bringing his Uncle Dan to K.I.S.S.--Kids Invite Someone Special----Day at her school two years ago, she had no idea that it would change her life.

Perhaps she should have suspected that Uncle Dan was not your ordinary guest because Ryan was so puffed up with pride whenever he talked about the impending visit. But, all of the students were excited to be bringing a loved one to school, so it didn't really register with her. The class spent weeks planning activities, making party favors and name tags, and preparing special snacks to share with their guests.

On the morning of the big day, Charlene wore her favorite outfit and the necklace that the class had gotten her as a Christmas gift. When school started, she was waiting at the door to her classroom to greet her students and their visitors. When Ryan introduced her to his Uncle Dan, all she could do was stare. Of course, even if she hadn't recognized him as Daniel Josephson of the United States Senate, she would have stared. He was head-turningly handsome---soft brown hair, firm jaw, piercing green eyes---and a body that made her palms sweat.

She stammered a greeting and feebly held out her hand to him. Daniel was as charming as he was good looking. He held her fingers gently between his two strong hands and said, "So, you're the Miss Aronson that Ryan tells me about. His descriptions really didn't do you justice."

Charlene felt herself blush and thought she would die of embarrassment. She gazed, tongue-

tyed, at the gorgeous politician. Finally, she found her voice and said, "it's a pleasure to meet you, Senator Josephson."

"Please, Miss Aronson, today I am Uncle Dan. I'd be much happier if you would call me by my first name." His smile, which was intended to put her at ease, made her toes curl.

"Well," Charlene's mouth had gone dry and she struggled to get the words out, "Uncle Dan it is, then. We're glad to have you here today." She smiled back and hoped she didn't look like a star-struck schoolgirl.

The teacher turned her attention to her student. "Ryan, why don't you take your Uncle Dan inside the classroom and help him put on the name tag that you made for him. Then maybe he would like to take a look at some of the papers that we put in your folder, or some of your art work that is hanging up on the bulletin board."

The proud kindergartner took his uncle's hand and led him into the room. Daniel shot a smile at the teacher over his shoulder as he walked away.

Charlene managed to recover and greeted the rest of her students and their guests. She chided herself for falling under the spell of the obviously practiced charm of a career politician. She resolved to be professional, yet detached, in her dealings with Senator Daniel Josephson.

Despite the vow to herself, Charlene was utterly distracted all morning and caught herself stealing glances at "Uncle Dan" when she thought no one was looking. Once he caught her peeking at him and winked. She nearly dropped the tray of paper cups filled with fruit punch that she was carrying at the time. He jumped to her rescue and took the tray from her. When his fingers brushed hers, she felt a charge that shot through her body and landed somewhere just below her navel.

She watched him throughout the day and there was no denying it---Daniel Josephson was a kind, down to earth, gentleman. He proudly sported the

name tag that Ryan had made for him out of glitter, praised his nephew's artwork, and was gracious to all of the other students and guests. He went out of his way to direct attention away from himself and politely corrected anyone who called him Senator by saying, "I'm taking a day off from being a senator, so please, call me Daniel."

When his assistant discreetly approached him on the playground during recess, Charlene heard him say, "Lee, I really want this to be Ryan's day. I've arranged for someone to cover for me, so I'd really appreciate it if you would only interrupt me if it's an emergency. Besides," the senator grinned before he turned away, "it's my turn to push the merry go round."

By the end of K.I.S.S. Day, Charlene was totally smitten by the charming senator, and when he invited her to dinner, she happily said yes.

And, a year later, when he asked her to be his wife, her answer had been the same.

No, Charlene did not need to read some newspaper reporter's account of her romance with the senator. The entire experience had been far too profound for mere newsprint.

She got up from the table and headed for the shower.

Charlene dressed carefully. She knew that the hotel was full of paparazzi who were determined to get a shot of the fairy tale bride on her wedding day, and she didn't want to take a chance at being caught not looking her best. She wore a slim, butter-colored linen skirt with a matching silk blouse and headed out the door for some last minute appointments. The bride-to-be had a busy day ahead.

It had probably been a mistake for her to go into the ballroom to check on the preparations. After all, she had a wedding planner. In fact, she was

supposed to be the best in the city, so Charlene really had nothing to worry about, right? Besides, she really didn't have time. The photographer was waiting to meet with her, and she was already running behind. But, she just couldn't help herself. She wanted everything to be perfect. I'll just peek my head in for a second, she told herself.

The Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Du Lange had never been more elegant. Round tables covered with crisp cream-colored linen tablecloths filled the room. Eight upholstered arm-less chairs with matching linen skirts that reached the floor surrounded each table. The florist and his assistant had already placed vases of hyacinths and tulips in the center of each table and were making the final adjustments to one of the four opulent freestanding arrangements that marked the corners of the dance floor.

She should have left after seeing that the room was just the way she'd pictured it, but when she saw the chef in a deep conversation with the wedding planner, Charlene became concerned and headed in their direction.

"What do you mean, you don't have enough filet mignon?" Paulette, the wedding planner, looked panicked.

"I'm so very sorry ma'am." The chef was nervous as he faced the irritated wedding planner. His face was nearly as white as the tall starched hat on his head. "There was an error in the order that we placed with the butcher. It is entirely my fault. We do have plenty of prime rib, which I am sure that your guests will find very satisfactory."

"What are you talking about? How can you not have enough filet mignon? How is this even possible?" Charlene joined the conversation. "In just a few short hours over six hundred people, including the governor and several United States Senators, are going to be here for my wedding reception." Charlene felt her pulse begin to race, and her voice was shrill. "Did you see the news trucks outside?"

We can't have any mistakes. Do you know how many people are watching every little detail about this wedding? I have been planning for over a year and I had your assurances that everything would be precisely as I requested."

Despite the fact that she had spent the last seven years dealing with five-year-olds, Charlene had completely lost her patience.

The future Mrs. Senator Josephson paused to catch her breath. She was so agitated that her legs were shaking, and she thought she might actually lose her balance. She gripped the back of a chair to steady herself, but before she could continue to harangue the chef, she felt a soft hand on her shoulder. Charlene knew, even before she heard his voice, that it was Daniel.

"I'm sure that the prime rib will be perfect. In fact," the senator smiled at the chef who was obviously reeling from his encounter with the wedding planner and the bride, "I actually prefer prime rib. Thank you so much for all of your hard work. The ballroom is beautiful, and I'm sure that the meal will be equally spectacular. We'll see you in a few hours." The senator gave the chef a firm handshake before he turned to his bride-to-be.

"It looks like everything is under control here, Charlene, so let's leave these fine people to do their jobs." His voice was gentle, but firm, and Charlene knew better than to mention the photographer that was waiting for her.

With a guiding hand on her elbow, Daniel steered Charlene from the room. They walked in silence to the elevators, though the senator nodded and smiled at a few well wishers.

When they reached Charlene's suite, she handed him her key card, and he opened the door for her. Reluctantly, Charlene led the way into the room.

The suite was spacious and sunny. It was the mirror image of the one in which Daniel was spending his last few hours of bachelorhood, with the exception that his suite was one that his family

kept at the hotel year round. Charlene's had been rented for only a few days.

The couple found themselves in the sitting room of the suite, which was separated from the bedroom by a pair of carved wooden doors. Daniel seated himself in a burgundy wing chair. Charlene was too agitated to sit down. The senator removed his glasses and looked at his future wife with the same green-eyed gaze that had won him the label "the Sexiest Man in the U.S. Senate."

"You seem to be feeling a bit of stress, Charlene. Why don't you tell me what's going on."

"What's going on?" Charlene was incredulous. "What's going on is that we are getting married in just a few hours. Six hundred people are expecting dinner, and the hotel has somehow managed to foul that up." Her voice became shriller as the beleaguered bride-to-be went on. "What are people going to say? We already sent the newspaper the information on the dinner menu and now they are going to know that it's changed---Wait a minute. It's supposed to be bad luck for you to see me on our wedding day. Oh, this is just great!"

By this time, Charlene was pacing the Oriental rug in a frenzied to and fro.

Daniel replaced his glasses, stood up and went to his agitated fiancée. He pulled her into his arms and held her close to his well-muscled body. "Charlene, this is supposed to be the happiest day of our lives, so let's just calm down and enjoy it." He kissed the top of her head.

Charlene was not to be placated so easily. She pulled away from his embrace and stood facing him. "Oh, that's easy for you to say. All you have to do is show up and smile. But, what about me? I've been planning this wedding for months. I've been followed by reporters trying to find out every detail from the design of the dress to the brand of toothpaste that I'm going to use. I had every little detail planned out precisely, and now it's all falling apart, and there just isn't time to get everything

done. In fact," she said as she glanced down at her watch, "I'm supposed to be meeting with the photographer right now."

Daniel was a patient man. "Charlene, I understand that you have been working very hard and that you feel like you are under a lot of scrutiny. I also realize that it's partly my fault. If I'd had my way about it, we would have flown off to my house in Bermuda months ago and gotten married on the beach. But, because of my family and my career, that just wasn't possible. And, I'm sorry, because I can see that this has really put a big burden on you."

Daniel paused, then took his beloved's hand in his, before continuing softly, "I am very concerned about your behavior today. You are under a lot of stress, and it seems to be continuing to build." Charlene nodded her agreement. "Being married to a public figure will subject you to a great deal of attention. People will be watching your every move and whatever you do, good or bad, will be noted and possibly printed in the morning paper. I want people to know you as the kind and loving kindergarten teacher that I met on K.I.S.S. Day. But, I don't think that chef thinks of you that way. And, it hurts me to think that he might think poorly of you. I'm so proud that you are going to be my wife, and I want everyone to love you the way that I do." He emphasized his point with a soft kiss to her upturned mouth.

If Daniel thought that he was getting through to his bride-to-be, he was wrong.

"Daniel, I appreciate your concern for me, really I do." Charlene spoke rapidly. "I know that I need a break, and I'm going to be getting that when we leave on our honeymoon in the morning, so all I need to do is just get through today. But right now, I just don't have time to have a lengthy conversation about this. I'm supposed to meet with the photographer, I have an appointment to get my hair styled, and your office scheduled me to have an

interview with some reporter. I have to go now." Charlene's eyes were wide and a little frantic as she headed for the door.

"Oh no you don't. Just where do you think that you are going, young lady?" Charlene stopped in her tracks. The hand that had reached for the doorknob fell to her side. She recognized the tone of his voice---she'd heard it a couple of times during their courtship---and knew what it meant. Slowly, she turned around and faced Daniel.

Her eyes were pleading. "Daniel, I'm sorry. I know that I've been under a lot of stress, and I know that I shouldn't have yelled at the chef, or at you. But please don't spank me. At least, not right now. I know that I deserve it, but can't you just wait and do it tomorrow? Please, darling, I just don't have time."

"Oh, yes you do, because we are going to make time." Daniel beckoned her to the paisley sofa. Dread filled her steps as Charlene crossed the room and stood in front of him. "Charlene, you are like a time bomb that's about to explode, and the only way to prevent that from happening at the wrong time is to get rid of that stress now. You need this, and you know it. Now be a good girl."

Charlene was torn. She knew that he was right about her behavior and about her stress level. She also knew that she didn't have a minute to spare and that people were waiting for her.

The tense bride-to-be looked into Daniel's gentle eyes and knew what she had to do. She slipped off her shoes and set them aside. She didn't want her skirt to get wrinkled, so she took it off and laid it on a chair. Then she slid her satin panties down to her knees. Daniel made a place for her across his lap, and she stretched out across his knees and grabbed the sofa cushion for support. Still not able to give herself over completely to the situation, she said, "Could you at least be quick about it?"

Daniel smoothed his hand over the soft globes of her bottom and said, "You know that you aren't

the one who gets to make those decisions. I believe that you are becoming forgetful as well as snippety."

The senator's right hand came down with a resounding smack against the tender flesh of her backside. A scarlet handprint stood out on her left cheek. A matching one bloomed on her right cheek a moment later. Daniel continued to pepper her bottom with rapid strokes from his hand. Charlene buried her face in the cushion of the sofa to muffle her squeals.

She was well aware of the pain in her rear end, but Charlene continued to think about all the things that she still had to do: the hairdresser, the photographer, the reporter. There were probably a couple more that she'd forgotten about. Finally, it all just seemed too much for her and the dam of tension that had been building over the last week finally broke. She sobbed into the paisley cushion on the couch as Daniel continued to redden the sweet curves of her derriere.

Charlene felt wave after wave of stress leaving her body as she released it into the now damp sofa cushion. She hadn't even noticed that Daniel had stopped spanking her until she realized that he had slid his hand under her blouse and was rubbing her back in soothing circles.

Once she stopped crying, he gently slid her panties back into place and turned her over to sit in his lap. He reached into his pocket for a handkerchief and gingerly patted away the tears on her cheeks. He kissed her forehead, put his fingers under her chin and tipped her face back so that he could look at her.

The repentant bride-to-be gave him a soft smile. "Thank you, Daniel. You were right. I needed that. I don't know what got into me. It's like I turned into some horrible screaming shrew." She pressed her lips against his. "You always know just what I need."

Daniel ran his hand down the softness of her

honey-colored hair. "I'm as much to blame as you are. My staff has had you running ragged all week with interviews and photo shoots. I guess that I forgot that you were entitled to just be a bride without all the trappings of politics and publicity. It's tough enough for anyone to get through all the wedding preparations without the added pressure of dealing with the media."

Daniel's kiss took her breath away and left her slightly dizzy. He ran his hands down her back and carefully cupped her bottom. He slipped Charlene off his lap and set her on the sofa. "Wait here," he said and then disappeared into her bedroom. He wasn't gone long and by the time he returned, Charlene had regained her composure and was interested in a few more of those kisses.

He sat down and pulled her onto his lap again. "I know you're worried about your schedule," the senator told his bride-to-be, "so I just made a couple of calls to help you out." Daniel touched his finger to her lips to shush her when he saw that she was about to protest. "Remember, you just said that I always know just what you need, and right now I say you need a break."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Senator. Whatever you say." Her eyes twinkled, and she gave him a mock salute. "So, tell me, what magic have you worked with your powerful telephone?" She certainly was a changed woman from just a few minutes ago. Daniel was pleased to see her playful side return to replace the shrill lunatic that had taken possession of her earlier in the day.

"First, I called that overpaid wedding planner and told her to make sure that everything was precisely as you had specified. I think she got the message. Then, I called my assistant, Lee, and told him to cancel the interview with the reporter. He may have to promise him a post-honeymoon interview with both of us to make up for it, but it will be worth it for you to have some time to yourself this afternoon. And, finally, I called the

hotel masseuse and she is going to be here in an hour to give you a nice, relaxing massage."

Charlene's eyes were a moist blue as she looked at him. "Oh, Daniel. That sounds heavenly, but are you sure it won't be a problem to cancel the interview? I really don't mind."

"I appreciate that, sweetheart, but I'm sure that Lee will be able to work it all out." He smiled at his soon-to-be wife and traced his fingertip around the waistband of her underpants. "Besides, I've been feeling a bit of stress myself lately, and I think that you now have just about enough time to help me out with that little problem."

Charlene felt a tingle---down there---and grinned at her thoughtful fiancé. "Well, it does seem only fair," she said as she loosened his tie.

Four hours later, massaged and radiant, Charlene glided down the aisle to meet her groom at the altar. All of the wedding guests agreed that Ryan was the most adorable ring bearer in the history of weddings. But, mostly, they all marvelled that Charlene was the most beautiful, happy---and relaxed---bride that they had ever seen.

Lesson for the Teacher

Chrissy's hands gripped the steering wheel at ten o'clock and two o'clock. It wasn't because she was a particularly careful driver, but because she thought that squeezing the dickens out of the steering wheel was probably a wiser choice than pulling out her hair.

It had been a long day.

Maybe fifteen years as a second grade teacher was just a little bit too much. She loved the kids...usually. Their enthusiasm and energy rubbed off on her...usually. Her students were excited about learning and eager to please...usually.

Today was not a "usually" sort of day.

It started when Harvey, the class hamster, got loose and ran around the room with twenty-one second graders squealing and chasing him. By the time she was able to catch him, poor Harvey was scared to death and hid inside his plastic soup can for the rest of the day. Sometimes Chrissy wished she had a plastic soup can to hide inside too. Then Mary Beth Stevens managed to get gum stuck in her hair, Janey Klein fell off the swing, and Bob Fitzgerald wet his pants. And all of that was before lunch.

The stress of the day moved from Chrissy's clenched hands, up her arms, and deposited itself into a nice, tight knot between her shoulder blades. The beleaguered teacher breathed deeply, popped open the sunroof, and cranked up the stereo.

By the time she pulled into the long driveway to her house, Chrissy was feeling nominally better and thought she could face her own three little darlings with reasonable good cheer. Then she saw Melanie, age thirteen, looking out the window at her as she got out of the car. It was clear that there was an emergency. Of course, with Melanie, nearly everything was an emergency.

As a trained educator, Chrissy understood Melanie's need for attention. She was barely a year

younger than her older sister, Madison, and the comparisons between the two were like a constant assault on poor Melanie's self-esteem. Melanie was insecure, needed constant reassurance, and though she did well enough in most things, she wasn't a stand-out at everything like her older, prettier, athletic, and more poised sister.

Unfortunately, understanding those things didn't make dealing with Melanie any easier, especially when she was determined to get her mother's attention. And Chrissy could see by the look on her daughter's face that Melanie was feeling very determined indeed.

Chrissy took a deep breath, gathered up the evening's paperwork from the back seat, and headed into the house.

Three children, the two girls and younger brother Mason, surged toward the door, all with one word on their minds and coming out of their mouths: "Mom". The two dogs were part of the crowd and Chrissy knew that if they could talk, they'd be saying "Mom" too. Everybody wanted her and all she wanted was a few minutes to herself. Dream on, Mom.

Melanie was hopping from one foot to the other, waving a glossy catalogue in one hand and a piece of paper in the other. Her words spilled out in one hurried breath, "Mom, the choir is selling candy and wrapping paper and the guy said that if we turn in our orders by tomorrow instead of on Friday, he'll let us get a prize from the next prize level. I need to go right now before the other kids get out there to sell. Can you take me to Grandma's house and then to Aunt Marcie's? Please? We have to go right now 'cause Allen said that he was going to go to Grandma's too and you know he will. If I sell four things before tomorrow, I'll be able to get this radio. Isn't it cool? It comes in green and pink. Or should I get this flashlight? Can we go now, Mom, please, can we?"

Chrissy felt the knot squeezing between her

shoulder blades. She pressed her fingers against her temples and silently prayed for patience.

"Melanie, we'll go after dinner." Chrissy was surprised that she sounded so calm when what she really wanted to do was scream.

"But, Mooooom," Melanie was becoming frantic, "we have to go right *now*. I have to sell four things tonight so that I can get the radio. I already sold something to Mrs. Shultz, the secretary at school, because I was the first one to get to the office to ask her after choir." Somehow, this information did not surprise Chrissy. "So that means I need to sell one thing to Grandma, one thing to Aunt Marcie, and then I'll buy something with my birthday money, but we have to go right now. Puhleeze."

Chrissy tried to be patient, she really did, but that last, final, whining "puhleeze", on top of the loose hamster, the gum in the hair, the scraped knee, and the boy with the soaked, smelly trousers, was just too much. "Jesus Christ, Melanie. I said we'd go after dinner." Chrissy's voice was so shrill, it hurt the dogs' ears. "I don't understand why you have to make such a big deal out of everything. I swear, they get you kids all excited to sell this shit in order to win some prize, which is also a piece of shit. You have three different radios already, and you don't listen to any of them."

The room went silent. Melanie stopped fidgeting and stood statue-still in front of her mother. The girl's jaw hung open in surprise and her pupils went wide. A glimmer of a tear formed in the corner of one eye.

Chrissy glared at her daughter, waiting for more whining, but Melanie remained silent. Her moist eyes stared back, then flickered away to something, or someone, standing behind her still irate mother.

"Madison, Melanie, Mason, go play outside." Her husband's quiet voice sent shiver's down Chrissy's spine...and not the good kind.

The children obeyed their father and quietly exited the house. Chrissy could feel her heart

pounding in her chest and the blood rushing through her ears was nearly as deafening as the silence that engulfed the house. She couldn't decide if she should turn and face her husband or not. The decision was made for her when, a moment later, Michael "Mac" MacLean, high school history teacher, varsity basketball coach, father of her children, and Chrissy's husband for fifteen years, walked around to stand looking down at his petite wife.

"That was quite a little speech you just gave," Mac's brown eyes bore into Chrissy's blue ones. "When I got you that word a day calendar for Christmas, I had thought that it would improve your vocabulary, but it sounds like you've gone back to relying on some old favorites."

Beneath the sarcasm, Chrissy knew that her husband was annoyed. Ok, annoyed was probably putting it lightly.

"Christina," *Oh shit, he only uses that name when he's really pissed off*, Chrissy thought, as her husband continued. "We've had this conversation a thousand times, and a thousand times you've promised to watch your language, especially around the children---and that you'd watch your temper."

Chrissy didn't say anything. That didn't mean that she didn't have anything to say, it just meant that she knew better than to say all of the things that were on her mind right then since it would have only made the situation worse. She was not feeling particularly contrite.

Mac continued, "I think that you need a little bit of time to yourself to think about your attitude and your language. I'll deal with the kids, including Melanie and dinner. While I'm doing that, I want you to go to your room, sit at your desk, and do some writing." Mac's eyes showed that he had noted his wife's continued resistance and that he was in no mood for opposition. "It appears that you may need some attitude adjustment. But first, you need to spend some time thinking about your actions. Now, get going." With his final comments,

he gave her a swift swat on the rear that caught Chrissy by surprise...and gave her a hint of things to come.

The bedroom was dark and silent when Chrissy entered. It looked the same as it had when she left for work that morning: the king-sized bed was neatly made up with the quilt that Mac's grandmother had made for them as a wedding gift. On the wall opposite the bed, French doors opened onto a private deck; the master bath and walk-in dressing area were to her left. Chrissy headed to the walk-in closet and began to remove her clothes. She wished that she could have a nice quiet soak in the tub, but she wasn't sure how much time she had, and she didn't want to risk making her husband even more angry by not completing the task, which he had assigned.

Chrissy stripped off her clothes, dropped them in the hamper, and stood naked in the dressing area. As she peeled away the layers of clothing, part of the stress of the day came away as well, though of course, she was far from relaxed at the moment. Chrissy dug into the back of the walk in closet and pulled out a small, fabric covered box. As she lifted the lid, she felt a tingle of excitement that mixed with a tingle of dread. Inside her uniform was waiting, just as it had been when she put it away the last time. As was her custom, Chrissy always washed and ironed the outfit after every use so that it would be crisp, clean, and ready whenever the need arose.

Chrissy set the box on the floor and took off the lid. White cotton panties were the first item she removed from the box. Chrissy slid the sturdy undergarments up her legs and over her bottom. The crisp cotton felt very different from the lacy panties that she usually wore.

Next came the matching white cotton bra with a

little pink bow sewn into the V between the cups. Chrissy noticed that her hands were a bit unsteady as she buttoned the stiff white blouse with a Peter Pan collar over the functional, though dull, bra.

A blue and green plaid pleated skirt that reached mid-thigh was the last bit of clothing in the box. Chrissy pinned a pink bow into her short blonde curls, put on the white anklets in the bottom of the box, and slid her feet into a pair of black patent leather shoes.

Chrissy inspected herself in the full-length mirror. She looked like exactly what she had been that day---a very naughty girl.

The uniform clad woman turned from the mirror and went to her dressing table. She gathered up the mirror and make up that were on top and carefully removed the fabric skirt, which surrounded it. Once it was uncovered, it was easy to see that the dressing table was also an antique school desk. When she purchased it at an auction several years ago, she had no idea the multiple uses that it would serve. Chrissy retrieved a small wooden chair from the corner of the dressing area and sat down. She lifted the hinged lid of the desk and pulled out a stack of wide lined paper and a fat number two pencil. She placed the items on the top of the desk, sighed, and got to work.

I will not lose my temper. I will not swear. I will not lose my temper. I will not swear.

The words repeated themselves across the paper. At first, Chrissy's writing was cramped and the paper was indented from the pressure that she placed on the pencil. But, there was something soothing about the monotony of the task and gradually she began to relax. Her fingers loosened their death grip on the pencil and the tensions of the day began to fade as the tired teacher continued to write.

I will not lose my temper. I will not swear. I will not lose my temper. I will not swear.

Chrissy was so focused on her task that she

nearly forgot why she had been sent to her room in the first place. When she heard the bedroom door open and then close with a soft click, she was brought back to reality.

She heard Mac's feet pad across the carpet of the bedroom and she scurried to stack her papers into a tidy pile. Chrissy's husband did not tolerate sloppy work.

Chrissy stood next to her desk with the papers piled neatly on top as Mac entered. Chrissy stared straight ahead and waited for Mac to speak.

Tall and generally good-natured, Mac was well liked by his students, their parents, and his colleagues. He had a subtle sense of humor and brown eyes that often twinkled as though he was enjoying a private joke.

Of course, he hadn't gotten to be district coach of the year---twice--- without a strong sense of determination and discipline. Currently, the twinkle in his eyes was replaced by a somber glint. He held out his hand, and Chrissy turned over her papers to him without a sound.

Mac ruffled through the papers. "I see that you've been busy. That's good. But, there is still the matter of correction." Mac opened the top of the desk and put his wife's "homework" inside to serve as a reminder. There were a number of similar stacks there already. I will not make faces behind my mother-in-law's back filled several sheets after a particularly contentious visit from Mac's mother. Patience is a virtue was another popular refrain that covered the tops of several stacks of papers.

After he deposited the documents, Mac removed a ruler from the desk and softly closed the lid. Chrissy felt her stomach tighten at the sight of the ruler. She knew it was in there, and she knew that it was likely that Mac was planning to use it on her, but the sight of the wooden stick let her know that Mac was quite serious about correcting her behavior. She would have preferred that he use his hands because even though they were large and

strong and capable of getting her attention, they didn't sting the way that the ruler did. Chrissy really hated the ruler.

Unfortunately, she really had no grounds for objecting. Her language had been horrible and because Melanie was a particularly sensitive child, she knew that her words probably had a devastating affect on the poor girl. Chrissy cursed herself, yet again, for having such a short fuse.

"I've had a long day too," Mac said. "I'm going to take a quick shower and put on some more comfortable clothes. While I do that, I want you to stand here by your desk and think about your actions. We'll discuss the appropriate discipline when I get back."

Chrissy tried to swallow past the tightness in her throat. She squared her shoulders and stood at attention next to the desk. Mac reached under his wife's skirt and tugged the sturdy white panties down around her ankles. His hand brushed Chrissy's inner thigh, and she felt the sensitive flesh there quiver.

Chrissy saw a flicker of a smile turn up one corner of her husband's mouth as he turned toward the shower.

The naughty wife wasn't sure how long she'd stood there, but as always, it seemed like hours. The waiting was always the worst part. Her stomach churned, and her mind raced with wild thoughts of what Mac might do. Of course, her fears were always worse than the actuality, and Chrissy knew that. Her husband was a fair man, and his leadership was always meted out with an even hand and without malice or anger.

Mac's hair was still damp from the shower when he returned to his wife's side. "Do you have any explanation for your behavior with the children?"

Chrissy wished she could come up with something, anything, that sounded good, but the truth was that she couldn't, and she knew that trying to fake her way through an explanation would

only make matters worse. "No Mac, I don't have an explanation, or at least not a good one. All that I can say is that sometimes I just feel so overwhelmed with everything---the kids, my job, the house, the sports---that there just never seems to be any time for me, and Melanie's whining was just the last straw tonight...I know it doesn't justify what I did, but that's what happened."

Mac looked thoughtful for a moment and then said, "Wasn't it just this morning that I said something to you about the fact that you seemed particularly stressed out? And didn't I ask you if there was anything that I could do to help?"

"Yes" was his wife's whispered answer.

"So, why the martyr act? I know there are a lot of demands on your time and that's why I made that offer this morning, but if you don't tell me what you need, I can't help." Mac raked his hand through his hair before he continued, "So, it appears that there are a couple of issues that need to be clarified for you. One is the swearing, and the other is your stubborn insistence on doing everything yourself and not asking for help, or accepting it when it's offered. How can we be partners if you don't want to share?"

Mac's words stung. Not because they were harsh, but because they were so true. She had been stubborn, and she did want to do it all, even when it made her into a screaming, swearing, shrew. Why was it so hard for her to ask for help, or to accept it when it was offered, especially from her husband? She wished she knew.

There was really nothing left for Chrissy to say, so she turned toward the desk and leaned over its length. Her fingers closed over the far edge, and her backside was exposed. She pressed her upper body against the sturdy wood, which had been used by many students over the years, but probably never quite in this manner. She knew that not only did she deserve a thorough spanking, she needed one. Badly.

Mac retrieved the ruler and stepped close to his wife. The plaid skirt had flipped up over her hips leaving the rounded globes of her rear end ready and waiting for him to administer the correction that his wife so desperately needed.

Mac rested his left hand in the small of his wife's back and applied a small amount of pressure to keep her from wiggling away.

In his right hand, the ruler swung back and cracked down on Chrissy's sensitive flesh leaving an angry red streak across the left cheek. Chrissy's grip on the edge of the desk tightened, but she didn't cry out. Next it smacked against her right cheek and left a matching mark. The second stroke pushed her up onto the toes of the patent leather shoes. Over and over, the ruler continued its assault on her derriere until both sides were red and stinging.

Chrissy felt the pain but remained silent until it built to an unbearable crescendo of heat and then she released it all---the frustration of the day, the anger at herself for losing her temper, the fatigue and stress of her many responsibilities, and her shame at having excluded her husband from helping her to deal with all of it---on a wailing sob that echoed through the silent bedroom.

She loosened her grip on the desk, folded her arms under her face, and allowed the tears to flow. The sleeves of the white cotton blouse were soon soaked and still the crying continued.

Gentle arms scooped up the uniform clad woman and held her close. Chrissy buried her face in her husband's neck and inhaled deeply of his scent as she attempted to quell her sobbing. As her breathing became more normal, Chrissy's husband carried her out of the dressing area and lowered her petite body to their bed and then lay down next to her.

"I'm s-s-s-orry," she hiccupped and looked into Mac's eyes. They told her all she needed to know. He caressed the side of her face and smiled into her

eyes before he leaned forward to tease her lips with his own.

When he finally pulled away, Mac's voice was gentle, "I want to help you. I want to be your partner, your support, your helpmate, but you need to let me help you. I know that you like to think that you can do it all. And, I know that you can do it all---very well---and I'm proud of all that you do. But, when you insist on doing it all yourself, there's a price that you pay. The stress eats away at you until it erupts, and usually at the wrong moment. And, when you don't let me support you either by asking me to help or by accepting my offers, then it shuts me out of your life, and it shuts me out of what's happening with my family. That's not what either of us want."

As he spoke, Mac reached into his wife's blonde hair, removed the pink bow, and set it on the nightstand. Then his fingers worked the buttons of the schoolgirl blouse and peeled it away. He reached down to pull off the patent leather shoes and white anklets. The sturdy cotton panties had been lost en route to the bed, which left only the bra with the pink bow and the plaid skirt, both of which were removed in short order.

Mac traced his finger across his wife's collar bone and down the valley between her breasts before plucking at one nipple, and then the other, making the rosy peaks stand at attention against his palms as he reached out to gently squeeze the womanly orbs.

The stinging in her backside was soon forgotten as Mac's hands worked her breasts and then headed south.

"Now that we've dealt with that naughty little girl, I think that it's time for me to pay some special attention to my wife, don't you think?"

Chrissy felt a warm tingle down below her belly button and gave her husband a sly grin as she reached for the waistband of his pants. "Funny, I was thinking that I wanted to pay some special

attention to you too.”

Chrissy was up early the next morning to wash and iron her uniform. As she folded the items and returned them to the box, she smiled at the memory of all the “special attention” that was given and received the night before...and she wondered when she might need her naughty girl clothes again.

Harmony felt an unfamiliar, but not unwelcome, tongue enter her mouth and wrap her own in a cobra-like grip. She pressed her hands into the soft brown curls at the back of his head and held firm. It had been a long time since the woman had been kissed so thoroughly, and she was not about to let this man, or his tongue, leave her grasp any time soon.

Sensations, which she had long thought dead, started to reawaken. Harmony felt a vaguely familiar stirring that started just below her navel and moved its way southward like a river of warm melted chocolate.

The man with the tongue slid his large gentle hands down her back and grasped her cheeks in a possessive way that forced a moan from deep in Harmony's throat. At the same time that his fingers were kneading the flesh of her behind, his tongue pulled on hers in an erotic tug of war.

Harmony's breathing became more ragged as the man continued his onslaught on her tongue and rear. Her legs were starting to feel a little weak, so she was relieved, and excited, when he eased the two of them down onto the sofa.

The two of them were facing each other, their bodies touching down the length of the couch. Male hands worked at the buttons on her blouse, and Harmony felt her nipples spring to life at the thought of some attention from that very talented tongue. The hands were nearly as adept as the tongue, and the front clasp on her bra was undone expertly. Harmony inhaled sharply as his thumb rasped across the hardened peak of her left breast. As his mouth descended to replace his thumb, Harmony felt a trickle of her own moisture escape into her panties.

The too long celibate woman sighed deeply and hoped that this would be the end of her dry spell.

Seemingly of their own volition, Harmony's

hands left the back of his head and snaked their way down to the waistband of his pants. It had been a long time since she'd felt the press of a man's arousal against her palm, and she was eager to use her own tongue to give him pleasure. She fumbled a bit with his belt and the hook at the waist, then slid her hands deeper anticipating a hot, hard reception for her wandering fingers.

An hour later, Harmony walked into her living room. Her roommate, Ivy, was so startled by Harmony's early arrival that she nearly dropped the mixing bowl full of popcorn that was sitting on her lap.

"It's only 8:30! What are you doing home so soon?" Ivy spoke around the fluffy white kernels jammed into her mouth.

Harmony flopped herself down on the edge of the coffee table and reached into the bowl on her friend's lap. Although Ivy was a modern woman in many ways, she refused to compromise her popcorn. For her, there was only one way to make it: on the stove, with an oil coated pan scraping back and forth over the burner and then a generous dousing of melted butter and salt. One of Ivy's favorite refrains was "Orville Reddenbacher can kiss my ass."

As Harmony picked at the lusciously unhealthy kernels in her hand, she told the story of her most recent on-line dating fiasco.

"He'd been so nice when we'd had coffee, so when he invited me to his place for dinner, I figured it would be fine." Seeing Ivy's eyes widen with concern, Harmony was quick to reassure her. "Oh, it was perfectly safe. Sorry. Didn't mean to scare you like that."

"So what happened? You haven't been on anything resembling a second date in ages. I really thought this might turn into something," Ivy

continued to look confused.

"I did too." Harmony's disappointment was palpable. "I really liked him. He'd been so friendly in his emails, and he actually looked like the picture that he'd posted, unlike some of those other guys. I arrived at his house, and we had a glass of wine while we discussed where we were going to go for dinner."

"Seems harmless enough. Go on." Ivy was sitting on the edge of the couch with the snack bowl perched on her knees between the two women.

"Well, before we could decide on a restaurant, he started to kiss me...and I mean KISS. I know I haven't been with a lot of different guys, but that guy wrapped his tongue around mine and really gave it a work out. I'm not sure that I don't have tongue strain, as a matter of fact."

"OK, so the guy kissed the daylights out of you and may have injured your tongue. And you left because....?" Ivy's voice lifted into a question.

"Well, I didn't want to, believe me. But as things were heating up, I reached into his pants, you know, just to get a feel for how things were going down there."

Harmony paused to munch some popcorn. Ivy lost patience and threw a piece at her roommate. "Don't stop now! How can I live vicariously through your social life if you don't share?"

"Well, I reached inside his tighty whities and--- nothing."

"He didn't have a penis?" Ivy choked on popcorn and Harmony had to get up from the coffee table to give her a couple whacks on the back.

"Yes, he had a penis, you idiot. It was just, well, nonresponsive."

"Nonresponsive?"

"Yeah. To put it another way, limp, like a dishrag, soggy, cold, lifeless...need I go on?"

"Eewww. Stop. I get it." Ivy appeared horrified. "Totally limp? What did he say?"

"He mumbled something about being on

medication," Harmony sighed before she went on. "I was dying! The guy might not have had much going on 'down there', but man, the foreplay was incredible. I was so hot and ready, I couldn't believe that he wasn't. I gave it a really good effort. I'll spare you the details, but let's just say that I used every thing that I knew to try to get something to happen, but no dice. Eventually, it just seemed like a lost cause, so I made an excuse and got out of there."

"Too bad the medication wasn't Viagra." Ivy had recovered from the shock and was back to being her usual pithy self.

"Well, if it was, he'd better get his money back," Harmony giggled. As always, talking to Ivy had put her in a better mood.

The roommates munched popcorn in companionable silence for a few moments, then Ivy reached over and squeezed Harmony's arm. "I'm sorry it turned out this way. I know it's been tough for you to get back out there and date after your divorce. I just never expected that you would keep meeting such losers."

"Thanks, Ivy." Harmony was touched by her friend's understanding. "That old man on the TV commercials sure makes it seem easy to meet the love of your life. Of course, with all the money that people are paying him to search for their soul mates, it probably is easy for him to find a woman."

"Oh, don't give up yet, Harm," Ivy licked butter and salt off her fingers as she spoke, "Prince Charming might be emailing you right now."

Harmony laughed as she got up from the coffee table. "Well, if he is, he'll have to wait until tomorrow for a reply. I think that I've had enough 'romance' for one night and now I'm off for a nice soak in the tub." She grabbed another handful of popcorn and headed out of the room.

A slightly prune-y and lilac scented Harmony emerged from the bathroom nearly an hour later. She had succeeded in washing away her disappointment from earlier in the evening and was looking forward to snuggling up in bed with a good book.

She entered her room and stepped toward the sanctuary of the antique sleigh bed. Though she had never shared the bed with anyone, she derived great pleasure from slipping beneath the covers and propping herself against the aged wood of the headboard. It had been a splurge, but after years in an unhappy marriage, where there never seemed to be money for the things that she wanted, Harmony saw the bed as a symbol of her new life.

Just as she reached down to pull back the comforter, she glanced over at the laptop. Despite her earlier resolve, curiosity got the best of her, and Harmony headed for the computer to see if she had any new messages on the dating site.

Her instincts had been correct. She did have a new message.

*Hi Harmony, the online suitor began
I'm sure you hear this all the time,
but you really have a beautiful name. I'm
truly sorry that I did not respond more
quickly to your earlier message. I travel a
great deal and have been out of town for
several days. I hope that you will not
think that my lack of a response indicates
a lack of interest...nothing could be
further from the truth.*

*Please tell me more about yourself. I
think that I'd like to get to know you
better.
Clark*

Harmony felt a small tingle of excitement. She had given up on Clark since she hadn't heard from

him for a few days. She remembered that he lived in a city about an hour's drive away and that he owned his own business. Maybe this one will turn into something good.

Despite her horrible marriage and the string of oddballs and downright weirdos that she'd met in her recent dating ventures, deep down Harmony was a romantic who still believed that somewhere out there her soul mate was searching for her just like she was searching for him.

She arched her fingers over the keyboard and wrote back.

*Hi Clark,
Nice to hear from you.
Well, you already know that I'm 33 and
that I'm a nurse, because that's in my
profile. Other than that, I have been
divorced for a little over a year, no
children, no pets. In my spare time, I like
to read, go to movies, and garden. I'm
taking a watercolor painting course at the
community center.
Why don't you tell me more about
yourself? What kind of business do you
own? You said that you travel a lot, is
that for work or pleasure?
Looking forward to hearing from you,
Harmony*

Harmony hit the 'send' button and then immediately thought "Geez, that sounds so dull. Reading and gardening? I need to come up with some more interesting hobbies, something exotic...or erotic. I suppose writing 'P.S. I'm incredibly horny' would have been a bit much." She smiled to herself, pleased that at least she hadn't lost her sense of humor.

Harmony left the computer and crawled beneath the covers. As she drifted off to sleep, she sent up a silent prayer that love would come her way.

The next day at lunch, Harmony went to the internet café across from the hospital and checked for messages. Every time she'd walked by a computer that morning, her fingers had itched to sit down to see if Clark had responded, but she just couldn't take the chance that one of her co-workers would see what she was doing. Although she enjoyed her job and liked most of the other nurses, they were a nosey bunch, and Harmony hated the idea of being the subject of their gossip.

She munched on a BLT as the site came up on the screen. Harmony's heart beat a little faster, and she glanced around the room to make sure that no one could see what she was doing, then she logged on. She stifled a pleased little squeal when she saw that she had a message from Clark.

*Harmony,
Watercolor painting? That sounds so
interesting. I think that it's important for
all of us to explore our creative side,
don't you?
I hope you don't think that I am being
too bold, but I'm going to be in your city
tomorrow for business and would really
enjoy meeting you.
I'm staying at the Grand Victoria Inn on
Market Street. Would you like to meet
me there for dinner? Would 7:00 p.m.
work for you?
I know that we are basically strangers, so
I would perfectly understand if you
thought this was a little too soon. I'd
never want you to do anything that
makes you uncomfortable, it's just that I
am rather taken by you and would hate
to miss the opportunity to get to know
you.*

Clark

Harmony clasped her hands in her lap to keep from pumping her fist in the air. The Grand Victoria Inn?! Only the most beautiful---and expensive---hotel in the city! I don't have anything to wear!!!

Harmony got a grip on herself and wrote back.

*Clark,
What a lovely invitation. I'd be happy
to have dinner with you. Shall I meet you
in the lobby?
Harmony*

Harmony sipped on her iced tea and nearly choked when a response came back immediately.

*Harmony,
I'm so pleased that you'll be able to join
me. I'll look for you in the lobby at 7:00
p.m. tomorrow. I'm sure that I won't
have any trouble finding you; your photo
is stamped on my brain.
Until tomorrow,
Clark*

Harmony practically skipped back to the hospital and floated through the rest of her shift.

Those eyes are the most interesting shade of amber that I've ever seen. Harmony hoped that she wasn't gawking at the handsome man seated across the table from her.

They were nearly finished with their dinner. Harmony sneaked a peak at her watch. Two hours? How could that be possible? She'd been having such a lovely time that she'd hardly noticed that so much time had passed.

Clark was charming and witty, but in a sincere

sort of way. Harmony had been nervous about being out in such a formal setting with someone that she barely knew, yet he'd been so warm and engaging that she found herself relaxing almost immediately.

Harmony was grateful to have a roommate who wore the same size---and had a more appropriate wardrobe. The sleeveless black sheath that she had borrowed from Ivy was perfect. It was understated and classic, but sophisticated and sexy at the same time. She saw the appreciation in Clark's eyes, and her breath caught in her throat.

For not the first time that evening, Harmony caught herself wondering what it would be like to stare into those eyes while making love. Harmony felt a flush start at the base of her neck and quickly turned her attention to Clark and hoped that he didn't notice her distracted state.

"Thank you for having dinner with me, Harmony. I hate to see the evening end already, especially since I don't know when I'll get another chance to see you. I have a very nice suite upstairs with a lovely sitting area and balcony. Would you like to come up for a drink?"

Harmony heard Ivy's voice in her head: "I don't care how charming he is, or how horny you are, do NOT, I repeat, do NOT, go to his room. He won't respect you if you're too easy." Harmony told Ivy to shut up and responded "That sounds lovely, Clark." She placed her hand in his as they rose from the table and left the restaurant.

Clark's suite was on the 27th floor and the view was spectacular. Without even thinking about the fact that she was in a hotel room with a stranger, Harmony rushed across the suite's living room and stood looking out the wall of windows. The lights of the city cast a romantic glow over the town and Harmony started to feel a glow too.

It seemed so natural when Clark wrapped her in his arms and kissed her there in front of the windows. Harmony pressed herself against him and stifled a soft moan as his mouth pressed hers open. Her arms were around his neck, and she felt Clark slide his hands along her sides and down to press her hips against his.

Harmony got the distinct impression that he was turned on.

Clark scooped her up in his arms, and Harmony kicked off her shoes as they headed toward the bed. She wound her arms around the width of his shoulders and trailed kisses down the side of his throat.

Harmony expected that he would lay her on the bed, so she was a bit surprised when Clark stopped short of the bed and sat down in the straight-backed desk chair.

If she was surprised by the fact that he sat in the chair instead of going to the bed, she was stunned beyond belief when she found herself swiftly turned over his knees. Even later, when she replayed the scene in her head, Harmony could not remember how she went from nuzzling his neck to facing the carpet.

"What are you doing?" Harmony wasn't so sure she liked this.

"I'm giving you the spanking that you so well deserve," was his calm reply.

"WHAAAT??" Harmony wrenched around to stare at him but found that her thighs had been pinned in place between his powerful legs.

"I said," Clark continued calmly "that I am going to teach you a lesson about limits and self-respect, and safety. And the only way to make sure that you will remember this lesson is by making an impression on your backside."

"Lesson? What lesson do I need to learn, other than that you are probably nuts?" Harmony was alarmed, but realized that she really wasn't fearful. Although this was certainly one of the more unusual

situations that she'd ever found herself in, she felt strangely confident that Clark was not a threat to her safety.

Harmony re-thought her position when she felt his hand come cracking down on her bare backside. Harmony cursed Ivy for talking her into wearing a thong...not that underpants would have been much protection against this assault on her rump. After the initial shock wore off, Harmony realized that her butt stung---in fact, it stung a lot, and there was no apparent end (pardon the pun) in sight.

Clark, obviously more experienced in this position than was Harmony, continued to assail the confused woman's rounded orbs while interrogating her.

"Tell me, Harmony, what do you know about me?"

Harmony struggled to think clearly. Between the heat in her derriere and her confusion over going from the throes of passion to the sting of a butt warming, Harmony was having a bit of trouble concentrating. She struggled to focus and choked out an answer.

"I know that your name is Clark O'Neill. You live in Union Town, and you own your own business."

Harmony paused while she tried to remember any other information that she knew about the man who was peppering her backside with a long series of rapid swats. Harmony had been so busy trying to remember what she knew about him, that she'd stopped struggling to free herself.

"Do you have any confirmation of that information?" Harmony felt as though the rug had been pulled out from under her as she contemplated the meaning behind his statement.

Clark continued. "You don't know a damn thing about me, yet because I appeared to have money, gave you a few flowery compliments, and dressed the part, you assumed that I was everything that I'd said that I was." He punctuated his statements with a hardy swat across the sweet spot of her ass.

Harmony opened her mouth to protest, but had nothing to say. He was right. She's been a fool. She'd allowed her loneliness to overcome her good sense. She was lucky that all that had happened to her, so far, was a well-deserved spanking.

Clark, apparently satisfied that he'd made a sufficient impression on her backside, turned Harmony over and gently perched her on his knee so that he could see her face. Harmony winced as she tried to find a comfortable way to sit.

She looked into his amber eyes. Harmony knew that she should be trying to get away from this madman, but again, she could see that she had nothing to fear from him, so she sat, mesmerized, as Clark explained himself.

"Three years ago, my sister met a man on-line. They emailed for a few weeks and spoke on the phone for hours. She was so excited. She'd just come out of a bad marriage, and she was so lonely. She said that she'd met her soul mate, and when he came to town to meet her, she went directly to his hotel room without the slightest hesitation." Clark paused and Harmony saw the pain in his eyes.

"I'll spare you the details," he continued, "but I can assure you that the last few hours of her life were agonizing." Clark rubbed at his eyes, then set his jaw decisively.

"A very small amount of amateur sleuthing on the web showed that the man was not who he claimed to be, and was, in fact, a sexual predator who had only recently been released from prison." Harmony felt the color drain from her face. Her hand ached to reach out and sooth away the sadness from his brow.

"I felt so helpless. She was my little sister. I'd been watching out for her my whole life, but I couldn't protect her from that monster." Clark inhaled raggedly before going on. "At her funeral, I vowed that I would devote myself to getting the message out to other women. Initially, I gave talks at high schools and colleges, did interviews with the

local TV stations, but it just didn't seem to sink in. Everyone thinks that those sorts of things happen to everyone else. So, I set out to prove, one woman at a time, that if it could happen to my sister, it could happen to anyone."

"At first, I simply lectured the women that I met who were taking risks. But it just didn't seem to do any good. So, I decided that I had to do something to get their attention." Clark's amber eyes bore into Harmony's. "You're a sweet girl, Harmony, and I'm sorry that I had to hurt you to get my point across." He reached out to run his fingers over her hair. "But, I'd hate to see something bad happen to you."

His touch made the pulse at the base of Harmony's throat pound. Her mouth went dry, but she was able to ask the question that was tormenting her. "Who are you---really?"

Clark smiled and said "Everything that I told you was true, Harmony. I'm Clark O'Neill, and I really am a self-made man. And," he bent his head and whispered against her lips "despite everything, I really am glad that you came to my room tonight."

As his mouth moved over hers and Clark pulled her close, Harmony thought me, too.

The Summer Place

Candace stood beneath the cool shower washing away the remnants of her morning at the beach. She rinsed the soft lather of the scented body soap down the drain and turned off the water. She reached for a towel and dried herself carefully since she'd spent a bit too much time in the sun that day. Slender hands fluffed out her freshly washed hair, and it fell in damp strawberry blonde waves down her back. She wrapped the towel around herself and stepped into the bedroom.

No matter how much time she spent there, Candace still had trouble believing that it belonged to her, and her husband, Jason, of course. It was like something she'd imagined as a little girl who'd never been to the beach. She'd grown up in the Midwest and hadn't had much of an opportunity to travel as a child. She did most of her travelling though her mind's eye. As a child, Candace had loved to read stories about all sorts of exotic places, but her favorites were those about summers spent whiling away lazy afternoons in the surf, and she daydreamed that one day she would do so as well.

The room was even better than anything that she might have imagined. Weathered white wash covered the walls and the furniture. An antique white iron feather bed stood against the wall near the bathroom. A dressing table, which once belonged to her husband's grandmother, was positioned against the opposite wall. Floor to ceiling windows allowed the sea air to flow into the room from the beach side, and on the backside of the room, French doors opened onto a private patio. The breeze from the ocean puffed out the gauzy white curtains, and they billowed softly into the room.

She looked around the room at the crisp white flowers she's picked from her own garden and placed on the nightstand, the bed was made up with fresh linens that had been dried in the sea air, and

the candles in the wall sconces were waiting to be lit. The room was ready.

Candace tossed the towel into the hamper and slipped into a short white cotton robe. She knotted the belt around her waist and padded across the uneven wooden planks of the floor. She checked the clock and saw that she had plenty of time for her personal preparations before Jason's arrival, so she stepped onto the patio to dry her hair and enjoy the late afternoon sun. Candace sat in an Adirondack chair, propped her feet on a stool, and contemplated summer as a member of the Bolt family.

The cottage was one of a cluster of four that had been in her husband's family for nearly one hundred years. Theirs was the oldest; the original cottage built by Jason's grandparents. Over the years, three others had been added. Jason's two younger brothers, Joshua and Jeremy, and their families, had the cottages on either side of them, and his parents' was across the way. The four bungalows formed a happy little circle on a small hill overlooking the ocean. The Bolt family compound was a bit of an anomaly as condos and luxury hotels sprung up around it. Every year, developers tried to persuade the family to sell. In fact, the most recent offer was so generous it nearly caused Candace to choke on her coffee. But, the family was resolute. They understood the value of the time they spent there together, and since they were all financially secure, there was no reason to give up what all of them considered to be their own little slice of heaven on earth.

The family's refusal to sell was a bit ironic, since the family business was Bolt Construction, and much of their work involved building hotels and condominiums. Jason and his brothers ran the business now, though their father liked to keep his hands in things. All three sons, their families, and their parents, lived in a small city about two hours away. The wives and children spent the entire

summer at the cottages, with the men arriving on Friday nights and staying as late on Sunday as they could. As was their custom, all of the grandchildren had Friday lunch at their grandparents' house and stayed for a big sleepover, which ended when all of their parents arrived to collect them in time for a family lunch on Saturday. Candace was grateful to have a mother-in-law who remembered the excitement of spending Friday afternoon anticipating her husband's arrival after a long week of sleeping alone, and who went out of her way to make sure that her daughters-in-law could have that time with their husbands without the intrusion of children. And, of course, it was no great hardship for the children to spend a night being spoiled by their grandparents.

Candace knew that she was blessed to have two darling children, Jack, age four and Hannah who just turned two, but she also looked forward to dropping them off at her mother-in-laws' house at lunchtime every Friday.

The Friday afternoon anticipation was Candace's favorite part of the week, aside from the actual arrival of her husband. Today, she was even more anxious than usual since business had prevented Jason from getting to the beach last weekend. Two long weeks. Candace was determined to make the night sufficiently memorable, so her husband would not be tempted to miss another weekend. She smiled to herself at the naughty thoughts going through her head and returned to the bedroom to prepare to put them into action.

Candace removed the white robe and sat down in front of the dressing table. The long white eyelet skirt around the table brushed against her bare feet. As she slid lotion over her legs, Candace wondered about the women who had gone through the same Friday afternoon rituals in that room before her. She wondered if their husbands had the same rugged good looks as Jason, if they were also passionate, yet surprisingly tender, lovers. Candace

felt a flutter in her abdomen as she thought about the night ahead.

Her preparations had actually begun well before she stepped out of the shower. Steaks were marinating in the refrigerator next to the salad she made that morning. Wine had been selected, and the table was set. Of course, she hoped to work up an appetite in the antique feather bed, or elsewhere, before dinner.

Candace applied mascara and a light coating of eyeshadow. She dusted her nose with powder to tone down the redness, and the freckles, caused by the sun. It was hell to be a fair-haired sun worshiper. Her alabaster skin never tanned, only went from pink to shades of red, so she was usually quite careful. Candace dabbed perfume at her wrists, behind her ears, and down the deep cleft of her cleavage. She sprayed her hair and was about to stand up when she saw Jason looking back at her in the mirror.

Candace jumped from her seat and turned to give her husband a proper welcome, but stopped short when she saw the look on his face. He had her sandals in his hand.

"Jason! I didn't hear you come in. I'm so happy to see you, but you caught me before I was ready."

Jason couldn't help but smile as he looked at his naked wife. "You look ready for what I've had on my mind all afternoon. In fact, I was so distracted that I knocked off work early just to get here that much sooner."

Candace took a step closer to her husband, and the flutter in her stomach returned. But, she had to ask, "What are you doing with my sandals?"

"A very good question, my dear," Jason said as he looked down at the shoes in his hands. "When we spoke on the phone a couple of days ago, didn't you tell me that you had punished the children for tracking sand into the cottage?"

"Yes. I didn't let them watch TV that night. What's that have to do with anything?" the confused

wife asked.

"Well, Candace, when I walked in the front door, I was able to follow the sand trail all the way through the living room and into the kitchen, where you left your shoes. I don't necessarily care so much that you tracked sand in; it is a beach cottage after all. But, I do care about the fact that you imposed a rule on the children, but then didn't follow it yourself. What kind of example is that for Jack and Hannah?" Jason looked at his wife sternly.

There really wasn't much for Candace to say. She had done precisely the things of which she was accused, and she had been wrong. Soft gray eyes looked up at her husband.

"I'm sorry, Jason. You are absolutely right, and I will explain to Jack and Hannah that Mommy didn't follow the rules, and that she's sorry. But, please don't be angry with me. I've missed you so much. Let's not let this ruin our night together. I've made a special dinner, and I've been planning lots of ways to help you relax and unwind after your long work week." As she spoke, Candace stepped toward her husband, slid her hands around his neck, and pressed her slender form against the steely length of his body.

Jason loosened his wife's hands from his neck and held her two slim wrists in one of his large hands. "I'm sure that we'll have plenty of time for your plans...and mine...but there are a couple of matters that need to be taken care of before then." Jason led Candace to the feather bed and sat down on its edge. Candace stood in front of him, a little knot of dread forming in her stomach.

"W-what do you mean?" she asked. She worked hard to keep the quiver from her voice.

Candace's husband looked at her and said, "You aren't the only one in the family with rules to enforce. I have a couple of my own, and since one of them has been broken, I need to impose a punishment."

"Jason," his wife whined, "I don't want a

spanking. Please? I know I shouldn't have tracked sand in, especially after I had punished the children. And, in case you are wondering, I'm sure they saw what I had done since we all came back from the beach together this morning before they went over to your parents' cottage. But isn't just an explanation to the children good enough?" Instinctively, her hands went around to shield her backside.

"You know that's not the way it works in this family. You can't honestly say that you don't deserve to be spanked, can you? Now, take your punishment like a good girl, and then we can get on with our other plans for the evening. But, first, we need to uphold the rules, and you know what they are."

Indeed, she did know the rules, she just didn't think that he would punish her at the summer cottage. He never had before. Punishment had always been meted out at home. Candace was not happy about what was in store for her, but she was relieved, a little, when she realized that all of Jason's favorite spanking implements had been left at the house that was a hundred miles away. At least the sting of her husband's hand would not be as bad as the leather paddle that was his instrument of choice back at home.

She positioned her naked body across his lap and braced for the feel of his work-worn hand coming down on her upturned fanny. Candace was shocked when, instead of Jason's hand, she felt the sole of her sandal crash into her cheeks. The recently applied lotion made her butt slightly slick and the moisture gave the sandal extra sting. In addition, the sand that remained on the sole of the shoe clung to the lotion and created another layer of sensations on her ever-reddening ass. The grit of the sand made the nerve endings in her rump come alive, and they were tinglingly sensitive to the slap of the leather sole.

Candace cried out, but Jason just leaned toward

her ear and whispered, "Shhhh. Remember, sweetheart, the windows are all wide open."

Candace bit her lip and stretched out her hands to grasp the comforter for balance. Her pale fingers clung to the soft fabric as leather continued smacking against the rounded curves of her derriere.

Because her skin was so fair, even a light spanking left her cheeks red. This time, with the combination of sand and sole, Candace felt a whole new level of crimson spreading across her backside in sharp contrast to the ivory skin of her back and the golden hue of her hair.

Jason's wife scissored her legs in response to the searing pain until he put a stop to it by clamping her thighs between his knees. Candace realized that resistance was futile and gave herself over to her husband's corrective methods.

Candace winced with each crack of the sandal--- one to the right side, one to the left, then two in a row in the sweet spot in the middle. With her legs locked in place by her husband's muscled thighs, Candace saw her plans for a romantic evening slip away with each successive crack to her fanny. The tears which had stung at the corners of her eyes from the searing pain in her rear began to flow in earnest as disappointment washed over her.

In the two years that they had been practicing domestic discipline, Jason had seen his wife shed many a tear from a spanking. But, he had never seen her weep so bitterly before. Her shoulders were heaving, and, to him, it sounded as though her heart was breaking. Mystified, he dropped the sandal to the floor and gathered his wife onto his lap. Strong fingers gently pushed the soft curls of her hair away from her face as he tried to look into her eyes to figure out what was wrong.

Jason's sobbing wife buried her face in his shoulder, and, soon, his collar was wet from her tears. He slipped his hand under the soft waves of her hair and rubbed her back. He whispered

soothing words and held her close.

"I'm so sorry," Candace blubbered into her husband's shoulder. "All that I've been able to think about for the last three days was seeing you. I wanted it all to be perfect, just for you, and now I've ruined it all." The crying woman took a deep breath and then exhaled raggedly.

Jason gently lifted his wife's face from his shoulder. Soft fingers caressed her cheek as he looked into her gray eyes. "No, darling, you haven't ruined it. Not at all." Jason's eyes scanned the room, and he saw the special effort that his wife had made to welcome him. "When I walked in, I was so focused on the sand that I didn't even see all the loving things that you had done to the room, and yourself, just for me. But, now, I can see all that you've done—the flowers, the candles---and you smell great. Perhaps I am the one who owes you an apology."

"Jason, no. You don't owe me an apology. You were right to point out that I had been a hypocrite with the children, and I'm glad that you did. I just feel so miserable because I know that I've let you down."

"Let me down?" Jason was incredulous. "Candi, you could never let me down. You're my wife, my partner, my lover. We're two halves of the same whole. No matter what. I'll admit that I was concerned that you blatantly flaunted a rule that you had made for the children, but that's because I want to support you in being a good mother, just like I'd expect you to support me in being a good father. You aren't answerable to me for your actions, but we have agreed that there are certain consequences to breaking certain rules. We agreed, remember?"

Candace wiped her eyes and managed a weak smile for her husband. "Yes, I remember," she whispered. "But, I'm just so mad at myself, and so disappointed. I wanted to have a really romantic evening with you. But, instead, my eyes are all red

from crying, and my butt's all red from getting a spanking. None of that is very romantic, now, is it?" Candace continued to look miserable.

Jason smiled at his wife, and the hand that was rubbing her back slid down to touch her searing rump. "You might not think that getting a spanking is very romantic, but I think the sight of your cherry colored backside is quite appealing."

"Of course," Jason continued, "your front ain't so bad either." As he spoke, Jason slid a finger along his wife's collarbone and paused to feel her pulse fluttering at her throat. Candace leaned forward and touched her lips to his. He kissed her back, then moved his mouth so that he could press gentle kisses to her forehead and cheeks. His lips feathered along her jaw line and captured her mouth in a slow caress.

Candace spread her fingers into the dark thickness of his hair and pressed closer to him as his tongue entered her mouth. It slipped along her teeth and swirled around its counterpart in her mouth. Candace felt a slow burn forming in her loins, and it was starting to spread.

Jason lay back on the bed and pulled his naked wife down with him. He pulled his shirt over his head while she worked to open his belt buckle and remove his pants. Candace felt desire careening through her veins as her eyes roamed slowly down his body. Broad shoulders, muscled arms, and trim mid-section were brown from the sun. She boldly stared below his tan line.

Jason's index finger did a slow trace down his wife's body from her lips, to her throat, through the creamy cleft of her cleavage and around one rosy peak and then the other. It continued across the smoothness of her stomach and into the strawberry blonde curls beneath. Jason had been fascinated with the color and the softness of Candace's mound from the first time that he'd seen it. When he met Candace, he had been struck by the beauty of her nearly waist-length hair. It was the most delicate

shade of red that he'd ever seen, and, from the moment he met her, he wanted to bury his face in it, and imagined how it would feel sliding across his bare chest.

Though he'd had ample opportunity to feel the swirl of Candace's crowning glory over the past few years, he was still mesmerized. He ran his fingers slowly through the golden hair below her navel, which matched the golden ringlets on her head. Candace felt her heart bang against her chest as she lost herself in his touch and anticipated the pleasure of his fingers going deeper into her welcoming moisture.

Jason's wife eased herself up onto the pillows at the head of the bed and opened herself to him. While his fingers plundered the heat of her womanhood, his tongue returned to dance with hers in a kiss filled with the longing that had built up over their two week separation. Candace was breathless when he pulled away. Her breath continued to come in shallow gasps as Jason slowly moved to the southern regions of the bed and buried his face in the spot where his fingers had been.

Quivers ran the length of Candace's creamy thighs as Jason pleased her. She buried her fingers in the brown curls of his hair and pressed him further into her, while his tongue lapped at her hardened nub. The crisp coolness of the cotton sheets played against the sting in her recently reddened backside as she thrust her hips forward and back as pleasure shot through her to her very core. It started as a slow rumble in her abdomen, then built to a crescendo that forced her to bite her lip to keep from shouting. The intensity washed over her in waves. In fact, she wasn't sure whether the waves roaring in her head were coming from within her emotion filled body, or from the windows that opened to the sea.

Cool ocean breezes swept across her body as Candace lay back against the pillows and attempted

to catch her breath. Jason left his position between her thighs and rained soft kisses up the length of her body. He paused en route to circle her engorged nipples with his tongue and gently pull at their rosy tips with his teeth. He pulled his face away from the milky whiteness of her breasts and replaced his lips with his broad hands. His fingers kneaded them until they were hard pebbles pressing against his fingertips. Candace's attempts to regain control of her breathing were futile. When Jason claimed her mouth with his, Candace could taste her own juices lingering on his lips.

Jason straddled his wife with his taut thighs and held himself above her with hands on either side of her head. Candace ran her hands down the sturdy length of his torso, then around to clasp the firm roundness of his rear end. She ran her fingers slowly across his buttocks, then brought them back around to caress his erection. Jason's eyes darkened as she ran her fingers from root to tip. Candace inserted her index finger into her mouth and then spread the moisture around the head of his penis. Jason inhaled sharply at her touch. Candace smiled as she felt him grow even larger against her palm.

Candace's hands continued their erotic massage until Jason was nearly ready to explode. He gently moved her hands aside, then slid his length into her. She repositioned her hips so that she could properly welcome the length of him into her waiting heat. Candace was drenched with desire, her body warm and accepting as he drove the length of his shaft all the way into her wet passage.

The two of them moved up and down together in that time honored rhythm of men and women until Jason shuddered and released his essence into her. Spent, he eased himself onto the bed next to his wife and gathered her into his arms. Candace rested her cheek against his chest, and Jason inhaled deeply of the scent of her hair. His hands softly pulled at the curls splayed out across his chest.

When his breathing finally became more regular, Jason said to his wife, "So, what were the plans that you had for tonight?"

Dinner at the Club

"Not tonight, honey. I have a terrible headache." Parker Hartington McLean said, and she rubbed her temples.

Peter McLean handed his wife a glass of wine. "Come on, Parker, it won't take very long. Besides, how often do I ask you to do this?"

"Can't we just do it tomorrow?" Parker suggested.

"No, it has to be tonight," Peter pressed his wife.

Parker sighed and gave in. "All right. But, I really wish that you would have checked with me earlier today so that I could have planned for this and been ready. I always need some mental preparation, you know. "

"Thanks, Sweetie. You're a real trooper."

Parker gave her husband a sly smile. "Well, you're going to owe me. You know how much I hate this stuff. I was really hoping that we could avoid it this year."

"I know you do, but I really need this from you, tonight."

Parker really couldn't say no to Peter. He rarely made such requests, and besides, who could say no to those baby blue eyes? "Okay. But, the next time someone asks you to buy tickets to a charity dinner, please call me before you say yes. I've had a really long day." Parker finished her glass of wine and poured a refill. "The other teacher didn't show up today, so I've spent all afternoon translating Spanish to English and back again. When I volunteered to run the English as a Second Language program at the Y, I never dreamed that there would be so many people who would want to learn. At least, I won't have to worry about any very intellectual conversations at the club tonight to tax my brain."

"I hate these things too, and I can think of a number of things that I'd rather do tonight. In fact,

most of them involve you and racy lingerie," Peter said. "But, the charity gala only happens once a year, and it's important for us to be there. You know that it's good for my business for me to be there, and your parents will be disappointed if we don't attend. Wear something sexy that will make me the envy of all those stuffed shirts." As he spoke, Peter moved behind his wife and brought his arms around to caress her from behind. He ran possessive hands across her breasts and headed south. His fingers slid down past the waistband of his wife's pants and found their way into the soft curls buried there.

Parker forgot about her headache and lost herself in the touch of her husband's tongue across the back of her neck and the sweet warmth that his fingers were creating inside her silk panties. Just as she was about to reach the point of no return, Peter stopped, removed his hands, and whispered in her ear, "If you're a good girl tonight, we'll pick up where we left off when we get home."

Parker didn't know whether to laugh or scream. Of course, it was the fact that Peter always kept her on her toes that made her love him. He was the only man she'd ever met who didn't put up with her shenanigans and always gave her a good run for her money.

Two hours later, the McLeans made their entrance at the charity gala. Parker had taken Peter's instructions as a challenge and turned quite a number of heads when she entered the room. She knew that most of the women would be in black, or white, or both, so she chose a red halter dress that plunged to just above her navel. The skirt was more discreet; though its soft swirls fell just above the knee and showed off her well-formed calves.

Parker spotted her friend Bitsy across the room and headed that way, hoping for a good laugh and some gossip. She had almost made it when she was waylaid by Janine Reardon, the chairperson of the charity gala. Parker's heart sank as she realized

that she was trapped. Over Janine's shoulder, she saw Bitsy raise her glass to her and laugh.

"Oh, Parker, don't you look wonderful? Mother always says that red makes me look cheap, but it's just perfect for you." Parker felt the jab of the saccharine laced slam, but she was used to that sort of thing from Janine and her circle of friends, so it had no impact on her. In fact, she took it as a compliment. She knew that she must look really great if she got such a direct insult from Janine. Parker looked down at the shorter woman in her lacy, high-collared white blouse and black satin skirt and gave her a tolerant half-smile. Parker considered a snide retort, but decided that it wasn't worth the bother, especially when it was unlikely that the other woman would realize that she was being insulted.

Soon, Janine and her cronies surrounded Parker and within just a few short minutes, Parker considered the possibility that her head might actually explode. She imagined blood and brain matter splattered on the mahogany paneling of the dining room of the Rutledge Country Club. For a brief moment, she thought that it would be preferable to listening to the endless drivel spouting forth from the Pumpkin Heads.

"We have had the most awful time finding a decent gardener." Ann said with a put-upon sigh.

"There is just no good help to be had. I fired the maid just last week." Janine looked at the others with her beady black eyes. "I'm sure she was dipping into the sherry. She was always acting like she was drunk. Besides," she gave the others the gaping yellow-toothed grin, which, in Parker's mind, had earned her the title of Queen of the Pumpkin Heads, "I hated trying to understand her broken English, anyway."

While Janine went into a smug imitation of her former maid's Spanish accent, Parker looked across the room at the portrait of her great-grandfather and namesake, Parker Hartington. It gave her some

comfort to know that not everyone who had ever belonged to the club had been as vacuous as the Pumpkin Heads. Parker's great-grandfather had made his fortune during prohibition. He was a rough and tumble kind of man who had gone from rags to riches thanks to a fearless ability to transport whiskey from Canada in kegs labeled "molasses". He had also been fond of a good game of poker, skeet shooting, and horses, so it was only logical that he had used part of his self-made fortune to found the Rutledge Country Club. Though she had no memories of her great-grandfather, she had grown up hearing the constant comparisons between her own rebellious nature and that of her rum-running namesake.

Parker's glance moved from her great-grandfather to the simpering fools that surrounded her. She'd known the four Pumpkin Heads since middle school, and in the nearly twenty years since then there had been nothing to change her initial impression---they were annoying, shallow, mean-spirited, and not too bright. She had dubbed them the Pumpkin Heads long ago, in part because they all had the same empty stare as a Jack-O-Lantern, in part because of Janine's snotty grin which showed her teeth and were the same pukey yellow color as the inside of a pumpkin, but mostly, because from the time that she had known them, they had referred to each other as "Pumpkin", as in, "Oh, Pumpkin, did you hear that Parker got detention because she was smoking behind the gym?" Or, "Pumpkin! Mumsie says that I can get my nose fixed this summer before school starts."

After high school, the Pumpkin Heads went off en masse to Miss Potter's School for Young Ladies to learn about flower arranging and table settings and to fill the time between high school and marriage. Each of them had actually succeeded in finding men willing to marry them, due, no doubt, to their families' connections rather than their own charm or desirability. DeeDee married a doctor, and

Ann married a dentist. Secretly, Parker thought it was a shame that Janine hadn't found herself a dentist to marry given her aforementioned dental issues, but she landed an accountant instead. Parker thought for a minute and then realized that she didn't really know what Denise's husband did. All she knew for sure was that he was nearly as dull as his wife was.

Parker, despite her mother's pleading, had refused to consider Miss Potter's and had packed her convertible and headed off to Wilkins College to study art history and to have a good time. She had no intention of looking for a husband. There was too much fun to be had before she ever wanted to settle down. She achieved the first two goals, but the third was thwarted the first weekend that she was on campus when Peter McLean came knocking on the door of her dorm room.

Parker's brother, Jack, had graduated from Wilkins the spring before she entered as a freshman and had asked his younger fraternity brother, Peter, to keep an eye on his sister. Jack had explained Parker's general disdain for rules, authority, and convention. But, like most brothers, he didn't bother mentioning her preppy good looks.

Peter had gone to her dorm only as a favor to a fraternity brother. In fact, he went the first day just to get it over with. His jaw dropped when an athletic looking blonde with shoulder length hair, long tanned legs, and even white teeth opened the door. In the ten years since, Peter had been true to his word and had been very busy keeping an eye on Parker. Sometimes, it took a firm hand to keep her in line. Sometimes, it took more than a firm hand.

Parker put a stop to her wandering thoughts and focused again on the events around her. She tried to blot out the voices of the Pumpkin Heads and looked across the room at her husband. Just because I don't want to be here doesn't mean that I can't have some fun, Parker said to herself. Peter was standing with a group of men, probably talking

about golf or the stock market. Peter glanced up and caught his wife's eye. Her bold gaze held his from across the room. With slow deliberation, she moved her eyes down her spouse's nicely toned body, paused at the area just below his belt buckle, then returned her eyes to his. Before she broke visual contact, she slid the pink tip of her tongue across the fullness of her upper lip. Parker saw her husband's eyes briefly darken with desire before he gave her the "you'd better behave yourself" look that she'd seen countless times in the last ten years.

Seating for dinner was announced, and Parker was relieved to get away from the Pumpkin Heads. Her relief was short-lived, however, because she found that Janine and her accountant husband were at the same table as she and Peter. Parker took a seat across from her husband. Geoffrey Smythe, local polo aficionado, was seated on her right, and Janine plopped her dumpy little body into the seat on Parker's left.

Parker settled into her seat and reached for the red wine, which had been poured by a white-jacketed waiter. She looked across at Peter and saw him wink at her. Parker was still determined to have a good time, so she carefully slipped off her right shoe. She skimmed her foot across the antique carpet of the dining room and up her husband's leg. One of the many advantages of being a leggy blonde was the ability to stretch her leg all the way across the distance between her chair and her husband's, and up into his crotch. She gave him a wicked smile over her wineglass as her red-painted toes found their intended target. While all of this was going on, Parker chatted with Janine's husband as though he was actually interesting. To anyone who observed the table, there was no indication that anything unusual was happening under the crisp linen tablecloth. No one would suspect that Parker Hartington McLean, great-granddaughter of a founder of the club, was arousing her husband with

her tippy toes while chatting with an accountant.

Of course, for Parker, the naughtiness of the whole thing was very arousing. She felt a tingle beginning to grow in the area under the swirling red skirt of her dress.

She continued chatting with everyone at the table, while studiously avoiding her husband's gaze. She could feel the hardness growing in his crotch, and it pressed deliciously against her foot. Parker was feeling rather pleased with herself.

Suddenly, she felt her husband clasp her mischievous foot in his firm hand. She glanced at him under her lashes, and he flashed a quick grin her way. Then he started tickling her foot. As he did, he spoke to Geoffrey about polo.

"Tell me, Geoffrey, do you ever have to use the crop on your more spirited ponies? It must be difficult, sometimes, to keep them in line." Peter punctuated his words with particularly intense tickling so that Parker had no doubt as to his meaning.

The tickling was getting to be too much for Parker. She was struggling to refrain from either laughing out loud or wriggling too much to rescue her foot. Her statement might not have made much sense to everyone else at the table, but she got her message to her husband.

"You know, my uncle never used the crop on his horses, no matter how high spirited they were. Some people think that high spirited is a good thing. Better than an old broken down work horse."

As soon as she said the word "uncle" Peter gave his wife's foot a loving pat and let it go. Parker tipped her head to him in a silent acknowledgment of his victory.

Parker turned her attention back to the conversation with Janine's husband. While Parker's attention was diverted, Janine had entered the conversation and had changed the subject. She had returned to her complaints about the sherry-sipping maid, and was once again mocking the poor

woman's accent.

Parker, who had spent several hours earlier that day, as she did every week, teaching English to many of the Spanish speaking immigrants in the area, had finally had enough of the Queen of the Pumpkins. Just as Janine was about to take a sip of her red wine, Parker was overcome by a sneezing fit, which, by some strange coincidence, caused her to bump Janine's arm. Red wine made a crimson puddle on the front of Janine's lacy white blouse. She jumped up from the table with a small squeal while Parker apologized profusely and attempted to blot up the mess on the other woman's clothing.

Only Peter, who was well aware of his wife's proclivity for pranks, knew that this was no accident. He also noticed that instead of actually wiping up the wine that was spilled on Janine's blouse, Parker was actually smearing it into an ever-expanding scarlet stain.

Peter felt a mixture of emotions. He loved the fact that Parker was no country club Barbie. He'd never met anyone like her, and he found her free-spirited nature and lack of pretense to be refreshing. On the other hand, sometimes she took it too far. He was no big fan of Janine Reardon, either, but that didn't excuse causing the woman such a public embarrassment.

The Reardon's left right after dinner. The McLeans's made their exit shortly thereafter. Peter had been rather remote during the rest of dinner, and Parker suspected that he knew that her sneezing had been no accident.

After the valet brought the car around and she had been deposited in the passenger seat, Parker ran her left hand across the front seat and touched her husband's leg. Long fingers traced their way across the muscled length of Peter's thigh and moved deeper into his lap. She could feel the affect

that she was having on him, as he grew harder against her fingers. Parker unfastened her seat belt and moved toward her husband's side of the front seat. As she slid across the leather seat, the skirt on her dress rode up to reveal tanned thighs. Parker pressed herself against Peter's arm, planted a slow kiss on his neck, and continued her manual exploration of his crotch.

At a stoplight, Peter turned to his wife and kissed her soundly. When he finished, he said to her, "I am certainly enjoying the ride home, but you should know that no matter how much fun this is, you are still getting a spanking when we get home, and don't pretend that you don't know why."

Parker returned to her side of the car, replaced her seatbelt, and pondered her fate for the remainder of the trip home.

They pulled into the garage and Peter shut off the engine and turned to his wife. "I'm going to take the babysitter home and when I get back, I expect to find you waiting for me upstairs."

Parker knew what he meant by "waiting for me upstairs", and her already fluttering stomach started doing somersaults. She went into the house and checked on Mac, age two, before heading to the master bedroom suite.

Her steps were slow as she walked down the long carpeted hallway. Parker's stomach had calmed a bit, but her mind was racing. Maybe I shouldn't have spilled the wine on Janine, she said to herself. But, it felt so good to get back at her for all her snide comments.

Parker knew that it wouldn't take Peter long to drop the babysitter off and return home, so she moved quickly around the bedroom. She tossed the red dress into the hamper for the dry cleaners and changed into what she referred to as her naughty girl uniform. It consisted of a large green Wilkins College football jersey with the number 20 on the back and a pair of sensible cotton panties. Parker had acquired the Jersey by stealing it from Peter's

roommate's dresser. The night that Peter discovered her thievery was also the first night that he had spanked her. Since then she'd tried--really hard--to be a good girl, but sometimes it was just too difficult.

Parker heard the garage door open and knew that she only had a couple of minutes before Peter entered the room. She scurried over to the corner, lowered her cotton panties to her knees, and stood staring at the wall.

She had only been standing there for a few moments when Peter entered the room. Parker knew better than to turn around. She heard him go into his dressing area and remove his clothes, and then she heard the shower running. How much longer is he going to drag this out? Parker wondered to herself. Peter knew that, for Parker, the waiting was often as painful as the punishment itself.

Finally, Parker heard Peter turn off the shower. Her feet wiggled in nervous anticipation, and her hands were clenched at her sides. The butterflies had returned to her stomach and were dive-bombing her insides. Parker focused on her breathing and tried to calm herself.

"Come over her, please, Parker." Peter's soft voice broke her concentration, and Parker turned to see him sitting on the edge of the bed.

Bare feet crossed the room slowly, in part because Parker was in no hurry to face her husband, and in part because the panties that were around her knees hobbled her. Parker found herself standing between her husband's knees. Peter reached out and held her left hand in both of his and spoke to her with quiet patience.

"Parker, if you can look me in the eye and honestly tell me that it was an accident that wine got spilled on Janine tonight, then I'll apologize right now for assuming that it was intentional."

Parker looked into her husband's blue eyes and started to speak, but she closed her mouth and

lowered her gaze. "It wasn't an accident, Peter." Parker's voice was a mere whisper.

"I didn't think so." Peter's voice remained even and low. "I know that you can't stand Janine and her friends, and frankly, neither can I. But, that doesn't give you the right to publicly humiliate her. Your behavior tonight was childish, and I'm very disappointed. I love your sense of fun, and I'd never want to do anything to squelch it, but we've both agreed that there are times when you cross the line, and I think that you'll agree that this was one of those times."

Parker was thoughtful for a moment, then said, "Oh, Peter, she was so annoying, and I didn't want to be there, and it just seemed like I couldn't help myself." Her eyes were pleading. "But, as much as I thought that I would enjoy embarrassing her, I must admit that it wasn't really as much fun as I thought it would be. When it was all over, I actually felt sorry for her. Her life must be so dull, and she had worked hard on the gala, and I spoiled that for her. I still don't like her, but I'm sorry that I acted the way that I did."

Peter searched his wife's face for a sign of insincerity, but found none. He squeezed her hand. "I'm very proud of you, Parker. That's a very mature way of looking at things, but you are still getting a spanking."

Parker's mouth opened in astonishment. "Why? Don't you believe me?"

"I do believe you, sweetie, but that doesn't change the fact that you were irresponsible and foolish and that we have agreed that there would be certain consequences for that type of behavior."

Resigned to her fate, and knowing that he was correct; Parker laid herself over her husband's left knee.

Peter clamped his knees closed over her thighs and pushed the hem of the football jersey up to expose his wife's backside. The creamy flesh quivered when he smoothed his hand over her

rounded cheeks and down to her thighs. Parker braced herself against the softness of the satin comforter and waited.

Peter was in no hurry and continued to stroke his wife's derriere. Just as she began to relax, his hand lifted and then crashed down against her right cheek. A flash of red began to spread across Parker's backside and Peter's hand came down again on the same spot.

Parker's husband continued to redden her right cheek, and then moved to her left. Although Parker couldn't see her bum, she knew that it was nearly the same color of crimson as Janine's blouse had been. She suspected that the blouse would return to its original color more quickly than her backside would.

Peter's hand continued to rain down on Parker's rump, and she began to feel tears stinging at the corners of her eyes. About the time that Parker thought that her rear end must be on fire, her husband redirected his attention and focused on her upper thighs. Oh, the sting. Parker writhed and wriggled and nearly got her legs loose before Peter clamped his own muscled thighs more tightly against hers.

In doing so, Parker's bottom tipped up more fully across his knee and her thighs came apart slightly to reveal the pink moisture that lay just beyond. Peter continued meting out the punishment that his wife had earned for herself that evening, but soon he became distracted by thoughts of their earlier encounter that afternoon. He remembered probing his wife's warm interior with his fingers. When he decided that Parker had been punished enough---and the scarlet welts on her backside, along with her tears, indicated that he'd accomplished his goal---Peter continued to keep his wife's rear perched in the air just above his knee, only this time he loosed his knees slightly so that even more of her was exposed to his view. He smoothed his hand across her enflamed rear and

then slid it further down and returned his fingers to the spot where they had been that afternoon.

Parker felt his fingers plunder her and felt a small swirl begin to form in the same region. She was spent by the events of the evening and the thorough spanking that she'd just received, so there was nothing for her to do but to give herself over to the sweet warmth that her husband was creating with his fingers.

Parker again clutched at the satin comforter, this time to keep herself from moving out of position as, for the second time that day, her husband's loving fingers moved her closer to the point of no return. This time, however, he finished the job and as the waves of pleasure washed over Parker, her husband leaned toward her and whispered in her ear, "I told you that if you were a good girl we'd pick up where we'd left off."

The Wedding

CeCe sat at the dressing table in her bedroom sipping champagne. This was the most important day of her life. Everything had come together beautifully, and she couldn't have been more pleased. As soon as the engagement was announced six months ago, she had put a plan into place to look and feel her best on this day, and all of her hard work had paid off. In fact, it had worked out even better than she could have imagined.

CeCe leaned forward to look at her face in the mirror. Thanks to weekly facials and a supply of expensive cleansers and moisturizers from one of those peppy women behind the cosmetic counter, her skin was dewy, soft, and glowing. It had been a pricey undertaking, but she knew that the money was worth it in order to look, and feel, confident and beautiful.

She'd already been to the salon that morning for a fresh manicure and pedicure and to have her hair styled. CeCe had been letting her brown hair grow so that she could have it put into a sophisticated up-do. She'd considered having them do her make-up too, but decided against it. She'd been practicing for weeks and felt that she'd finally achieved the look that she wanted. The woman at the cosmetic counter had probably financed her entire summer vacation with the commissions she'd earned from sales to CeCe.

She stood and examined her body in the full-length mirror. CeCe looked herself over with a critical eye. First, she checked herself out from the front and then turned to see how she looked from the rear. Again, she was pleased. Regular sessions with a personal trainer and strict adherence to a diet had worked wonders. Though she'd never had a weight problem, the workouts and the diet had given her body tone and definition. They had also given CeCe a sense of poise and ease with her body that she'd not had before. Her arms were nicely

muscled without looking gnarly, her thighs were steely hard, and she had a butt you could bounce a quarter off of.

She smiled at herself in the mirror. Despite the fact that she hated the taste and slimy feeling of the teeth whitening strips that she'd been using religiously for the last two weeks, CeCe noted that the discomfort had been worth it. Her teeth were whiter, and the coffee stains were gone. She knew that she'd be able to smile without feeling self-conscious about her discolored teeth, and that made CeCe very happy indeed.

CeCe took another sip of champagne and glanced over at the beautiful dress hanging from the top of her closet door. She felt a small thrill of anticipation as she thought about strolling into the church in such a sumptuous garment. She'd spent weeks pouring over magazines and scouring all the best shops in the city, and when she found it, she just knew it was The One. She nearly maxed out her credit card in order to buy it, but this was a once in a lifetime event, right?

CeCe had been dreaming of this day since she'd met Scottie five years before. She wasn't going to let a little thing like a credit limit stand in the way of making his eyes pop when he saw her.

CeCe pictured her beloved Scottie standing at the altar in his wedding finery, and her heart swelled with love. It also broke just a little bit more as she realized, yet again, that she was not to be his bride.

Two hours later the doorbell rang. CeCe gave herself one last approving glance in the mirror and headed down the stairs.

She pulled the door open. CeCe and her "date", Oliver, stared at each other. CeCe knew by the look on Oliver's face that she had achieved her goal of looking jaw-droppingly gorgeous. She was also a bit

surprised by Oliver's appearance. He actually looked good.

An escort had been the one part of CeCe's plan that had been the most challenging. She knew that she couldn't go alone. It was going to be depressing enough to watch the man she loved marry someone else. She knew that there were a number of people who suspected that her feelings for Scottie were deeper than they appeared on the surface, and she couldn't stand the idea that they might think her pitiful if she showed up alone.

Oliver was a co-worker, and they had been pals since they met two years before. Their cubicles were next to each other at the publishing house where they both worked. The two of them often ate lunch together at the park across the street from their office building, frequently commiserating over their failed love lives while eating sandwiches and chips.

Oliver had seemed like a logical choice as a date, particularly since she had confessed her feelings for Scottie to him. But, the one fly in the ointment, and CeCe felt like a heel for thinking it, was that Oliver was sort of a geek. Sweet and thoughtful, a devoted friend, but a geek, nonetheless. He was often shy in a crowd, and he was not known for being a sharp dresser. In fact, CeCe suspected that he hadn't been in a men's clothing store since high school.

But, Oliver had volunteered one day at lunch, and since she didn't have any other reasonable prospects, she agreed. Since then, she had hinted subtly, and not so subtly, about taking him shopping for something to wear. He had insisted on doing it himself, so CeCe had held her breath and crossed her fingers that he would at least find a knowledgeable, and persuasive, salesclerk when he went in search of appropriate attire.

When CeCe saw Oliver, she almost didn't believe that it was him. His hair was freshly trimmed to keep the brown curls under control. Gone were his

usual blue Dockers and sport shirt. They were replaced by a black suit, crisp white shirt, and a tie with diagonal stripes of gray. She reached out gingerly and touched his lapel. The fabric felt luxurious, and expensive, between her fingers. She glanced down, dreading the possibility that he might be wearing brown shoes, and saw that he was wearing black Italian leather loafers with a thin silver buckle across the top.

CeCe looked up at Oliver and smiled. She also gave a silent prayer of thanks to the shopping gods who had obviously taken her buddy under their wings.

"You look great," she said, trying not to sound too surprised.

CeCe felt Oliver's dark eyes skim over her from the sophisticated twist of her hair, past the discreet plunge of her dress, and down to the three-inch heels on her very pointy pumps. She did a quick twirl around so that he could see her from the back as well.

Oliver let out a low whistle. "You've really out done yourself this time, CeCe. You look fantastic."

Then Oliver did something that he'd never done before. He leaned forward and softly kissed CeCe's cheek. CeCe was surprised to realize that it was not an altogether unpleasant experience. She also noted that he smelled great.

"Shall we?" Oliver extended his arm to CeCe, and the two of them headed for his car.

The trip to the church took about twenty minutes, and CeCe used that time to mentally prepare to watch Scottie, the man with whom she had dreamed of spending her life, as he married another woman. She knew it would be an ordeal, and she just prayed that she could get through it without doing anything foolish.

The drive also gave CeCe time to reflect on her

relationship with Scottie. They met back in college when he was dating her roommate, Jill. Jill dumped him rather abruptly, and he had sought out CeCe's advice in an effort to win her back. Although things between Jill and Scottie never worked out, CeCe and Scottie became fast friends.

Over time, CeCe realized that she had fallen in love with Scottie. Unfortunately, he never gave any indication that he saw her as anything other than a pal. Scottie would call her late at night, and she would listen as he poured his heart out over yet another failed relationship. Time after time, CeCe told herself, *As soon as he gets all these other girls out of his system, he'll realize that they are all wrong for him and that I'm the one that he's meant to be with.*

It never happened. CeCe never had the courage to speak up for herself. Scottie used to list all of the things that he was looking for in a woman, and CeCe bit her tongue to keep from screaming *Me, me. Look at me. I'm all those things. Can't you see?* But he never looked past CeCe his buddy to see CeCe the woman. And, as long as she kept her feelings to herself, CeCe didn't have to face the possibility of his rejection. That would have been too much to bear. For CeCe, it was better to keep hope alive than to open her mouth and remove all doubt.

When they pulled into the church, CeCe realized that she hadn't spoken to Oliver at all during the entire drive. She turned to apologize, but he was already out the door and moving to the passenger side of the car to assist CeCe in getting out.

Oliver held her hand just a beat longer than necessary and then gave it a squeeze before letting go. "Are you ready?"

CeCe was touched by his concern for her, and felt doubly bad about ignoring him on the ride to the church. She gave him a brave smile and said, "I guess I'm as ready as I'll ever be. Let's go."

CeCe took a deep breath, straightened her skirt,

squared her shoulders, and again linked her arm with Oliver's.

CeCe studied the church decorations with a practiced eye and felt the pangs of despair pierce her chest. Everything was exactly as she'd imagined it so many times...she'd planned her wedding to Scottie on her morning runs over the years...of course, with the notable exception that she was viewing the scene from a pew instead of from the altar.

The pre-wedding music was winding up. CeCe focused on the front of the church. She bit her lip and clenched her hands together in her lap. A door at the side of the altar opened and the minister, Scottie, and the best man took their positions.

CeCe felt a fist clamp itself around her heart. *Oh Lord, help me get through this* she silently prayed.

The rented tuxedo looked as though it had been made just for Scottie. Broad shoulders narrowed to a slim waist, lean hips, and powerful thighs. He looked relaxed and happy. He looked at CeCe, and his face broke out into a big smile.

CeCe's heart thrilled at his smile, and she returned it with enthusiasm. Then she realized that he had not been looking at her at all, but was looking past her to the back of the church where the bride and her father were preparing to walk down the aisle.

A tear tingled at the corner of her eye, and she opened her handbag to get a tissue. Before she could find one, a fresh white handkerchief was pressed into her hand. She gave Oliver a grateful look and dabbed away the tear.

Oliver and CeCe stood with the other wedding guests as the bride joined her groom at the altar. CeCe had met her a few times, and despite her fervent desire to hate her, she honestly couldn't find any reason to do so. She was friendly and kind, and

it was obvious that she cared deeply for Scottie. *It would be so much easier if I could hate her*, CeCe told herself.

Midway through the reception, CeCe was in the ladies room at the country club freshening her makeup. The day had been much more draining than she had expected, and she was glad to have a few quiet minutes to herself.

Aside from the one tear that she'd vanished with Oliver's handkerchief, CeCe had gotten through the wedding without releasing the sobs that were aching to get out. *I just need to get through another hour or so and then I can go home and have a good cry*, CeCe told herself.

She returned to the table, and Oliver popped up to pull out her chair. CeCe felt another pang of guilt over the way she had been treating him that day. He'd really surprised her by how attentive he'd been, and she was touched by his solicitous concern for her.

The dancing had begun, and CeCe was relieved. She knew that after a few songs, she could make her excuses and leave. A nice soak in the tub was sounding very appealing after an emotion filled day.

CeCe made small talk with Scottie's cousin who was seated next to her. Suddenly, her ears perked up. Her favorite slow song was starting. During those morning runs she had often pictured herself dancing with Scottie to this song. She imagined the touch of his hand on her back as he pressed her closer to his body, and they moved together to the romantic strains of the music. *Will this torture never end?* It was getting to be nearly too much for her.

CeCe could see the dance floor while she spoke to Scottie's cousin. She watched as Scottie pulled his bride into his arms and pressed his hand against her back. The bride moved easily in his arms and the two of them floated around the dance floor,

oblivious to the two hundred guests seated around them.

CeCe quickly wrapped up her chat with the cousin and was about to stand, hoping to find sanctuary in the ladies room again, when a male hand appeared before her face. "May I have this dance?"

Oliver reached down to take her hand and wordlessly lead her to the dance floor. Oliver pressed his hand into CeCe's back and held her with firm confidence as they slowly circled the floor. CeCe was stunned. She had no idea that her bookish pal, Oliver, knew how to dance. Nor did she ever expect that he would be so good at it. They moved easily together, and CeCe felt herself relax, ever so slightly, and enjoy the song that always touched her heart.

The song finished, and CeCe realized that she was a bit reluctant to end the dance.

The ride home was as quiet as the ride to the wedding had been. This time, CeCe was just too worn out to talk. When they arrived at her apartment, she just wanted to bolt from the car but she felt obligated to invite Oliver in. She was a bit chagrined when he accepted. CeCe kicked off her shoes and padded around the living room in her stocking feet.

"There's another bottle of champagne in the fridge. Would you like some?" CeCe was raised to always offer guests a drink, even if you really wished they'd just leave.

"Yes, actually, I would. Thank you."

CeCe had never known Oliver to be much of a drinker, yet he'd had a couple of drinks at the wedding and now he was going to top it off with some champagne. *Maybe I don't know him as well as I thought I did.* CeCe prided herself on being a good judge of character, so she was a bit surprised

at this realization.

When CeCe returned from the kitchen with the champagne and a plate of cheese and crackers, she found Oliver inserting a CD into the stereo. Soon, the room was filled with soothing, soft music.

"I didn't know that you were such a good dancer," CeCe said as she placed the drinks and snacks on the coffee table.

"Maybe there's more to me than meets the eye." Oliver's eyes held hers from across the room for a split second.

"In fact," he continued, "it seems a shame that we only danced together for one song." He held his hand out to her, and CeCe found herself in his arms once again.

Oliver had left his jacket and tie in the car, and as they moved in a small circle in the center of CeCe's living room she could feel the muscles of his back through the fine fabric of his shirt. The soft lights, the music, the champagne, all had an affect on CeCe, and she finally started to unwind and reflect on the day.

"I don't know how I would have gotten through the day without you, Oliver. Thank you. You're a good friend." She went on, "even though I had told myself that today was going to be painful, I really had no idea just how painful. I had no idea that I loved Scottie that deeply."

CeCe felt Oliver's shoulder tense under her hand, and he said, "I know that it was difficult for you, but you handled yourself beautifully, and I'm sure that no one suspected. But," Oliver pressed on with a gentle voice, "don't you think that it's time that you got on with your life and started thinking about someone other than Scottie?"

CeCe sighed. "That would make sense, wouldn't it? And, that's what I have been telling myself, but now that I realize the depths of my pain, that just shows me how much I love Scottie and that we are really meant to be together. Half of all marriages end in divorce, you know, so there's still time."

Oliver stopped dancing and stared at CeCe. To CeCe it looked like he was having an internal argument with himself. Finally, he put CeCe's hand down, then hoisted her onto his shoulder. Taken by surprise, CeCe was silent for an instant, then cried out, "What are you doing? Put me down." She pounded on his back with her fists and kicked her feet in an effort to break free from him.

Despite her workouts, CeCe was no match for Oliver. He easily carried her to the couch then sat down. He placed her flailing body across his knees and locked her knees between his own.

"My dad used to say that sometimes there was only one way to get through to a stubborn woman. I never thought that I'd agree with him, but right now I can understand his point completely."

"What are you talking about?" CeCe had forgotten all about her broken heart.

"What I'm talking about is the fact that I have been listening to you whine about Scottie for the last two years. I actually thought that seeing him get married would make you realize that there was no hope for the two of you. But, somehow, you've managed to convince yourself, in spite of the fact that he is on his way to the airport for a two week honeymoon in Maui with someone else, that someday he'll fall in love with you."

Oliver trapped CeCe's arms behind her back and continued. "So, it appears that I am going to have to spank some sense into you."

"What??" CeCe shrieked. "Are you insane? You can't spank me."

Oliver was calm in the face of CeCe's outrage. "CeCe, I'm your friend, and I can't stand to see you wasting your time waiting for a man who obviously does not feel for you the same way that you feel for him. I understand that this is a rather drastic approach, but it's for your own good."

Oliver settled himself into the couch more comfortably and took a firm grasp on CeCe's wrists to make sure she didn't slap him. He was impressed

by her strength. He was also impressed by the firm curve of her rump that tipped up at him from his lap.

CeCe was not interested in being taught a lesson for her own good and made that clear to Oliver. "Let me go, you bastard. You can't do this to me."

"Oh, a potty mouth too. Well, we'll see if we can correct that while we are adjusting your attitude."

CeCe was horrified by her predicament, but she was also oddly turned on by this take-charge part of Oliver. She'd never realized what a he-man he was, and she found that she rather liked it.

That didn't mean that she was going to be sweet about it, though. "Well, if you really think that you have to be a barbarian about it, then hurry up and get this over with."

Oliver ran his hand over her derriere, and CeCe felt her glutes tighten involuntarily. Oliver's voice was calm in the softly lit room. "I'm not being a barbarian, I'm being a man who actually cares about you and wants you to quit selling yourself short. I think you need to find a man who will appreciate you."

CeCe thought about what he said, but her thoughts were redirected when she felt the sting of his hand against her tush. CeCe bucked against Oliver, and in the fray, the light fabric of her dress flew up and exposed her backside, garter belt, silk stockings, and thong.

"Well, perhaps this will make it easier to get my point across," Oliver said as his hand came crashing down against her cheeks, first the right, then the left, and back again.

"Let's get this lesson done as quickly as possible," Oliver said. "So, repeat after me: I deserve a man who appreciates me."

CeCe ground the words out from gritted teeth. "I deserve a man who appreciates me."

"Good. Now how about, I deserve a man who shows up on time when I invite him to dinner."

CeCe knew that he was talking about Scottie

showing up an hour late for her Christmas dinner party. She had been hurt by his tardiness. She said the words prescribed by Oliver.

CeCe continued to repeat the words Oliver dictated. .

"I deserve a man who treats me like a woman and not a buddy."

"I am beautiful and sexy, and I won't be second best."

"I deserve a man who will listen to what I have to say and not just talk about himself all the time."

"I deserve a man who cares as much about me and my problems as I care about him and his problems."

CeCe's backside was burning, and she couldn't believe that she was lying across Oliver's lap with her nearly bare butt being spanked. But, oddly enough, she also felt strangely empowered by the words she was being forced to say. She was beautiful and sexy. She was tired of being treated like one of the guys. She did deserve a man who treated her with importance and respect.

The events of the day, and the emotions of the last few months, all came surging forward and, finally, CeCe had that cry that she'd been thinking about earlier. If Oliver was still talking to her, she didn't realize it because she was overcome with anger, sadness, and shame at the fool that she'd been to think that Scottie would miraculously see her differently.

CeCe felt herself lifted softly into Oliver's strong arms, and for the second time that day, he pressed his handkerchief into her hand. CeCe wiped her eyes and sniffled. She looked at Oliver through her wet lashes.

"I guess I needed that," she confessed. "How did you know?"

"I know exactly what it's like to love someone and to have them only think of you as a pal, nothing more. I know what it's like to wish and hope and dream that someday they'll see you differently. I

also know how foolish you can feel if you let that happen, particularly if you never do anything to let them know how you feel. Unlike you, however," Oliver continued, "I have decided to stick my neck out and see if the woman I love can see me for more than just a pal. More than just a geeky substitute for her fantasy man."

CeCe looked at Oliver, and it was as though the fog finally cleared from her head.

"You?" she whispered and touched her fingers softly to his cheek.

"Yes," he whispered back, and CeCe could see the fear in his eyes. The fear that he'd be rejected, rebuffed, and ridiculed.

Suddenly, CeCe could see clearly for the first time in a long time. Oliver. It all made perfect sense now that she could see it. Oliver. Sweet and funny. Utterly devoted and loyal. Oliver who cared enough to spank some sense into her. Oliver whose lips were pressing against hers with love and tenderness.

Fast-forward one year

CeCe sat at the dressing table in her bedroom sipping champagne. This was the most important day of her life...

Puss in Boots

Marcia felt a trickle of sweat work its way between her shoulder blades and down her back as she trudged the groceries up three flights of stairs to the stuffy, one bedroom apartment she shared with her husband, Greg. She could hear "Jer-ree, Jer-ree" blasting from the neighbors' TV when she passed their door. Marcia struggled to get the heat-swollen front door open and deposited her purchases on the tiny kitchen counter. She closed her eyes and slowly counted to ten while reminding herself that it was just a matter of time before she and Greg would have enough money saved up for a down payment on a home of their own, and then this dumpy, cramped, noisy apartment would only be a bad memory.

Marcia checked the small window air conditioner grudgingly provided by their landlord. It sputtered and wheezed and managed to send out a short puff of coolish air. Marcia brushed the loose tendrils of her blonde hair off her face and re-captured them in the scrunchy holding the rest of her hair up off of her neck. She was dressed for the heat, wearing a sleeveless sundress and sandals and hoping for any bit of cool air that might pass by to refresh her. Marcia turned from the air conditioner and set about putting away her purchases.

She daydreamed about a spacious kitchen with marble countertops and cherry cabinets while she jammed the groceries into the crowded cupboards and the temperamental refrigerator. Marcia was lost in thought, imagining a large eat-in kitchen with a center island, when she heard Greg call her name. He sounded annoyed.

"Marcia, can you come in here, please?" Greg called from the bedroom. Something in his tone made Marcia a bit cautious. She hesitated before she entered the room. Greg was broad shouldered and his hair and eyes were both dark brown. Marcia knew that he was really a big teddy bear, but at

times Greg's intimidating size and dark features gave him a brooding look. He was seated at the small desk in the corner, paying the bills. Marcia felt her stomach knot up and her heart started to pound when she saw that he was holding the VISA bill. He swung toward her in the swiveling desk chair as she walked into the room.

It says here that you spent \$250.00 on a pair of boots at Alice's Leather Outfitters," Greg said as his brown eyes focused on her over the top of the bill.

"Well, y-yes, that's true, I did buy some boots." Marcia squirmed and looked down at the floor as she responded.

Greg shook his head, dismayed. "Marcia--- Marcia----Marcia. Didn't we both agree not to buy anything that wasn't an absolute necessity and not to put anything on a credit card unless it was an emergency? How are we ever going to get approved for a mortgage if we keep carrying a high balance on our credit cards? How can we save money for a down payment if you are buying \$250.00 boots?"

"The boots were half-price, so it seemed like it was an emergency. I mean, how often does anyone have an opportunity to get such great boots for such a bargain?" As she spoke, Marcia realized that her excuse sounded really lame.

Greg just stared at her for a minute, exasperated by her poor judgment, and then sighed. "May I at least see these fabulous, budget-busting, boots?" he asked.

Marcia hesitated, then walked over to the bed, got down on her stomach, and started pulling storage bins and boxes out from underneath. She had to stretch her left hand as far as she could, while wiggling a few inches under the bed, in order to reach the box containing the boots. She pulled the box out and handed it to her husband. In an attempt to look busy, and to hide her nervousness, Marcia put the boxes and bins back under the bed with particular care and attention. When she was unable to make any more busy work for herself,

Marcia stood up and turned toward Greg.

Marcia felt a variety of emotions while she watched her husband inspecting the boots. They were GREAT boots: three-inch stiletto heels, supple black leather that reached to the knee, and slim, pointed toes. She was mesmerized, and a little bit turned on, as she watched Greg run his large hand over the leather. When he looked up at her, though, she was filled with remorse and mentally chastised herself. She didn't have any business spending that much money on a pair of boots. What was she thinking?

The over-zealous shopper was just about to open her mouth to apologize when her husband said, "Go get Little Louie."

Marcia's eyes popped open and her jaw dropped. "No!" escaped from her mouth. A single look from her husband made Marcia clamp her lips shut.

Marcia knew that Greg never punished her when it was not deserved. Obediently, she went to her husband's nightstand, opened the drawer, and took out a wooden box. She had a bit of trouble getting the lid opened because her hands were trembling. Inside the wooden box was a dark brown leather paddle, which she removed. As she walked over to her husband, Marcia, not for the first time, questioned her wisdom in ever purchasing the leather implement. She had seen it at Alice's Leather Outfitters right around the time of Greg's last birthday. Greg had been very surprised, and pleased, by the gift and had dubbed it "Little Louie". Despite her trepidation, Marcia felt the corners of her mouth turn up as she remembered the birthday spanking that she had gotten that night...and it wasn't even her birthday.

Regardless of the pleasant memories, Marcia never looked forward to the first stokes across her bare cheeks, and dread tingled through her body as she handed the paddle to her husband, then stood before him and awaited his instructions.

The man of the house carefully replaced the lid

on the box containing the boots and handed it to his wife. She placed the box on the bed and returned to her place in front of him. Greg was slowly rubbing his left hand over the soft leather of the paddle while his right hand gripped the handle firmly. Marcia could almost feel the sting of Little Louie as she watched her husband's preparations. He had left the desk chair and was seated on the padded bench at the foot of their bed. Greg motioned for his wife to assume the position across his lap. Marcia placed herself over his knees and rested her upper body on the bench. Butterflies churned in her stomach as she prepared to take her punishment. The anticipation was like going up the first hill on a roller coaster---frightening and exciting and titillating all at once.

Greg gathered up the skirt of her yellow cotton sundress and pooled it in the small of her back. Gentle fingers slid into the waistband of Marcia's underpants, skimmed the flimsy fabric over her thighs, and down to her ankles. Instinctively, Marcia tightened her cheeks. Greg's soft voice wafted over his wife as gentle fingers caressed her nicely rounded rump. "You understand, don't you, Sweetheart, that we agreed to get our finances under control? I can understand why you might be tempted to splurge on yourself after the way we've both been pinching pennies for the last few months, but that's not the point. We had an agreement, and you didn't keep your part of the bargain, and as a result, we have both suffered a set back in our goal."

The feel of her husband's fingers lingering over her backside, combined with his soft words, caused Marcia to relax, and as Greg's fingers played across the lower part of her fanny, she opened her thighs in a silent plea for his fingers to continue downward into the moisture that was gathering inside. Perhaps he sensed her silent wish because Greg probed the outside of her womanhood---ever so briefly---with his fingertips. Marcia began to wriggle toward the

pleasure-giving digits and moaned softly.

Her husband was not to be distracted so easily, and mid-moan, Marcia felt the sting of the leather paddle across the center of her rump. Her mind, which had begun to wander with her husband's erotic touch, was snapped back into the present with a bang---so to speak. Stinging pain surged across her backside, and the moan turned into a muffled squeal as Marcia braced herself for the spanking that she knew she deserved.

Long fingers gripped the sides of the bench and Marcia pressed her forearms into the roughness of its velour covering. Despite herself, Marcia felt a tingle of excitement as her breasts brushed against the bench. She could feel the tickle of the sage green velour against her nipples through the thin cotton of her sundress. Of their own accord, the rosy peaks of her breasts hardened and pressed back into the bench, making small indentations in the fabric.

Each time that Greg landed a stroke across her upturned backside, Marcia was pressed forward slightly and then slid back into position. The back and forth motion caused her breasts to continue their dance with the velour bench, and Marcia was filled with sensations---the erotic pleasure of the roughness against her swollen and sensitized nipples, the stinging heat of her now reddened ass, and the hardness of her husband's arousal which she could feel growing more and more firm against her abdomen with each whack against her bottom. Marcia added in a couple of extra wriggles across her husband's lap just to make him happy and smiled to herself when she heard his involuntary moan.

Marcia tried to keep track of the number of times that Little Louie had connected with her fanny. She could feel an equal amount of sting and heat on both cheeks, and thought that he was at around number eight. She knew that Greg would not stop before he got to twenty, maybe not even

thirty, as this was such a serious infraction. The man of the house was particularly stringent about enforcing their agreements, and Marcia was glad to have his leadership. She had never noticed how much her "little white lies" had damaged their relationship until the two of them had agreed to total trust and honesty. Marcia knew that the boots had been a big mistake, and she was angry with herself for slipping back into her old, deceitful ways, but she felt sure that she had learned her lesson.

Marcia could feel the redness building on the rounded pink flesh of her butt as the leather cracked against her left cheek and then her right. Greg was nothing if not thorough. Marcia longed to reach her hands around and rub her burning backside, but she knew well from experience that doing so without permission would only lead to more of the same---and it was much too early to even consider asking for permission. Tears stung her eyes, but she didn't cry out. She had been a bad girl and was required to take her punishment without complaint.

Suddenly, the spanking stopped. Greg set Little Louie down on the bench and carefully replaced his wife's underpants. He pulled her onto his lap and cradled her in his arms. Marcia felt more pain scorch through her bum when she sat on Greg's lap. She was confused about the abbreviated punishment and looked into her husband's face for an answer. She didn't know exactly how many strokes had been meted out, but she knew that it was nowhere near the punishment that she ought to have received. Greg, apparently sensed her confusion and explained, "I stopped bit early because I decided that I'd like to see you model those boots for me."

Marcia's brow furrowed. "Model the boots?"

"Yes, model the boots."

Marcia stood up and retrieved the boots from the box on the bed. She considered sitting on the side of the bed to put them on, but the stinging in

her flesh made her decide to put them on while standing up. Despite her guilt over the extravagant purchase, Marcia couldn't help loving the boots. Pulling the sleek leather up her leg made her feel hot and sensual. And the heels---who wouldn't feel sexy wearing spiky stiletto heels like that? Marcia stood in front of Greg wearing the boots. She walked a couple of steps toward him, did a pirouette and walked back to where she had started. Marcia looked at her husband expectantly, waiting for some comment from him about the boots, or at least for him to tell her that she should put them away so that they didn't get scuffed. She was quite stunned, therefore, when he said, "No, just the boots."

Marcia wasn't sure that she understood his meaning, until he reached over and turned on the CD player, then leaned back as though he was waiting for a show. Instantly, the cheeks on her face were as red as those on her rear and she stammered, "You must be kidding."

"No, I'm not kidding," came the reply. Greg reached out and touched his wife's hand. "You're beautiful and sexy---now show me what you've got." He squeezed her hand and smiled his encouragement, then resumed his position on the bench as an avid spectator.

I think I'd prefer the rest of the spanking, Marcia thought to herself. She stared at her husband, and when she realized that he really was quite serious, she began to sway back and forth to the music. She closed her eyes and simply danced for a few seconds, letting the music wash over her. As she moved, she could feel the soft cotton of her sundress as it swished over her recently reddened backside. The contrast between the cool cotton and the heat of her flesh, along with the downright sexiness of the boots, caused the stripper to get a bit turned on. You can do this, she told herself.

Despite her shyness, Marcia loved and trusted her husband and knew that he would not ask her to

do something if he didn't think that it was in her own best interest. She had certainly come a long way in losing her inhibitions since they had begun practicing domestic discipline a few years ago, but she was still hesitant to really let go and explore her own sensuality. Marcia knew that this was her opportunity---she just had to trust.

With her eyes still closed, Marcia continued swaying to the pulsing beat of the music and then started to glide her hands over her body. She reached up and pulled the scrunchy out of her hair, and her tresses fell around her shoulders in a golden cascade. She pressed her palms against the sides of her waist and pushed them down to her hips. Marcia winced slightly as her hands skimmed over her still tender cheeks, and then reaching down she grabbed the full skirt of her sundress and began to sashay around the room. Feeling brave, she opened her eyes and looked at her husband.

Greg's smoldering eyes told her that he was enjoying the show. Somehow, knowing that he found her sexy, and not silly, spurred her onward. Marcia started to swing her hips with a bit more enthusiasm and found that the gyrations were more fun than she had expected. Shocked by her own brazenness, the performer moved her hands upward to caress her breasts. Her nipples, which had hardened during the spanking, were like pebbles pushing against her clothing. Marcia, still wiggling her hips, pushed the mounds of her breasts together to create a dark cleft of cleavage protruding from the bodice of her sundress---then she leaned forward and jiggled them in her husband's face.

Greg had never seen this side of Marcia before--neither had she---and he was very pleasantly surprised. He reached out to touch the sultry dancer, but she pranced away, wagged her finger at him, and said, "You're not allowed to touch the dancers, Sir."

Marcia's husband was speechless---but

incredibly aroused as the bulge in his khaki shorts proved. Marcia turned her back to her audience and pulled up the skirt of her sundress. She rested the skirt on her hips so that Greg could see the redness he had inflicted through the sheer fabric of her underpants. While her husband was enjoying her rear-view, Marcia was working the buttons of her bodice. Despite her apparent bravado, she was very nervous and her hands were shaking. One button popped off and rolled across the floor, but Marcia managed to get the others un-done without totally destroying the dress. She lowered the skirt back in place and turned to face Greg. With the bodice unbuttoned, Marcia lowered the top of her dress to her waist and continued dancing. She moved slowly around the room, and teased her husband by approaching him and then pulling away so that he could not reach her. Marcia moved the cotton fabric down past her hips and dropped it to the floor in a puddle around those fabulous boots. She stepped out of the dress, and with one bold kick of her leg, she tossed it at her husband's feet. Greg's jaw dropped.

The previously bold dancer felt suddenly shy when she realized that she was standing before her husband in only bra, panties, and boots. In order to bolster her nerve, Marcia turned her back on Greg again. He didn't mind since he still got a great view of the shapely red globes of her rear. Greg saw Marcia reach around her back and unhook her bra. Marcia turned slowly to face Greg again, her arms crossed over her breasts to hold her loosened bra in place. With her right arm pinned across her nipples, Marcia used her left hand to pull out her bra and toss it onto the dress in the pile already at her husband's feet. Marcia's bold gaze held her husband's eyes while she grasped her breasts and tugged at the hardness of her own nipples. She saw him gulp and watched his eyebrows shoot up when she inserted her index fingers into her mouth and then used them to lubricate her engorged peaks.

Greg's eyes were glued to her glistening, damp breasts. Marcia snuck a quick glance at her husband's crotch and saw that he appeared ready to burst.

Marcia had never realized the power of her sensuality—over herself or Greg—and she was emboldened by it. She continued to dance topless for her husband and when he picked up a dollar bill from the desktop and held it out to her, Marcia danced just close enough for him to slide it into the waistband of her panties. Naughty fingers tried to linger on her hip, but Marcia was in charge. She smiled and thanked him for the tip, then strutted out of range.

Marcia stood across the room from her husband and continued moving to the music. She locked her eyes with his and moved her hands slowly down her body to the waistband of her panties. Careful fingers slid inside and touched the moisture collecting there. She removed her hands and drew them up her body toward her face with slow deliberation. For the second time that day, Marcia inserted her own fingers into her mouth, this time to taste her juices. Greg nearly fell off the bench. Marcia's tongue swirled around her fingertips before she pulled them slowly past her lips. Her hands traveled down her body again, over her breasts and past her navel, and her thumbs slid into the waistband of her panties again. This time, she slid them all the way down her boot-covered legs, then turned so that her fanny was facing Greg. With great deliberateness, the stripper bent over so that her lone spectator could get a clear view of her paddle-scorched backside. She picked up her last item of clothing, turned and looked at him over her left shoulder, then stood and turned to face him wearing only the black leather boots. She twirled the panties on her finger and sauntered to the bench. Marcia dropped the final item into the pile of discarded clothes at her husband's feet and set her boot-clad right foot on the bench, giving Greg the

Big Money Shot.

By the time Marcia blinked her eyes open the next day, she could see that the mid-day sun was pouring in under the blinds. How late had she slept? She stretched and reached across the tangled sheets then realized that she was alone in the bed. Still groggy, Marcia's eyes roamed around the bedroom. Suddenly, she remembered the events of the day before. She bolted up in bed and felt herself blush. Maybe it was just a dream---a very vivid dream---but still, maybe just a dream. Nope, not a dream. Over by the window she saw one black boot flung in a corner, the other was at the foot of the bed. Down near the bench, she saw the pile of clothing made from her debut as a stripper. Her husband's clothes were in a pile right next to it. Marcia could also feel the sting in her rear end from yesterday's spanking. She lifted the sheet and twisted around to peek at the lingering redness of her rump. Tentative fingers touched the still tender flesh.

Memories and sensations flooded Marcia's brain. Had she really done a strip tease for her husband? Was she the same woman who had made love with total abandon---more than once---the night before? Did the neighbors hear her shouts of pleasure? Did she care if they did?

Then she remembered the impetus for the whole event. "What have I done?" Marcia asked herself. Despite the raucous good time that she and her husband had enjoyed the night before, Marcia still knew that she had to do something about the boots. She still had the receipt and, assuming that weren't noticeably scuffed by their inaugural wearing, she could return them. Marcia jumped in the shower, dressed quickly, and put on some make up. She retrieved the boots from where they had been flung. The box had not fared so well and looked a bit

battered. They probably should have taken the box off the bed, but rational thought was long gone by the time Marcia planted her boot on the bench next to Greg after her performance. She did her best to make it look presentable and headed to the kitchen for some coffee. Marcia was warring with herself as she put the receipt in the box. Oh, it was hard to give them up, especially after the great memories they created last night, but she knew that it was more important to restore her credibility with Greg, so back to Alice's Leather Outfitters the shiny black boots would go.

When she reached the kitchen, the coffee was already brewing. What a thoughtful husband. But, where was he? Marcia glanced around but it was clear that he was not home. Then her eyes landed on a large package sitting on the kitchen table. It was a big white box tied with a wide satin bow. She assumed that it was for her, but looked for a card or name tag just to be sure. Under the bow, she found a small envelope with her name written on the outside. She read the card and tears filled her eyes. My darling Marcia, I suppose that I can stand to live in this apartment just a little while longer than we planned as long as you promise that we can put these boots to the same good use as we did the others. Thank you for a very special night. Your Loving Husband, Greg.

Marcia opened the box and inside she found the exact same boots that she had bought; only these were in bright red patent leather. She squealed with delight and rushed to put them on. As she paraded around the living room admiring the red boots, the front door opened and her husband stood there looking at her. He stepped inside, closed and locked the door, and leaned against it with his arms folded. The corners of his mouth turned up in a sly smile and he said, "I'm here for an encore."

Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall

The water had gotten cold and the bubbles were all dissolved. Donna knew that it was time to get out of the tub, though she was tempted to run a third batch of hot water and add another squirt of bubble bath. She pulled herself to a standing position and reached for a bath sheet. She cursed herself when she realized that she had forgotten to get one from the linen closet before she got into the tub.

In the old house, this would not have been a problem since the bathroom was so small she could have reached the linen closet, the sink, and the door from the tub. The newly built home, their dream house, had a spacious bathroom with a sunken tub for two, a shower for two, large dressing areas for her and her husband, Jake, and a more than ample linen closet filled with new towels.

Donna did a bit of a drip-dry and contemplated her options. She didn't necessarily mind walking to the linen closet for a towel---except that it meant that she would be forced to walk past the nearly wall-sized mirror without the security of a bath sheet to cover her. She had objected to the large mirror when the designer had suggested it, but Jake liked the idea and she was too embarrassed to say that she hated looking at her reflection to object, so the gigantic mirror was installed and had mocked her ever since. In the few weeks that they had been in the house, Donna had avoided the mirror as much as possible, particularly if she was not fully dressed.

This is silly, Donna told herself. You're a grown woman. It's only a mirror. What are you so afraid of?

Donna squared her shoulders and stepped out of the tub. She held her head rigid and kept her eyes straight ahead. Except for a fleeting glance out of the corner of her eye, she would have made it. But something that she had seen in that split second

that she allowed herself to look at the mirror made her stop.

She turned and looked at herself. Really looked. She wasn't wearing her glasses, so she had to take a step closer to see her reflection better. As Donna inspected what time, three children, stress, and a seeming shortage of time to take care of herself had done, she was overwhelmed by sadness and self-loathing.

Hair, which had once been a shiny, rich brown, was now lifeless and threaded with gray. Donna reached up to touch her hair. She used to take such pride in it, always buying the best products and keeping up with the newest styles. Donna couldn't remember the last time she's changed her hairstyle. She'd been wearing it in the same shoulder-length pageboy since shortly after the birth of her first child, and since he was about to get his driver's license, she knew that it had been much too long.

Her glance moved down to her eyes. They were still the same deep brown they had always been, but now they were topped by eyebrows that hadn't seen tweezers or a wax job in weeks. Crows feet marched from the outer corners of her eyes and drooped down to her cheekbones. Donna looked into her eyes in the mirror and saw the first glimmer of tears.

Moving downward, she noticed for the first time a smattering of fine dark hair over her lip. She cursed hormones and the onset of menopause.

Donna was distraught, and she hadn't even gotten past her collarbone.

She thought about stopping before it became any worse, but it was sort of like watching a train wreck---she just couldn't help herself.

Her eyes settled on the droopy flesh that used to fill her with such pride. She remembered the sexy thrill of wearing a low cut blouse with a push up bra. There was nothing like the power of creamy cleavage to make a girl feel like she was on the top of her game. Now, the girls were simply tired and

pathetic looking. Nipples, which had once pointed straight ahead, were now directed toward her feet. Donna touched gentle fingers to the faded white scars, which were the remnants of bearing and breast-feeding three children and which made plunging necklines only a vague memory.

The inspection continued. Next was the waistline. Or, lack of a waistline to be more accurate. Donna glanced over at the scale, but knew without stepping on it what it would say: wedding day plus thirty pounds. She'd been thrilled when she'd only gained five pounds with the first baby, but baby number two added another ten, and the final one had added fifteen. She'd tried too many different diets: cabbage soup, low carbs, low fat, grapefruit, but none had been successful. It was just so hard to prepare the special meals when she had a houseful of people to feed and it seemed that she always put their needs ahead of hers. Exercise? Forget it. Who has time when you have three children to drive around, sporting events and practices to attend, a house to clean, a job, and a husband?

Donna felt the trickle of a tear that worked its way down her cheek. She brushed it away, determined to continue her painful self-inspection. Still looking in the mirror, her eyes moved past her stomach. What she saw there made her bend over and take a look for herself. Gray hair----there? Could it get any worse? Was nothing sacred?

That was the last straw for Donna. She gripped the side of the sink, hung her head, and sobbed. *Where did the time go? How did I let this happen to myself?*

The trip to the linen closet was forgotten as Donna gave in to her feelings of futility and failure. She didn't know how long she'd been sobbing, but she stopped abruptly when Jake entered the bathroom and handed her a box of tissues.

"What's wrong, honey?" Donna's husband asked. Donna was touched by the soft, concerned

tone of his voice. She was too ashamed to tell him what she'd been crying about, but she knew that he wouldn't be put off with a simple excuse. Donna couldn't look her husband in the eye, so she spoke to his reflection in the mirror.

"Oh, Jake," she struggled to control her tears. "Look at me. I've become old, and ugly, and I'm a mess." The words tumbled out on a sob.

"What are you talking about?" Jake asked.

Donna dried her tears and blew her nose. "Look." She pointed at her reflection in the mirror. "Gray hair, wrinkles, fat, cellulite, stretch marks. I just feel hopeless and ugly. I'm sorry that you have to look at me like this. In fact, I wish you wouldn't."

Jake took his wife by the shoulders and gently turned her to face herself in the mirror. He kept his hands on her shoulders and looked into his wife's eyes in the mirror as he stood behind her.

"Tell me what you see," Jake said to his wife.

"I told you what I see." Donna's voice was getting shrill.

Jake kissed his wife gently on the shoulder. "Let me tell you what I see."

Donna's husband stroked her hair. "You see gray hair. I see the bits of gray in your hair as symbols of your wisdom and maturity---a sign of a full life and the many happy years that we've had together."

Jake's fingers touched the wrinkles at the corner's of Donna's eyes. "I love the way this part of your face crinkles up when you smile. I don't think that you have any idea how beautiful your smile is. These wrinkles represent all of the smiles and laughter that we've had together, and I wouldn't change a thing about them."

Donna's eyes filled with tears again, but not due to despair this time.

Jake continued. He brought both hands around from behind his wife and stroked the faded scars scattered across her breasts. He cupped her breasts

and stroked his hands across her nipples. "These are little stripes of honor for the three beautiful children that you gave me and that you nursed with love and devotion. I remember the first time that I saw you breast feeding Tucker. I'd never seen anything as perfect and wonderful in my whole life."

Donna's husband turned her gently to her side so that she could see her rear end in the mirror. Jake ran his right hand slowly over her flanks. "I suppose you think that this is too big, don't you?"

"Y-yes." Donna's voice was a whisper.

"You don't have any idea how much your rear end turns me on, do you?"

Donna's eyes grew wide in disbelief. "I can't believe that my large butt could be a turn on to anyone. Look at it." She turned so that her backside faced the mirror and she looked at its reflection over her shoulder. "It's huge."

"Now you're exaggerating." Jake said. He turned her back to face the mirror and whispered in her ear, "Do you honestly think that some skinny little thing would be able to enjoy the spankings that I give you?"

Donna felt her face go crimson. She couldn't believe that she'd ever told him about her secret desire to have a strong man to help her remember the rules of the house. They'd been practicing domestic discipline for just a few months. In fact, she still wasn't sure that Jake was comfortable with it, so she was especially surprised when he mentioned it.

Jake continued to whisper in her ear. "I know you didn't really want this large mirror in here. Do you know why I did?"

Donna shook her head. She was dumbfounded that he'd picked up on the fact that she hadn't wanted the mirror.

"It looks like I'll be able to kill two birds with one stone, then," Jake said and he pulled the upholstered bench out from under Donna's vanity and positioned it across from the mirror. "You know

that you've broken our agreement about no pity parties, right? And you've also violated our agreement about getting down on yourself and putting yourself down?"

Donna felt the color leave her face. "A spanking? Please, not tonight." Instinctively, Donna's hands went around to cover her backside. "I'm sorry that I freaked out and got upset. I can't tell you how much your words mean to me. I never realized that you looked at me that way, and I promise to look at myself that way from now on. But, please, not a spanking."

Jake sat on the bench and looked up at his wife. "I meant everything that I said, and I hope that you will look at yourself the same way that I do. But, that doesn't change the fact that we agreed to certain rules, and we also agreed that there would be certain consequences for breaking those rules. In fact, you specifically requested that I support you in having a better attitude about your appearance. Well, that's what I intend to do."

Donna knew that he was right and agreed with a soft "Yes."

"Then I don't really see how I cannot impose a punishment, when you have clearly violated at least two, if not more, of our agreements. Can you?"

"No."

"Good. Then, be a good girl, and I'll be able to show you the reason that I wanted to put in this big mirror."

Donna took a deep breath to quiet the butterflies that were pounding away in her stomach and positioned herself across her husband's knees. She grasped the end of the bench for support and prepared for the first crack of his hand against her exposed rump.

Although she'd braced herself, mentally and physically, for the first blow, it still caught her by surprise, and she gave a small squeal. Donna knew, from perusing chat rooms and erotic bookstores, that other men often used paddles or other

implements to discipline their wives, but Jake had no need of assistance. He'd been a fireman for 20 years, and his large, work-worn hands, as well as his nicely muscled arms and shoulders, were more than sufficient for the task.

Jake's wife felt the sting of his hand against her rump and knew, even without looking, that her rear end was no longer the pale white that she had seen in the mirror. Jake landed a few more strokes across Donna's cheeks and paused.

Donna wasn't sure what to do. She was certain that he couldn't be done, but she didn't want to ask if he was finished, since it was clearly against the rules for her to do so. They had agreed that Jake was to be in charge of the spankings, and they were not done until he said they were. Donna knew that any effort to interrupt or distract him would only add to the heat burning across her buns.

Donna waited a moment or two, wondering what was coming next, when Jake held a hand mirror out to her.

"Take a look," he said.

Donna held the hand mirror up and saw the reflection of her backside in the wall mirror. It was a nearly uniform pink color---kind of like a carnation--and created a subtle contrast to the soft white flesh of her thighs and back. Donna glanced at her husband's reflection in the large mirror, and her eyes met his.

"This is why I wanted the large mirror on the wall in here. I wanted you to be able to enjoy the view that I have when I am spanking your very naughty rear end."

Donna felt like she was seeing a whole new side to her husband of 18 years. She'd never had any complaints about their love life, and felt that she was pretty familiar with her husband's desires, but this admission caught her by surprise.

She was about to respond when Jake resumed his task. Donna was mesmerized as she watched her cheeks go from carnation pink to rose red in

just a matter of moments as Jake's powerful hands rained down upon her upturned rump. She was so fascinated, and aroused, that she almost didn't notice the stinging pain that he was inflicting on her hiney. Almost.

Donna noticed that her butt was nearly an even shade of scarlet, and hoped that Jake was nearly finished with her punishment, when he moved down to her thighs. Donna struggled not to resist, but his hands really stung against the tender flesh where her cheeks met the tops of her legs. Donna gripped the hand mirror tightly and focused on the scene reflected in the wall mirror. She realized that her attitude about the mirror was starting to change. Rather than reflecting scenes which made her feel unattractive and lazy, she now found the mirror to show another side of her that made her feel interesting and daring. There she was, naked, lying across her husband's lap and receiving one heck of a spanking. She couldn't help it, she was really turned on by the fact that she had a husband who honored her request to try something new in their marriage, and who obviously took his duties very seriously.

Donna had a fleeting memory of the women at work complaining about how dull, and nearly non-existent, their love lives had become after years of marriage. She certainly wouldn't be able to join into any of those conversations, she thought, and smiled to herself.

Jake's hand finished with his wife's thighs and returned again to her backside. Donna watched as he gave her three rapid swats on each cheek and then a final smack right on her sweet spot. As much as she was turned on, the spanking hurt. It was meant to. How else was a man supposed to get a stubborn woman's attention?

Donna's arousal continued when Jake, finally finished with his disciplinary duties, reached over to her vanity and retrieved a jar of cream. With his wife still prone across his knees, Jake stroked the

lotion across the burning flesh of her cheeks and thighs. Again, Donna was mesmerized as she watched via the hand mirror. The strong, life-saving hands of a fireman stroked gentle circles of lotion across her flaming butt. Donna's heart swelled with love while other parts of her were swelling with desire.

When he finished ministering to her screaming flesh, Jake sat his wife up on his lap and kissed her gently on the forehead. He sat her on the bench next to him, then stood and walked around behind her. Donna laid the hand mirror on the floor and watched her husband's actions as they were reflected in the wall mirror. He quickly stripped off his clothes and Donna could see that she was not the only one who had found their activities exciting.

For the second time that evening, Jake stood behind his wife and faced her in the mirror on the wall. He bent his head and pressed soft kisses into her gray-flecked hair. He knelt down behind her so that he could slide his tongue across the back of her neck. Donna watched his hands come up under her arms and stroke her breasts. She swallowed hard, and her breath caught in her throat as her nipples flowered into hard peaks against her husband's teasing fingers.

Jake's voice was a husky whisper in her ear. "Did you know that on the nights that I have to stay at the firehouse I lie awake and think about your gorgeous, red, nipples and the way they get hard against my hands when I tug at them, just so? And did you know that ever since we decided to put in this mirror, I imagined watching you watch me touch them, just like we are right now?"

Again, Donna was speechless in response to her husband's erotic revelations. She never imagined that he could think of her in such a sensuous and sexy way, especially when she thought of herself as old and broken down.

Donna could feel the heat building in her nether regions as she watched Jake continue to pluck at

her breasts and it was with some regret that she watched him remove his hands and skim them down her stomach to her thighs. She felt her husband's erection pressing against her back and knew that he was enjoying himself too.

Jake's fingers stroked across his wife's thighs and separated them so that they could both see the pink moisture reflected in the mirror. Donna felt the flesh on her thighs begin to quiver as her husband stroked his fingertips across them. She couldn't tear her eyes away from the mirror and the sights it revealed. This was not an area of her body that Donna had ever thoroughly inspected in a mirror.

Donna was unaware of the gray hairs sprinkled across her mound, which had caused her such distress just a few minutes earlier as she watched her husband pull apart the lips buried beneath her dark hair so that all of her feminine secrets were revealed in the mirror on the wall.

Donna felt her mouth go dry, and her breathing became shallow when she saw Jake slide his index finger around the inside of her feminine passage. She gripped the edge of the bench and continued to stare into the mirror as her husband inserted one, and then two, fingers deeply into her moist heat. Donna felt her muscles close around his fingers and gave a Kegel squeeze to clasp them even tighter within that most feminine part of herself. She glanced at Jake in the mirror and saw his eyes darken with desire as she pulsed her muscles against his fingers.

Jake looked into Donna's eyes in the mirror and held her gaze while he removed his fingers and slowly drew them up to his mouth. Donna watched Jake's fingers pass over his lips and he removed her juices from them with his tongue.

Jake stepped from behind the bench and knelt in front of his wife. He placed his hands on either side of her face and kissed her gently on the lips. He swirled his tongue across her mouth and Donna opened her lips to allow him entry. She tasted the

remains of her own essence on his tongue, and desire forced a soft moan from deep in her throat.

Donna reached out to touch her husband's generous erection, but he replaced her hands on the bench and said, "Tonight is all about you, baby."

Donna felt a thrill of anticipation flutter in her stomach as she waited to find out just exactly what his plans were for her.

Jake's mouth retraced the path that his hands had followed earlier. He pressed soft kisses along the scars, which had caused his wife to lament her youth. His teeth tugged at her nipples, and Donna thought she'd scream for wanting him to complete the job. She was nearing the crest of a tidal wave of passion.

Donna reached down and clasped her husband's head to pull it closer as he slid his tongue into the passage where his fingers had been. Donna's hips rose off the bench as she pressed against the pleasure that his tongue gave her. Donna glanced into the mirror and watched herself as she reached a dizzying climax. Although she had often experienced the total abandonment of reaching that pinnacle of passion, she had never seen herself as it happened.

While her breathing calmed, Donna looked at the woman in the mirror on the wall. She was beautiful. Her hair, even with the gray in it, was wildly provocative in its post-love making disarray. Her eyes were so bright and shining that the crow's feet weren't even noticeable in comparison. Her lips were red and sensually swollen from her husband's kisses.

Donna reached down and drew her husband's face to her own. She kissed him softly on the lips and whispered her love in his ear.

Jake, the fireman, gently scooped his wife into the arms that had saved many people over the years, and carried her to the bedroom. He pulled back the downy comforter and placed his wife lovingly in the large bed that they shared. He

moved around to the other side of the bed and joined his wife under the sheets. "Now, it's my turn," he said, sheathing himself in her warm, moist depths.

A few minutes later, Jake wrapped his wife in his loving arms and whispered, "That wasn't so bad for a couple of old folks, now was it?"

The Assignment

Mars Bars, Three Musketeers, Reese's Cups, Twizzlers, Snickers Bars, Milk Duds, Twix Bars, Hershey Bars. Wendy stood in the candy aisle of the supermarket; her head swimming with the possibilities that surrounded her. As much as she hated the idea of passing out such sweet treats to the brats who would be ringing her doorbell that night, she decided to at least get something that she liked, so she tossed a bag of Reese's Cups into her cart along with the bag of cheap stuff that she got to pass out to the neighborhood kiddies.

Wendy finished her shopping and headed for the checkout counter. As usual, the line was long, and the cashier was borderline incompetent. If the last eighteen months had taught Wendy anything, they had taught her patience. She sighed, gripped the handle of her cart, and waited.

The cart ahead of her contained a little dark haired girl who appeared to be about six years old. Her face was smeared with chocolate from the bag of candy that her exasperated mother had finally opened to shut the child up. She smiled, and Wendy saw that her teeth were covered with brown Hershey sludge.

The cashier handed the girl's mother her receipt and handed the chocolate smeared waif a sucker. "What are you going to be for Halloween?" she asked.

The tot grinned, and a dribble of chocolate-laced saliva dribbled out the side of her mouth. "An ugly, nasty, old witch!" she exclaimed.

The cashier grinned back. "Nasty old witches are the best. They are so scary and mean. I'm sure you'll have lots of fun and gets lots of candy."

The child seemed pleased by this prediction and attacked the bag of chocolate with glee as the cart headed to the parking lot.

Wendy's stomach knotted, and the fingers on her right hand began to twitch. She squeezed the

handle of the cart until her knuckles were white and reminded herself of the oath that she had sworn when she took this assignment----No Magic----then she placed her items on the check out counter.

Wendy drove home, cursing herself for agreeing to take the two-year assignment to mix and mingle in the mortal world. She and her husband, Charles, had been agents with The Mortal Outreach Bureau (The MOB) for several years and had been thrilled when they were selected for this mission. It was quite an honor, and they were both very excited about this once in a lifetime opportunity. It seemed simple enough. They were to live among the mortals for two years, learn as much as they could about the mortal way of life, and most importantly, no magic.

Overall, it really had not been all that bad. They had certainly learned a lot of new skills like vacuuming and cleaning the gutters, though Wendy was unsure how that knowledge would be of any use to The MOB. Part of their assignment was to participate in every activity that they could find. At times, it had been exhausting. Between them, Wendy and Charles had been to PTA meetings, soccer games, book club meetings, bake sales, a Bar Mitzvah, a Tupperware party, two strip bars, eight casinos, a bachelor party, and a dog show, among other things. They had joined the Masons, the Lions Club, the National Rifle Association, and the Hair Club for Men. Wendy and Charles each had notebooks filled with descriptions of their outings along with maps, newspaper clippings, appliance warranties, and a couple of good crock pot recipes.

Wendy sat in traffic longing for her broom, which could have swept her away from the aggravation of the traffic jam. She smiled to herself as she imagined what the reaction of the traffic reporters might be if she buzzed their helicopter on

her broom. It had been difficult for her to leave her new Bissell Angle Broom behind. Sure, she had a broom now, but all it did was move the dirt around on the floor, and frankly, it wasn't nearly as useful as a Swiffer. Of course, flying a Swiffer probably wouldn't be very comfortable and the steering would be more difficult with that little flat head instead of a nice bunch of bristles.

She tried to shake off the grocery store incident, but she couldn't. Wendy had been in a foul mood all day, and she knew why. It had started that morning at breakfast.

"I'm sorry, Sweetie, but I have to work late tonight. You'll have to be in charge of passing out the Halloween candy." Charles knew his early morning announcement was not going to go over very well with his wife.

"Oh, Charles. Tonight?" Wendy whined. "You know I've been dreading this ever since last Halloween. I just don't think that I can stand to pass out the candy again this year."

"I know this is upsetting for you, Wendy. And I'm really sorry." Charles pulled his wife down onto his lap and stroked the soft blonde hair that streamed down her back. "But, you'll be fine. It's been a whole year, and maybe it won't be as bad this time."

Wendy focused her sad blue eyes on her husband. "Halloween used to be my favorite holiday of the year. Remember the fun we used to have at the Baron's Costume Ball? This assignment has ruined this holiday for me." Wendy stood up and paced the room. "I just get so tired of being stereotyped. Honestly, Charles, have you ever seen a witch with green skin? Or a wart on her nose? Or gray scraggly hair? Admittedly, my Aunt Ernestine is starting to look a bit that way, but she's two hundred and twelve, so what can you expect?" Wendy returned to the topic. "Regardless, it's just too much for me to listen to all of them talking about mean, ugly witches." She stopped her pacing

and looked at her husband. "I just want to scream at them. It's just not fair, and I take it all very personally."

Charles crossed the kitchen and wrapped his wife in his arms. "You know they don't know any better, Darling. Please don't take it to heart." He pressed a kiss onto the top of her head. "You're the most beautiful witch I know. You're also the most dedicated member of The MOB that I know, and that's why I'm sure that you'll be able to handle tonight without me." Charles tipped Wendy's head back and gave her a kiss that made her head swim.

Wendy wound her arms around her husband's neck and returned his kiss with matching fervor. She moaned her disappointment when Charles pulled away. "I really must leave...though I'd much rather stay here with you. I watched an interesting movie the other night that included making love on the kitchen table. Surely, it must be our duty to investigate the stability of Formica so that we can report back to The MOB." Charles smiled mischievously at his wife.

"Well, I do think that it's important to be thorough in our research," Wendy responded with a grin. "Too bad you won't be home in time to try it out before dinner."

Hours later, Wendy was still annoyed about Halloween. She really wanted to skip the whole thing, but knew that she was obligated to participate in as many mortal rituals as possible, so she really didn't have a choice. Wendy set the groceries on the kitchen table and remembered that morning's conversation. Resigned to the fact that she would have to deal with the trick or treaters herself, she headed upstairs to get ready.

Wendy looked at the clock on the nightstand and decided that she had enough time for a nice bath. As she lowered herself into the scented bubbles, she

closed her eyes and thought, I guess this assignment hasn't been all bad. I never would have learned about bubble baths. I'll have to be sure to take a couple cases of this Mr. Bubble stuff home with me. I wonder if I can pack a bathtub?

The disgruntled witch sunk further into the bubbles and contemplated her evening. I won't let a bunch of snot-nosed little brats keep me from enjoying my favorite holiday, Wendy told herself with resolve. I'm going to pretend that I'm going to the Baron's Costume Ball, and I'm not going to let anything stop me from enjoying myself.

Feeling a bit more in control of the situation, Wendy stepped from the tub and dried herself with a fluffy orange towel. She smoothed lotion on her legs and then on the rest of her body. Its jasmine aroma was soothing, and Wendy felt her spirits lift, just a bit, as she dusted herself with powder in the same scent.

She dug under the bathroom sink for the basket of spongy twist curlers. It was a time consuming task to wind her waist-length hair around the finger-like curlers, but Wendy was patient and soon her head was covered with multi-colored tubes. She doused her head with hairspray and went into her closet to get dressed.

Wendy smiled at her reflection in the hallway mirror. If she didn't know any better, she'd think that she was on her way to the Baron's Costume Ball rather than standing in a house in the middle of suburbia waiting for a bunch of sugar-crazed trick or treaters. Her hair fell in a cascade of golden ringlets down her back to her waist. Her dress was a glorious creation of shimmering, iridescent, gold satin. It was actually two pieces: a fitted corset that created creamy mounds of cleavage and then tapered to a tiny waistline and a full skirt that gathered at the waist and fell in shiny folds to the

floor.

To complete the look, Wendy found the wand that she had made for Halloween a year ago. She used a yardstick and a cut out star then she spray painted the whole thing gold and sprinkled it with glitter. She gave it a couple of practice waves in the air and then had a Reese's Cup from the bowl on the coffee table. She wasn't going to waste the good stuff on kids. Then she looked out the front door: two ghosts and a cheerleader. They seemed harmless enough. Wendy picked up the bowl of cheap Halloween candy and opened the door.

"Trick or treat!" the cheerleader shouted and waived her pom poms. The ghosts mumbled something, which Wendy assumed, was "trick or treat" but it was hard to really hear them with the sheets over their heads. Wendy dropped candy into their bags, and they ran through her yard to the Petersons' next door.

Well, that was easy enough, Wendy told herself. Maybe this won't be so bad after all.

Wrong. Wendy looked down the driveway and saw three witches headed toward her front door. They all wore long black robes, pointy black hats, and snarly gray wigs. All three had their faces painted green, and the oldest had a big wart on her nose and a nasty, oozy scar on her cheek. Wendy took a deep breath and composed herself before she opened the door.

The youngest witch stopped and stared at Wendy. "You're beautiful," she said in a hushed tone.

Wendy smiled down at her. "Why thank you. Can you guess who I am?"

"You must be a princess," the youngest witch answered. "Only a princess could be so pretty and wear such a beautiful gown."

"No, not a princess," Wendy felt her pulse start to quicken with annoyance, particularly since she knew a couple of princesses who were far from pretty and were certainly not sharp dressers.

"Then you must be a fairy," the middle sized witch said.

"No, not a fairy either," Wendy responded. "In fact, did you know that most fairies are really quite mean?"

"That's not true," the oldest witch said with authority. "Everyone knows that fairies are sweet and kind and very playful. So, who are you?"

Wendy stared at the scar-faced child and said evenly "I am a witch."

"You can't be a witch," the oldest girl assumed a bossy tone. "We're witches. Witches are ugly and wear raggedy clothes. Witches don't have blonde curly hair, and they don't wear beautiful gowns."

Wendy felt her fingertips itch with an urge to flick a spell on the impudent little brats on her front porch. Turning them into a trio of garden gnomes was very tempting. But, Wendy restrained herself and calmly tossed some black licorice drops into their bags.

"Black licorice? Yuck. We want some good stuff," the oldest witch surprised Wendy with her rudeness. "How about some of those Reese's Cups in that other bowl? What's the matter? Are you hogging those all for yourself?"

Wendy stared into the impudent child's eyes. "I've given you candy; now it's time for you to go to the next house." Apparently, the little witch sisters were not used to being spoken to with such authority because they each looked taken aback by Wendy's tone.

The oldest sister paused for a moment, then said to her siblings, "Let's get going. This house sucks anyway." And with that, the three little witch sisters turned and headed down the sidewalk.

Wendy nearly made it, but it was just too much for her. Before she knew what she was doing, the fingers of her right hand gave a quick flip and a snap and the three witches went tumbling across the lawn. Hats, wigs, and candy scattered in the breeze. Wendy stifled a laugh as she watched the

three of them chase after their belongings. The two younger sisters were more concerned with their wigs and hats, while the older sister was on her hands and knees in the yard collecting the spilled candy. Wendy noticed that she put all the good stuff into her own bag and put the licorice drops into her sisters' bags.

In all of the commotion, Wendy had not seen Charles' car pull into the driveway, so she was stunned when she saw him walk into the yard and help the girls with their costumes and candy. Wendy saw the patient way he helped them replace their wigs and hats and even tied the youngest sister's shoe. He did not look so kind and gentle, however, when he turned toward the front door.

Wendy had a sick feeling in her stomach but tried to mask it with cheerfulness. "Oh, Charles, I'm so glad that you're home," she kissed her husband and pressed her skirted lowed body against his loins. "Maybe we have time to try out that kitchen table experiment that you mentioned this morning."

"That certainly does sound appealing," Charles' eyes wandered lazily over his wife's golden clad body. "You do look very beautiful tonight, my sweet."

Wendy felt a small sense of relief. Clearly, she had distracted Charles from the trick or treaters.

"But, it appears that there are some other matters to be addressed first." Wendy's relief disappeared.

"W-what do you mean?" Wendy tried to keep her voice light and innocent.

"Wendy, the sweet and innocent thing isn't going to work with me. You should know better than that." Charles gave his wife a stern look then turned to answer the door. He dispatched a pirate, a hobo, and a football player with generous helpings from the Reese's Cup bowl then returned his attention to his errant witch of a wife.

"Trick or treating will be over soon. I'll take over

here. I want you to go upstairs and wait for me. You know what to do."

Yes, Wendy did know what to do, and she wasn't happy about it one bit. She plodded slowly up the staircase, berating herself for her foolishness. It was stupid of her to use magic on those little witches. Wendy knew that now.

She went into the bedroom and stood in the corner near the closet. While she stood there, she chastised herself for ever telling Charles about the conversation that she'd overheard at a Tupperware party. She'd been eavesdropping on a variety of conversations that night when she overheard two sisters whispering about the spankings their husbands had given them the night before. She learned that many mortals viewed this practice as a way of maintaining peace and harmony in their homes. She explained what she'd learned to Charles when she got home that night. Three days later, when she wrecked the car while putting on makeup, they put what they'd learned into practice.

Wendy had a feeling that tonight's transgression was worse than a scrunched up bumper. Waves of anxiety crashed in her stomach as she waited for Charles' footsteps in the hall.

Finally, the bedroom door opened. Wendy knew better than to look. She continued to stare at the wall in front of her and listened while Charles closed the door behind him and walked across the room. She heard the bed creak with his weight. "Come here, please, Wendy."

Wendy slowly turned from the corner. Her long skirt rustled in the silent room as she crossed to the bed where her husband sat. Wendy kept her eyes downcast. She really was ashamed of herself.

Charles held both of her hands in his and looked up at his wife. Blonde ringlets fell forward across her breasts as she hung her head.

"What you did tonight was very serious." Charles' voice was calm, but Wendy recognized the steely determination beneath his tone. "You could

have compromised our whole assignment, not to mention our futures with The MOB, by using magic tonight." Wendy shivered with the realization, and Charles slid his hands up her arms to warm her. "I know how much you hate Halloween here, and I rushed home as quickly as I could to try to relieve you of as much of it as I could. And then I pulled into the driveway just in time to watch your hand flick just before those little witches went rolling across the lawn."

Charles squeezed his wife's arms, and she looked at him. "Those little girls could have been hurt."

"I know." Wendy felt a stab of shame at the realization that she had used magic, and broken her word, for such a petty reason.

Charles' arms were at his wife's waist. Wendy's stomach tightened as she felt them slide around her waist to the back closure of her skirt. Deft fingers unlatched the hook and slid the zipper down. Charles eased the full skirt to the floor, and Wendy stepped out of it. Charles laid the fluffy garment across the footboard of the bed and then returned his attention to his half-dressed wife. He slid his fingers into the waistband of her panties, and Wendy felt a small trill of excitement as his fingers whispered across the delicate flesh of her stomach. The panties were lowered to just above her knees, and Wendy stood before her husband, knowing what was coming, but still filled with uncertainty.

Charles slid back on the bed and pulled his wife across his lap. "I know that this hasn't been a very good day for you, Sweetie, and I'm sorry to make things worse, but I just don't think that I have any choice. Do you?"

Wendy's forlorn eyes looked over her left shoulder at her husband. "No, you don't. I was childish and selfish, and I took a foolish risk. Not only that," Wendy felt her throat tighten with emotions, "but I put your career and your future at risk too. I had no right to do that."

Wendy buried her face in the comforter of the bed and braced herself by clenching her hands into the downy fabric. She wiggled herself into position across her husband's lap and waited for the first crack of his palm across her buns. In fact, a part of her looked forward to the release that a good spanking would bring. She'd know that she'd paid for her poor behavior and wouldn't need to feel guilty about it.

Charles prolonged his wife's waiting by slowly running the fingers of his right hand over the tender flesh of her backside. Wendy felt goosebumps break out across her hide along with a faint warm tingle in her girly parts.

The tingle was replaced with a sudden sting of pain as Charles' hand came down on her right cheek. Wendy inhaled sharply and waited for the rest of the punishment that she knew she had earned with her poor judgment.

Charles did not appear to be in any hurry. Rather than peppering her behind with rapid swats as he usually did, this time, he was taking his time and pausing after each crack to her butt. Wendy couldn't decide which was worse, the pain of his hand striking her tender derriere or the waiting for the next smack on her flesh.

The pauses between swats made it possible for Wendy to "appreciate" each one. She felt the sting against her cheeks when his hand hit its target, then she felt the heat from the impact as it spread across her rump. Sort of a double whammy on her fanny.

Even at this slower than usual pace, within just a few minutes, Wendy knew without looking that her backside was scarlet from cheek to cheek and from stem to stern. Just when she thought that he must be finished with her, he started in on her thighs. Oh, the sting. Wendy felt her fingers itch to flick a pillow across her rump, but she squelched the impulse. That certainly would not help the situation at all.

Finally, she felt her husband's gentle hands pull her up to sit on his lap. She pressed her tired forehead into his neck and sobbed out an apology.

"Shhh. It's all done now," Charles stroked his wife's curls back from her face and kissed away the tears on her cheeks. "You were very brave and took your punishment like a good girl. I know that parts of this assignment have been very hard for you. It's hard to be away from everything that's familiar and to try to live in a world that is so different from our own." Charles ran his index finger across Wendy's jaw and down her throat. His finger feathered across her collarbone and down into the shadow of her cleavage before he continued, "Let's put this behind us now." Wendy gave a weak smile at his inadvertent joke.

Charles' hand skimmed down his wife's leg and removed the last wisp of her panties. He reached behind her back to unhook the golden camisole and placed the other half of Wendy's outfit on top of the previously discarded skirt. Then Charles ran a lazy finger from the pulse beating at the base of his wife's throat to the rosy peak of her left breast. Wendy's nipple flowered against his fingertip, and she leaned into his touch with a soft moan.

Wendy clasped her hands around her husband's neck as he stood with her cradled in his arms. She expected him to lay her across the large bed so she was surprised when he headed toward the door. But, when he carried her into the kitchen, she knew what he had in mind.

The cool Formica felt good against the heat of Wendy's rump, and she reached out to help her husband remove his clothes. Charles gently laid his wife back against the kitchen table, his warm breath caressed her ear and he said, "Let's make some magic the old fashioned way."

Marcie's Luck Runs Out

Marcie looked out the window of the plane and marvelled at the pyramid. She couldn't believe that they'd built the airport so close to it. It really was an architectural wonder. She hoped that she'd get a chance to explore its interior.

She reached to her right and squeezed Daric's hand. She could see her husband's eyes sparkle with anticipation as he looked out the window too.

Marcie tried not to gawk like a tourist, but she really couldn't help herself. Further down from the pyramid she saw a castle. Then there was the Empire State building and if she craned her neck to the far left she could see the Eiffel Tower.

Her first trip to Las Vegas and Marcie couldn't be more excited.

The cab driver gave them the grand tour---and padded his fare---by driving them down the strip rather than using the side streets to get them to their hotel. As he drove, he gave them a running commentary on the casinos and their histories.

"Mandalay Bay is the place you want to go if you like music. They've got The House of Blues there. You'll want to be sure to catch the water show at the Bellagio and the pirate fight at Treasure Island. How long are you folks going to be here?"

"Just for a long weekend," Daric answered. "Our anniversary," he said and smiled at his wife.

"Good for you," the cabbie said. "No better place to have some fun and maybe raise a little hell than right here in Las Vegas. And remember," he said with a grin "what happens here stays here."

Daric and Marcie laughed and the taxi pulled to the curb in front of their hotel.

Marcie was mesmerized by the lobby of the hotel. It was hard to call it a lobby since nearly all that she could see where slot machines and lights.

The line to check in was long, and she and Daric took their place at the end.

“Why don’t you go and try your luck while I wait in line?” Daric handed his wife a twenty-dollar bill and nodded toward the bank of slot machines that were positioned nearby.

Marcie was hesitant. She’d never gambled before. But the whirring wheels, lights, and bells were very alluring. She walked to the nearest machine and slipped the twenty into the payment slot. The machine lit up and she saw that she had eighty credits on the twenty-five cent machine. Marcie took a moment to become familiar with the machine then hit the spin button.

The wheels spun. Bar, double bar, blank. Marcie looked up at the payout list on the machine and saw that her spin was a loser. She hit the button again. She got two cherries and the machine credited her with two quarters. Marcie clapped her hands in front of herself with pleasure and looked over at Daric to see if he’d noticed her win. He had. Daric smiled at his wife and gave her the thumbs up.

Marcie turned back to the machine. She continued to hit the spin button and watch the wheels turn. She noticed that with each stop of the reels her heart gave a small lurch. Bar, bar, bar. Marcie looked at the machine and saw that she’d won twenty quarters. Five whole dollars. She was thrilled. She looked over at Daric. He’d moved closer to the reception desk and couldn’t see her. She turned back to the machine. Her machine.

Feeling bold, Marcie hit the “max bet” button and increased her bet from one quarter per spin to three. She set the reels in motion. Bar, blank, blank. By now Marcie knew that was a losing spin. She hit the button again.

Double bar, double bar, double bar. A winner. Marcie won eighty quarters. She’d doubled her initial investment, and they weren’t even officially checked in to the hotel yet. Marcie grinned and spun again.

Red seven. Marcie sat up straighter in her chair. Red seven. Marcie's eyes grew wide and she held her breath. Her heart was pounding. Double bar. She exhaled and felt dejected. So close. Wouldn't Daric have been proud of her if she'd hit a jackpot before they were even registered guests of the casino?

But, she was still ahead of where she started, so Marcie spun the reels again. Behind her, the bells went off signaling a jackpot on another machine. Marcie was oblivious. Her eyes were focused on the machine in front of her. Her new best friend.

She nearly squealed with fright when someone touched her shoulder. It was her husband.

"Ready? We're all checked in."

Marcie looked around at Daric. "Look honey, I've doubled my money already."

Daric leaned down to kiss his wife on the top of her head. "I always knew you were a winner."

Marcie smiled up at him and hit the button again. "Just a couple more spins, ok? I'm feeling lucky."

Daric's right hand slid under his wife's hair and caressed her neck. "I was thinking that I might get lucky...but not in public."

Daric's fingers started a tingle in her neck that was working its way downward. Marcie took her eyes off the spinning reels and looked into her husband's smoldering eyes.

"I guess I could cash out," she said as she hit the button that produced a credit slip for \$42.50. Marcie tucked the slip into her purse, pleased with her success, then slipped her hand into Daric's as they headed for the elevator.

The view from their room was spectacular. Marcie stood by the window and stared down the strip. The sidewalks were jammed with people. Across the street, she could see the volcano in front

of the Mirage. Smoke filled the air further down the strip from the Mirage and Marcie, who had studied all the Las Vegas tour books that the library had, assumed that it was from the Pirate Fight that took place in front of Treasure Island. She pressed closer to the window hoping to see more.

She felt her husband's arms snake their way around her waist, and she tilted her head to the left so that he could kiss that special spot on her neck. Marcie leaned back into the strength of her husband's body as his hands began to roam. The lights of the strip lost their allure, and Marcie was caught up in the sensations that her husband was stirring up in all her tingly places.

Soon their travel clothes were nothing more than a heap on the floor. Marcie pressed her hands into the glass of the window overlooking the strip as her husband entered her from the rear. Marcie bent forward and tilted her bottom up slightly so that Daric could press his full length into her moist heat. She moaned and touched her forehead to the cool glass as her husband slid in and out, in and out, in and out. It was almost more than she could bear. She opened her eyes and caught her husband's reflection in the window. The pleasure on his face made her pulse quicken. She pressed herself back against him as he clasped her hips and continued to plunge rhythmically. Faster. Faster. Faster. Finally, they both exploded in a shimmering haze of passion. Marcie again pressed her forehead against the cool windowpane as she tried to steady her breath. Then she turned and wrapped herself around her husband's body. Their kiss was wet and lingering. The couple collapsed onto the floor in front of the window and slept.

It was dark when Marcie finally opened her eyes. She reached out for Daric but he wasn't there. Then she heard the shower running and smiled at

the memory of the passion they'd shared.

The strip was lit up and it was like a fairyland. Marcie stood and looked out the window. She felt a little unnerved about standing naked in front of a window, but she knew that the windows were tinted so that it was nearly impossible for anyone to see in. Besides, they were up so high that no one could see her even without the window tint. She was a little bit turned on by the naughtiness of it all. She could think about people seeing her standing there in the nude and that was exciting, but she didn't have to worry that they'd actually see her. It was the best of both worlds.

Marcie was proud of her body. She worked out nearly every day and met with a personal trainer regularly to monitor her progress. Even after children, she still had a flat stomach and a nicely rounded bottom. But, she was never suggestive in her clothing and didn't flaunt her body. Sure, she enjoyed wearing nice clothes and looking fashionable, but she liked saving the best for Daric. Why should everyone else get a look at what was intended only for him?

Marcie knew it was an antiquated idea, thinking that her body belonged to her husband, but she liked it. It made her feel treasured and it made her happy to know that her body gave her husband such pleasure. And it did. Regularly.

Maybe I'll join Daric in the shower. The thought of sneaking in and surprising her husband went along with the naughty mood that she was in, so she turned toward the bathroom.

Too late. Just as she was headed in that direction, the door to the bathroom opened and Daric entered the bedroom. His towel dried hair was just ruffled enough to look sexy instead of sloppy. The towel around his waist was riding low and Marcie continued to feel naughty.

She stepped toward her husband, but he stopped her with one of his looks.

"There'll be plenty of time for that later," he

said, and the glint in his eye told her that when he said plenty, he meant it.

Marcie grinned.

"But," her husband continued, "let's get out and see a few of the sights first."

"You're right," Marcie said. "But, it's nice to know that if we don't find Las Vegas exciting enough, we can make our own fun here."

She grinned again as she pranced past her husband into the bathroom. He gave her bare bottom a playful swat as she went by.

Her rear tingled a bit, and Marcie gave her husband a saucy look. "You're sure we'll have plenty of time for everything?" The meaning behind her emphasis was not lost on her husband.

"Oh yes, everything. It's our anniversary, you know."

Marcie giggled then darted into the bathroom.

She was taken aback by what she saw. The room was dark except for a handful of candles placed on the counter and around the tub. The tub itself had been filled with warm scented water.

Marcie peeked her head out of the bathroom door. "Thank you Darling," she called out to Daric. "You're too good to me."

"There's nothing that's too good for you. And don't you forget it." He answered from across the room. "But, that doesn't mean that I won't give you behind a little taste of things to come if you don't hurry up and get ready."

Marcie stuck her tongue out at her husband, then quickly closed the door.

Marcie was filled with energy as she and Daric walked down Las Vegas Boulevard--known the world over as The Strip. There was something about the lights and the people and all of the activity that created electricity that was hard to avoid. Marcie felt it, and it made her heart beat a touch faster.

She looked over at Daric and was pleased to see that he was enjoying himself too. They stopped at Paris Casino to marvel at the reproduction of the Eiffel Tower. They caught the water show at the Bellagio. The cabbie was right. It was spectacular. They stopped at the Carnival Court outside of Harrah's where they enjoyed the warm evening air, had a drink, and danced to the music of a live band. They decided to leave the pirate fight until the next night and headed back to their hotel.

They had long overdue business to attend to. It was their anniversary, you know.

Of course, it was impossible to get to the bank of elevators for the guest rooms without walking through the casino. Marcie glanced over at her machine. It was available. It was calling her.

"Daric, you haven't done any gambling at all," she said to her husband. "You've been here all day. You really should give it a try."

Marcie tilted her head toward her machine as an indication of what she had in mind.

"That sounds like fun," Daric said and pulled out his wallet.

Marcie sat down in front of her old friend and Daric chose the machine to her left. He slid a twenty into the machine while Marcie inserted her winning slip from earlier that day.

"Since you're the experienced gambler, maybe you can give me some pointers," Daric said with a mischievous smile.

"There really isn't much to it. You just push the button and hope for the best," Marcie said as she did just that. "If you get the three red sevens, you win the jackpot."

The reels in front of Marcie began to spin, and she felt her pulse increase. Bar, Bar, cherries. A small win. She hit the button again. Double bar, Double bar, Double bar. A bigger win. Marcie squealed and poked Daric in the shoulder.

Daric looked pleased at his wife's excitement. "Good for you Honey," he said. Marcie glanced over

and saw that the initial twenty dollars that Daric had put into the machine was now down to ten. He didn't look like he was having much fun.

They continued to play, each getting small wins every now and then. Soon Daric's initial investment was gone and he stood up. The movement distracted Marcie, and she looked up at her husband. It was clear that he was ready to leave. She was disappointed but didn't want to show it.

"Are you ready to go?" she asked. Daric nodded and put his hand on his wife's shoulder. He ran his hand across her back as he bent down to kiss the top of her head.

"I know you're having a good time, so why don't you play for a few more minutes while I go upstairs and get things ready for our anniversary celebration?"

Marcie smiled. Daric always knew exactly what she wanted. "Thanks Honey. I promise that I won't be long. Look, I'm almost up to a hundred dollars, and that's from the first twenty that I put in when we got here." Marcie was clearly feeling like a winner. "As soon as I get up to one hundred, I'll cash out and come upstairs, OK?"

Daric slid his hand down her arm and clasped her hand. He gave it a squeeze and said "OK", then turned toward the elevators.

Marcie felt a rush of love as she looked after her husband. He always made her feel so wonderful and seemed to have a sixth sense about what she needed. It hadn't always been that way, but thanks to some changes that they'd made, starting exactly one year ago, their marriage was the strongest that it had ever been and got stronger every day.

All of her friends had noticed and many asked what the secret was. Marcie just smiled and said that they'd been "working on some things."

How could she explain to her friends that the secret to her happy marriage involved going over her husband's knees for regular good old-fashioned butt blistering spankings? Would any of them

understand the level of commitment and trust that was involved in such a relationship, or would they just whisper about her behind her back?

Marcie suspected the latter, so she kept them in the dark. She wished that she could tell them so that they could enjoy the same kind of closeness that she had with Daric, but she had a feeling that they wouldn't listen.

Marcie sighed and turned back to her old friend, the slot machine. She checked to see how much she had won so far. \$88.50. Just a couple more spins and she'd be up to \$100, then she'd go upstairs to celebrate with Daric.

The reels spun. Double bar, double bar, and a special double wild card. Marcie bounced up and down in her seat with excitement and the woman to her right looked over and congratulated her. The wild card doubled the usual payout for that combination and Marcie added another eighty dollars to her winnings.

She stopped and looked at the machine. She now had over one hundred sixty dollars. She'd promised Daric that she'd come upstairs once she had one hundred dollars. But, it had only been one spin. He probably wasn't even in the room yet. When it gets to two hundred, I'll stop. Daric will be so surprised when I tell him how I turned twenty dollars into two hundred.

Marcie continued to play. Her winnings went up and down. She got close to two hundred dollars, but she never quite got there so she kept spinning. I'm almost there, she told herself. Just a couple more spins.

Marcie lost all track of time. The woman next to her cashed out and left. Two other people sat down and eventually left. Marcie barely noticed. Her eyes were glued to the reels in front of her.

Finally, she reached two hundred dollars. Marcie pressed the cash out button and put the slip in her purse with an air of triumph.

Then she looked at her watch.

Three hours! How could it have been that long since Daric went upstairs? It seemed like only a few minutes. Her heart sunk. Her bottom also tightened up when she thought about Daric's response.

Her winnings were long forgotten as she moved toward the bank of elevators. Maybe the elevator will get stuck.

No such luck. Within a matter of moments, the doors slid open and she was deposited on her floor. Dread built up in her stomach as she walked down the corridor. Marcie slipped the key card into the door and entered with as little noise as possible. Maybe he's asleep, she hoped.

Daric was not asleep. He had pulled an armchair over to the window and was looking out over the strip. Marcie had a moment to look at her husband before he realized that she was there. He looked very sad and disappointed.

She wished that she could crawl under a rock and hide. She'd rather have him be angry at her than to be disappointed. She hated herself when she knew that she'd let him down. And she knew that tonight she had done so in a big way.

Marcie bit at her upper lip and crossed the room.

She knelt down next to her husband's chair, put her hand on his knee, and looked up into his face. "I'm so sorry," she whispered.

Daric looked down at her hand on his knee and then his eyes met hers. The hurt that Marcie saw there stabbed at her heart.

She wished that he would say something, but he didn't. Not knowing what else to do, Marcie looked around the room. She saw roses on the night table and champagne chilling in a bucket. There was a beautifully wrapped package on the bed.

Marcie hadn't thought that she could feel worse than she did when she saw the disappointment in Daric's face. She was wrong.

"You really had a special night planned, didn't you?" Marcie could barely choke out the words over

the lump in her throat.

Finally, Daric spoke. "Yes, I did. I've been planning this for weeks, as soon as we booked the trip. I wanted to do something special for you to show you how much I've appreciated all the things that you've done over the past year to make our marriage so much better." He touched her face and then continued, "I know that it's been hard for you sometimes to let me be in charge and to submit to my discipline. I think that we'd both agree that it's something that really works for us. But, I know that there have been a lot of adjustments for you." He smiled ruefully, "And that it's not always been, well, pleasant."

"No, it isn't always pleasant for me," Marcie admitted. "But, you're always fair, and I trust you to know what I need. You've never been wrong about that."

Daric nodded toward the gift on the bed. "Why don't you open your present."

Marcie went to the bed and retrieved the present then returned to her position next to Daric's chair. She removed the ribbon and the heavy wrapping paper to uncover a wooden box. It contained a leather paddle. She smiled. She'd secretly wanted to try one for months, but she'd never mentioned it to Daric. How did he always know?

Marcie ran her fingers over the smooth leather. "How did you know?"

Daric seemed pleased that she liked the gift. "It's my job to know what you want and what you need. I'm your husband."

"And do you know what I need right now?" Marcie asked.

"Yes, I do. And you know it too, don't you?"

"Yes." Marcie stood and removed her pants. She laid them over the back of a nearby chair. She stood in front of Daric and handed him the paddle. Then she lowered her panties to her knees. Daric leaned back in the chair so that she could position

herself across his lap.

As was his habit, Daric caressed her back with slow circles while he talked to her. His voice was calm, but determined.

"Would you like to tell me what happened that caused you to be so deserving of a spanking?"

Marcie stared down at the carpet. She couldn't remember ever feeling so miserable. But, she knew what she had to do. She knew that once she had been properly punished they could both put this incident behind them, so to speak, and move on to enjoy the rest of their trip.

"I told you that I'd come to the room soon, and I was very, very late." Marcie began.

"And why were you very, very late?" Daric asked.

"Right after you left, I won eighty dollars. I was so excited. I had over one hundred dollars, and I thought how surprised you'd be if I won two hundred dollars. Well, I just got so caught up in the machine that I didn't even notice what was happening around me." As she described her action, Marcie was overcome by shame over her behavior. Tears started to slide down her face and drip onto the carpet.

"I forgot about time," she continued. "And," her voice was nearly choked out by tears, "I forgot all about you," she whispered. "Oh Daric, I'm so ashamed. Please forgive me."

Daric continued to rub her back as she clutched the side of the chair and sobbed.

His gentle voice broke in over her sobs, "Of course, you are forgiven, Marcie." His hand trailed down to her bottom and the gentle circles continued there. "But, you still need to be punished. You completely forgot about me. Me. Your husband. You traded time with me for time with a slot machine. That doesn't honor our marriage or our commitment to each other, does it?"

"N-noo," Marcie's voice was filled with remorse. Her head was spinning with regret and sorrow and

shame. Her focus was quickly redirected as Daric put the leather paddle to good use.

Oh, it stung. Among the things that Marcie was regretting at that moment was her desire to ever own a leather paddle. Daric had never used anything other than his hand on her backside. The paddle was a whole new experience.

Marcie generally enjoyed new experiences. This was not one of those times. The paddle rained down on her rump in a series of searing swats. Marcie bit her lip and clung to the leg of the chair to maintain her balance. The tears that had begun earlier continued to flow.

Marcie was glad for the tears. And for the pain. She was so deeply sad over disappointing Daric, the punishment helped to wash away some of her remorse.

Just when she thought that her bottom couldn't take one more crack from the paddle, Daric stopped. His hand again caressed her back in slow circles. Marcie continued to cry and Daric spoke to her. The love in his voice made Marcie cry even harder.

"It's over Marcie. I'm proud of you. You did make a big mistake, and I was very disappointed in you. But, you owned up to it and took your punishment without complaint."

Marcie sobbed again and drew her breath in a ragged whimper. Daric pulled her up to sit on his lap. He was careful to situate the two of them to create the least amount of pressure on her burning backside. Marcie laid her head on his shoulder and sobbed more apologies into his shirt collar. When she was spent, she lay quietly in her husband's arms.

"I think," Daric said, "that tomorrow we'll bypass the casino and spend the day by the pool. What do you think?"

"You always know just what I need." Marce said. She really was a very lucky woman.

A Ride in the Country

Cass felt warmth between her legs. There was a slow vibration spreading outward and down the length of her thighs. She pressed her knees toward each other in an effort to steady the quivering that was running through that most sensitive area where her inner thighs stopped and her womanly parts began.

She reached out and clasped firm male shoulders for stability. She feared that her grip might be so tight that it caused pain to her partner, but he gave no indication that he felt anything but exhilaration.

Although she'd never ridden a motorcycle before, Cass was starting to feel pretty comfortable. She continued to clasp Chase's shoulders and pressed her knees into his thighs. Even without the excitement of riding the motorcycle, she was enjoying the opportunity to press herself close to the man she loved.

Admittedly, Cass had not been enthusiastic when Chase first broached the subject of buying a motorcycle. She knew that he'd had one years ago, and she had often marveled at the glow that came into his eyes whenever he talked about the solo trip that he took across the country back then. That was back when all of his belongings fit into a duffel bag that he was able to strap to the back of his seat. And when his back could tolerate nights spent in a sleeping bag in a small tent pitched in an open field. No sleep number bed, back then.

At the time that he mentioned his desire to buy another bike, Cass had wisely kept her thoughts to herself. She could see that he was excited---almost boyish in his enthusiasm---and she hated to crush his dream. Far be it for her to mention the fact that he was a forty-something father of four, a respected businessman in the community, and a deacon in the church. If a few thousand dollars for a motorcycle could put the spring back in his step, then she was

all for it.

As she glanced into the small mirror on the handlebar and saw the gleam in her husband's eye as they leaned into a particularly tight curve, Cass knew that she had done the right thing in encouraging him to go ahead with the purchase.

Chase had kept his motorcycle license current, "just in case", for as long as she'd known him. For a man who was not prone to frivolity, maintaining the license was a sign that he intended to reclaim the man on the bike someday. Someday arrived just two months earlier.

It was red. And shiny. And the grin on his face the day that he brought it home from the dealership was unlike anything that Cass had seen in the fourteen years that she'd known Chase.

She had wanted to go for a ride that day, but he put her off saying that he needed to get familiar with the bike himself before he felt comfortable with a passenger. Cass had never given much thought to the physics involved in riding a motorcycle---something about weight and speed---but she deferred to him and sent him off on solo rides until he felt ready to take her along.

Cass really couldn't complain. In the last two months he'd volunteered to do every errand that needed to be done just so he could ride the bike. A last minute trip to the grocery for milk and bread which would have put Cass into a foul mood, turned into an opportunity for Chase to rip around town on his shiny red motorcycle. He returned invigorated. Their sex life had picked up steam dramatically.

Yes, all in all, Cass felt that the bike was a good investment.

She was so caught up in her thoughts that she hadn't even noticed that they'd left the main road and were bumping along on a narrow path that looked like an old mining road. The path got more and more narrow until it nearly disappeared. She ducked in close behind Chase as a low branch nearly hit her helmet.

They slowed and stopped in a small clearing. Cass got herself off of the bike and removed her helmet. As she looked around, she realized that they weren't alone. Under a large oak tree she saw a red and white picnic blanket that was set up for lunch. She saw wine chilling in a bucket and long stemmed glasses next to the china plates. There was a nice wedge of cheese, French bread, and a large bowl of fruit.

Cass scanned the area looking for the other couple. She felt a little uncomfortable, like they were interrupting someone's tryst. She looked at Chase and was about to suggest that they allow the missing couple to have their picnic in private when she noticed that he was heading straight for the red and white blanket.

Cass followed her husband and as she got closer she recognized the picnic blanket and the dishes. This wasn't someone else's picnic tryst---it was hers. A slow smile of recognition lit up her face as she realized that Chase had planned the whole thing---all the way down to her favorite wine.

Cass skipped---yes she skipped---over to her husband and flung her arms around his neck. She pressed her lips against his and inhaled sharply as he swung her up into his arms and carried her to the blanket. Cass couldn't remember the last time that Chase had done that.

He lowered her to the blanket and set her down in the shade of the oak tree. Cass's head was spinning a bit from being carried and then kissed thoroughly. As she regained her senses, Chase handed her a glass of wine.

Chase sat down next to his wife and touched the rim of his wine glass to hers. "So, did you enjoy the ride?" His grin showed that he had clearly enjoyed himself.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I did." Cass was honest in her response. "I must admit that I didn't think that I'd enjoy it as much as I did, but it was great. I loved the feeling of freedom. And the rush

from the wind was incredible.”

Chase finished the contents of his glass and leaned close to kiss his wife. “Thank you so much for understanding about the bike. Most wives would have thought that I was crazy, a man my age buying a motorcycle.”

Cass smiled thinking that the same thought had crossed her mind more than once. She returned her husband’s kiss and said “You’ve been so happy since you got it. If I’d known it meant that much to you, I would have suggested it myself a long time ago.”

“There’s just something about that bike,” Chase continued, “it makes me so hot...hot for you.”

Chase gently removed the wine glass from his wife’s hand and set both goblets aside. He turned to his wife and took her in his arms. Cass tasted the wine on her husband’s tongue as he pressed it into her mouth and explored the tender flesh there.

All thoughts of lunch disappeared as Chase trailed kisses down his wife’s neck and nuzzled into the deep opening of her blouse. Cass clasped her hands to her husband’s head and pressed his face deeper into the cleft of her cleavage. His tongue left a wet trail across the top of her breast as he kneaded the contents of her bra until he felt her nipple spring to life against his palm.

Cass moaned in protest when Chase lifted his head, but she was reassured when she realized that he had only raised himself above her slightly in order to open the buttons on her blouse. Apparently, Chase wasn’t as cool headed as he might have appeared because the first two buttons sprung from the blouse and flew into the grass next to the blanket. Seeing that saving the other buttons was a lost cause, he grabbed the cotton fabric and pulled until his wife lay exposed before him—her breasts heaving against her Maidenform.

Chase bent his head again and sucked at her nipple through the thin fabric of her bra. Cass felt moisture forming in her loins and pressed herself

against her husband's crotch. Chase was undeterred and continued to tease against the hard peak of her breast through its now damp fabric covering.

Cass realized that the cup of her bra was not the only piece of her lingerie that was damp. Seriously damp.

Despite his wife's wriggings beneath him, Chase was not going to be rushed. He turned his attention from the aching nub of her right breast to the straining tip of her left. Cass knew that when Chase was determined to complete his slow, erotic torture she had no choice but to relax and enjoy it. Not a difficult task.

Within moments both cups of her bra were damp to the point of transparency and Cass's button-hard nipples could be seen pressing against the fabric in search of freedom. Chase must have understood because he reached behind his wife's back and yanked against the fastenings there. In keeping with his destruction of her shirt, he tore two of the hooks from the bra, thus rendering it useless. The now unfastenable bit of lingerie was tossed over his shoulder and landed near the back tire of the shiny red motorcycle.

Cass stretched, cat-like, arching her back and enjoying the feel of the sun's warmth on her naked upper body. Feeling the heat of the sun dry the trail of moisture left by her husband's mouth was nearly as erotic as the tongue that left the trail across her pulsing breasts in the first place.

While Cass posed in the sunshine, Chase stripped off his shirt. Cass's fingers gloried in the crisp hair that covered his chest, and she plucked at his nipples while he covered her mouth with his own. Cass felt the earth press against her back as her husband's body trapped hers beneath it.

She moved her hands around to her husband's muscled back and slipped her fingertips down into the waistband of his pants. She delicately teased her fingers into the back of his pants and squeezed the tender flesh of his backside. Cass smiled when

her husband moaned his appreciation against her mouth.

She withdrew her hands and slid them across the ticklish spot on his side before arriving in front to work the buckle on his belt. When she bought him the belt with the motorcycle insignia for a buckle, Cass hadn't realized that it was a little tricky to get it open. Or maybe it was a difficult task because she was breathing hard, her head was swimming, and her husband was tugging at her right nipple with his teeth. Yeah, that could be it.

Cass forced herself to focus on the task at hand. Once the buckle was opened, she pulled the leather belt free from the loops of her husband's Levis and tossed it somewhere in the vicinity of her previously discarded bra. She opened the fly and gained access to the steamy insides of her husband's jeans. As her fingers slid past the zipper and into the crispness and heat underneath, she pushed Chase's clothing out of her way and ran her fingers all the way down to the base of his manhood and then trailed her fingernails gently to the tip.

Chase responded with a sharp inhalation and an overly excited nip at the peak of her right breast. He lifted his rear so that she could slide his pants down his hips and off. While he was raised above her, he tipped his head down and ran his tongue from nipple to navel.

A quiver followed where Chase's tongue traveled. Cass felt the quiver build to a smoldering burn as his tongue moved downward from her navel and darted inside the waistband of his wife's jeans.

Practiced fingers opened the button fly and slid the denim past his wife's hips. The pants were tossed aside and Chase reached for the moisture that had formed in the crotch of Cass's panties. As he had with her bra, Chase lowered his head and applied his tongue to the outside of her filmy undergarment.

Cass pressed her arms spread eagle into the picnic blanket and clutched at the red and white

fabric as her husband pleased her nearly naked body.

Cass moaned deep in her throat and arched her back so that her still swollen nipples pushed toward the sun.

The smoldering burn had become nearly white hot, and Cass was ready to explode when he yanked away her panties and filled her wet passage. He pushed deep into her loving folds.

She wrapped her arms around his shoulders in a vise-like grip, and the two of them rocked together in that time-honored rhythm until they both called out in ecstasy.

Cass blinked awake and looked around in a haze. As her eyes adjusted to the late afternoon sun and her mind woke from the passion-induced sleep, the events of earlier in the day coalesced in her mind. She stirred slightly and felt Chase's arm pull her close to his still sleeping body.

As she surveyed the surroundings---articles of clothing tossed around, the uneaten food, and the undrunk wine---her eyes landed on the bike. The sun glinted off of its polished chrome and suddenly she was filled with an urge to feel its power for herself.

She lifted her husband's arm and carefully slipped away from his grip. She paused for a second or two to make sure that he didn't wake. Then she crept over to where her clothes were strewn. The panties and bra were worthless. She got the jeans back on and reached for her shirt. The buttons were missing, but she was able to knot it under her breasts so that she felt reasonably covered. Cass slipped her feet into her boots and cautiously approached the motorcycle.

She'd seen Chase start it many times and felt fairly confident that she knew what to do. She straddled the seat and reached low for the key. At

the same time she placed her other hand on the handlebar to rev the engine and adjust the clutch.

Apparently, Cass had learned well from watching Chase because the bike started right up. Unfortunately, she was unprepared for its power, and she lost her balance when it lurched forward. She was tossed off the bike, and it continued a few yards in the grass before it tipped over onto its side, engine still running.

Too late, Cass realized that it would be impossible for Chase to sleep through the sound of a motorcycle starting up only a few feet away. He bolted up as soon as he heard the first crank of the engine and stood slack-jawed as he watched his wife land on her rear end when she was thrown from the bike, and then he saw the other love of his life tip over and lay on its side in the dirt.

He ran first to his wife and assured himself that she was unharmed, and then he rushed to the bike and turned off the engine. He ran back to the picnic blanket and retrieved his jeans before attempting to right the bike. He inspected the damage and saw that there was none, or at least nothing that would require more than a good washing to un-do.

Once the bike was situated, Chase returned to where his wife was standing. Her arms were crossed over her stomach, and she had her head down. As he approached, she peeked up at him from under her lashes. The dark look on his face told her that he wasn't impressed with her motorcycle handling skills.

Chase stood in front of his wife and waited until she looked up at him.

"What were you thinking?" His voice was stern. "Do you realize that you could have been killed? That's not a toy. You're lucky that it tossed you off. What if it had landed on you when it tipped? What if you'd hit a tree?" Chase turned away from her and raked his hand through his hair.

When he turned back to look at her, Cass could see that he was less angry, but he wasn't done with

her.

"I-I'm sorry, Chase" she choked out the words in a whisper. Cass looked at the bike and realized the foolishness of her actions. She could have been seriously hurt. And how could she have taken the chance of damaging the motorcycle that Chase loved so much? What had she been thinking?

Chase looked at his wife. "What would I have done if something had happened to you?" Cass saw the anguish in his eyes, and more guilt piled onto her conscience. "We've talked about your impulsiveness hundreds of times, Cass. When are you going to learn to think before you act?"

"I-I don't know, Chase. I'm so sorry. I don't know what I was thinking. You planned this whole romantic picnic for us, and I've ruined it. Please don't be mad at me." Her voice and eyes were pleading.

"I'm not mad. But I do think that a simple apology is not enough. This is an important lesson about thinking before you act, and you need to learn it the hard way. Talking about it hasn't done any good."

Cass felt her stomach knot. "The h-hard way?"

"Yes. The hard way. How else will you learn?"

Cass swallowed past the lump in her throat and looked at her husband. Her gaze was steady. She knew that he was right and she was ready to take her punishment without complaint.

Cass looked at Chase and waited for his instructions. She assumed that he would sit on the ground and assert his leadership across her backside while she was prone across his lap. When he didn't sit on the ground, Cass was a bit confused. Then Chase walked over to the motorcycle and patted the leather covered seat. "Here" he said.

Cass was confused. "What?"

"The bike was your temptation. It's fitting that it should be used in the punishment. I want you to lower your jeans and lean over the seat."

Cass was hesitant in her approach, but she did

what she was told. She stood next to the bike and unfastened her jeans and slid the fabric down past her knees. She looked over at Chase, and he nodded for her to continue.

Cass leaned down and pressed her chest onto the seat of the motorcycle. With her left hand she gripped the back of the seat and clasped the front with her right. She knew she'd need some stability.

Chase came close and stood next to his wife. He ran his fingertips from the middle of her back down to the top of her hip. His hand slid around to caress the cheeks of his wife's exposed backside, and Cass braced herself for the sting of his hand on her butt.

When she felt the first sting on her flesh, she realized that it wasn't his hand after all, but the leather belt with the motorcycle buckle that was to be the instrument of her instruction. The leather cracked across both cheeks, and she felt a welt begin to form.

Cass bit her lip and tightened her hold on the motorcycle seat. All indications were that this was going to be a rough ride.

The belt continued to come down across her rump. The force of the blows to her backside pushed Cass's breasts to and fro against the seat and within a very short time the knot of her blouse had come undone. She didn't dare loosen her grip on the seat in order to re-tie the knot, so her bare breasts jostled against the leather seat while the leather of the belt created a white-hot heat on her bottom.

Cass tried to keep track of the number of blows to her derriere, but she lost track. The sting of the leather was unlike any punishment that she'd ever had in the years that she and Chase had been practicing domestic discipline, and it took all of her concentration to keep from crying out or begging him to stop. She knew that complaints were unacceptable and would only lead to more of the same. Cass knew that Chase was fair but firm in his leadership, and she trusted him to know when she'd

had enough.

That didn't mean that she didn't silently wish that he'd hurry up and get it over with. She felt a red burn from her thighs all the way to the top of her butt. She knew without looking, or touching, that her entire backside was flaming scarlet.

Cass was braced for another blow from the belt when she felt something hard and smooth and cold against her stinging flesh. It caught her by surprise and took her an instant to realize that Chase was pressing the cold wine bottle against her roasting rump. Cass felt herself relax when she realized that the punishment was over and the ministrations had begun.

Chase continued to slide the cool glass across her ass. He leaned in close and whispered in his wife's ear. "You were a good girl and took your punishment very bravely. I'm proud of you." And he kissed her softly on the temple.

She had held it together until the sweet, gentle kiss. Before Chase had even pulled his lips away, the tears began to flow. She grabbed at the loose tail of her shirt and dabbed at her eyes.

Masculine hands carefully turned Cass and pulled the shirt from her hands. Chase wrapped his arms around his wife and held her close as the sobs poured out onto his shoulder.

"Oh, Chase. I'm so sorry. What if I had ruined your motorcycle?"

"Motorcycle? What do I care about that old thing? This wasn't about the motorcycle; this was about you taking care of yourself. Don't you understand that I don't want to be without you? That I can't imagine waking up even one morning without you next to me?" Chase pulled back so that he could look directly into his wife's eyes before he continued. "You mean more to me than anything on this earth. Anything." Cass heard her husband's voice crack with emotion. "When I looked up and saw you fly off of the bike, I was terrified that you'd been hurt...or worse. I don't want to ever have to

feel that fear again.”

Chase pressed his lips into his wife’s and Cass felt the tear that squeezed out of his eye and splashed onto her cheek. She’d never felt more cherished and loved, and she silently vowed that she would never be so foolish again.

Chase reached down and gingerly pulled his wife’s jeans up to her waist. He knew that the stiff denim would be particularly rough against her recently reddened butt. Next he knotted the loosened blouse below her breasts, but not before he rasped his thumbs across her nipples and watched the flash of desire form in her eyes.

Chase set his wife away from him and gathered up the picnic things. He carefully folded the picnic blanket and put it on the seat of the motorcycle to make a pad for her sore rear end. The two of them got on the bike, and Cass clung to her husband as the two of them roared off into the sunset.

Discipline & Desire

If you enjoyed this book and would like to read similar stories or novels, please visit www.disciplineanddesire.com

To contact the author please write to disciplineanddesire@hotmail.com