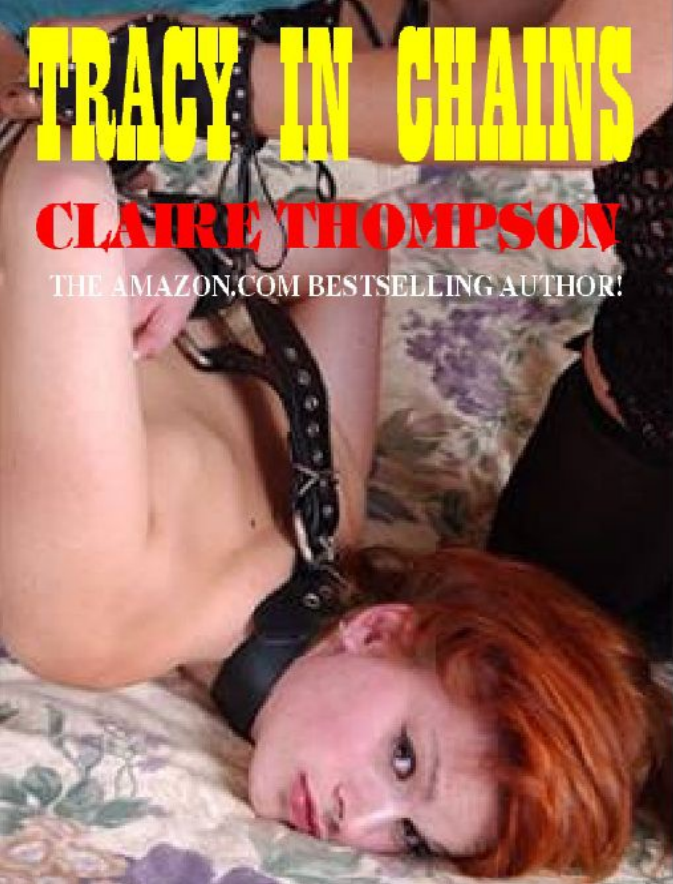


TRACY IN CHAINS

The background of the cover is a photograph of a woman with short, wavy red hair lying on her back on a floral patterned surface. She is wearing a black leather collar with silver studs and a black strap with silver buckles around her neck and shoulders. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

CLAIRE THOMPSON

THE AMAZON.COM BESTSELLING AUTHOR!

Tracy in chains

Claire Thompson

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Tracy in chains

CHAPTER 1

Tracy's Discovery

▼▼ I'll be your Master."

The words made her gasp as she saw them scroll across the computer screen. Tracy looked around nervously to see if her husband had somehow materialized behind her, but no, he was still safely tucked away on his own chat site. Actually they were both on 'bulletin boards' – those expensive and lumbering precursors to today's chat rooms.

The year was 1995 and Tracy had just turned twenty-eight. She sat typing away on a computer, while her husband

typed away on his computer in the other room.

Those words, 'whispering' to her, were the result of the profile Tracy had created for herself on the Palace bulletin board:

Nickname: Beloved

Desire: To find a 'Master' to teach me about submission and BDSM

Experience: Novice, but eager to learn

Availability: Email and online only

Stats: Female, Age 28, curvy and voluptuous

She felt silly selecting 'curvy and voluptuous' from the list of choices, which ranged from 'willowy' to 'big and beautiful'. Knowing this was anonymous

made it much easier. She had already received numerous emails from eager men who wanted to do wonderful, terrible things to her. She tentatively emailed back to a few, and gotten responses that made it pretty clear they were really only interested in her typing sex scenes for them while they jerked off at their keyboards.

The little time she had spent in the 'chat room' areas, watching others type silly things to her and to each other, made her realize the average age of the participants was probably about 16, if not chronologically, at least emotionally. It was disheartening. Still, there were forums where some thoughtful people had posted questions and ideas about the

whole 'scene', and lots of interesting articles and points of view.

Tracy found herself absorbed in reading about things she had only dared fantasize about all these years. Until this point she had never been able to reconcile her own submissive and masochistic urges with her heartfelt views on feminism and equality. How could she be for women's rights, yet have nasty little fantasies about being tied up and spanked? Or held down and raped by a dark mysterious stranger? What was wrong with her? Definitely something, she had been certain. At least until she had found this site, and started reading all this information from people who apparently had had the same

questions and thoughts!

She might be 'sick', but she wasn't alone.

That in itself was an amazing revelation. She wasn't the only woman out there with these strange desires to be sexually dominated and controlled. There were lots of women, and indeed men, who shared her needs and dreams. Many of them, if not most, didn't seem to have the hang-ups she did – they didn't consider themselves 'sick' or perverted at all, but accepted their own sexual needs and orientations as a matter of course. She spent many hours reading and scrolling from article to letter, her eyes wide with wonder.

"Where's dinner? I'm hungry!" Kyle's

smooth tenor made Tracy jump in her seat. She was startled to realize it was already dark outside.

"Hey, you're getting just as bad as me, huh?" Kyle grinned at her and leaned down to try and see what she was doing. Tracy quickly minimized her screen and jumped up, her face flushed. In the several weeks she had been going online, she had begun spending more and more time on the computer. Instead of reprimanding her, Kyle seemed pleased; it left him free to stay on too, and she couldn't very well complain about him, when she was just as culpable!

"Wow, I had no idea it was so late! I forgot to get anything out for dinner."

"That's ok, let's go out to eat. I'm in

the mood for Greek food anyway," Kyle said. Casually he added, "So what were you doing, anyway? What sites did you check out?"

"Oh... um... a couple of cooking sites, and a site for new mothers." Shit. Why did she say that? She couldn't even lie properly! Kyle's features darkened slightly and he turned away. He hated when she harped, as he called it, about children. Still, it had the desired effect of making him drop the subject.

Earlier in the month, when Tracy had protested to Kyle that he was on the

computer entirely too much, he had suggested she give it a try. Tossing her the bulletin boards magazine, a listing of all the most current sites on the fledgling Internet, he went back to his constant typing, barely glancing at his wife. She took the magazine, annoyed, but not quite brave enough to protest further.

Kyle didn't like it when Tracy 'got in his face' as he called it. He needed his space, he told her, and if she wasn't careful, the veiled threat behind his argument was he would get it by leaving her. Tracy was sure that would destroy her. She adored Kyle. She needed Kyle. She lived for Kyle.

Taking the magazine, she went into the living room and sat down. Holding it

unopened in her lap, she stared out vacantly at the redwood deck they had built in the back. This was the most recent addition to the house, and the most recent reason Kyle had patiently explained why they shouldn't have a child just yet. They had to finish paying for the deck. It wouldn't be wise to enter parenthood even more in debt than they already were, would it? With the medical school loans still looming over them, it would be a while before they were debt free.

Reluctantly Tracy had agreed, though she yearned for a baby with almost physical pain. Sometimes her longing was so acute she had even considered tricking Kyle and stopping her birth

control pills. She knew she would never do that; he would never forgive her.

So she waited. She had waited this long, dutifully working at the bank, putting Kyle through medical school, leaving her own college studies so they could devote themselves to his career as a doctor.

When he was done with medical school, and in residency, making a living wage, she could go back to college, or have children, he had promised. When the actual time came, the first year of residency was much more daunting than either of them had anticipated. Kyle was gone sixteen to twenty hours out of every twenty-four, and when he was home, it was only to eat something he barely

tasted, then fall like a rock into their bed.

The next three years were better, but Kyle was ambitious, and put in the extra time it took to become chief resident. He would always explain, a veneer of patience over exasperation, that what he was doing was for them both. This was an investment in their future, one he was willing to make. The fact that it left the present a sometimes lonely place for Tracy, was just a fact of life.

Tracy tried to be understanding, and didn't press him. He was a doctor. She was so proud she could have burst. She had risen from teller to head teller at the bank, and had quite a bit of responsibility, but it was nothing

compared to her husband, the doctor. How she had bridled when she had told Mr. Simmons, the senior loan officer, that her husband was doing his residency in psychiatry.

"I thought he was a medical doctor," he had blandly replied.

"That's a medical doctor!" she retorted, annoyed that he, and many others, confused psychology and psychiatry. Her husband was an M.D. – Dr. Kyle Becker, M.D. – and he wouldn't have made it without her, as he had told her time and again.

How she wanted to quit that job at the bank. The work was tedious and repetitive, and she really wasn't a 'people person.' She hated having to

smile and smooth things over when a customer became irate over some perceived slight. Confrontation frightened her, and being forced to deal with it professionally took a lot out of her, though on the surface she appeared calm and controlled.

It wouldn't be for long. That's what she told herself year after year. Things would be different soon. Kyle was just starting out now in his first month as a staff doctor at Timberlake Psychiatric Hospital. The long hard road of study and 'paying his dues' was ending at last. Soon it would be 'her turn.'

College no longer appealed to her; what was the point? She really wanted to be a 'stay at home mom', have her

children and make her home lovely for her husband to come home to each night. She wanted to give him and her children the home she had never had as a child. Sitting on the couch musing like this, an unpleasant memory of her drunken stepfather weaving angrily toward her, flashed through her mind.

To distract herself she looked down at the magazine in her lap. Idly, she began flipping through its pages, seeing bulletin board computer addresses for a wide variety of topics and tastes. "Vintage Car BB, Used and Rare Books BB, Naked Girls BB, Hot XXX College Babes, Fuck Zone." It took Tracy a minute to figure out that BB meant bulletin board. Kyle had explained to

her that these were sites you could log into and find friends who shared your interests. You could have your own little email account there, and you picked a 'handle', he told her, that you signed in with. It was fun, he assured her.

"Where do you go?" she had asked, innocently at first. He told her he used it for medical sites, and to find other audiophiles like himself. He appreciated fine music, mostly classical, which Tracy never really understood, but tried to sit through for Kyle's sake. He was so sophisticated compared to her, she thought.

Despite what he said to Tracy about where he went on the computer, in fact Kyle went almost exclusively to sex

sites. He always had a very high sex drive, and Tracy never seemed to satisfy him, though God knew she tried to, even when she would rather be reading her novel or sleeping. She always gave in to Kyle, who constantly pushed her until it was easier to acquiesce and be allowed to sleep eventually.

It hadn't always been like that. At first she couldn't get enough of him. Back in college they would meet in his dorm room, stealing a moment when his roommate was out, feverishly making love, most of their clothes on, shushing each other so no one would hear them through the flimsy dorm walls. Even then, if she were honest, he usually 'took' her before she was ready. She'd

attributed that to his intense desire for her, and told herself it was a compliment.

Something was missing now, which she couldn't quite define. Or more accurately, she refused to. Whatever it was, it had been a long, slow time in coming. Tracy shook her head to clear these negative thoughts. She wasn't given much to introspection; it was too dangerous.

Missing or not, Tracy never refused Kyle's attentions, but her 'wifely duty' wasn't enough, it seemed. Lately at night she would wake up, and feel his absence in the bed. Coming fully awake, she heard the muted tap, tap, tapping of the keys. The first time she tiptoed out to see

what he was doing, she was stunned to see him with his pants around his ankles, his erect cock in one hand, while he pumped and typed simultaneously. It was such a bizarre sight that she almost laughed out loud.

He hadn't noticed her, and she slipped silently back to bed, sure that if he saw her he would either be angry and accuse her of 'spying' on him, or he would make her come over and suck his cock. She wasn't up for that just then.

His nocturnal exploits became fairly regular after that, and she lived with it. It meant less obligation for her, as he seemed to be 'getting his needs met' elsewhere. Tracy was vaguely jealous, though relieved she didn't have to have

sex every single night anymore. But when he started logging on during the day, or right after dinner, and staying on most of the evening, it was just too much. Tracy protested, and was handed the magazine.

Ok, fine. She would get on there too, and see what all the hoopla was about. She scanned the list, looking for something interesting, like a cooking site or a parenting site, but her eye fell on something that made her catch her breath. "BDSM Palace – where all your sadomasochistic dreams come true." Oh. My. God. There's a site like that? Tracy felt a small clutch in her groin. She licked her lips, which had suddenly become dry. BDSM. Bondage.

Dominance. Sadomasochism. The words evoked something inside her that she couldn't quite define.

Liar. She could define it, all right. She was just afraid to. It was desire, a raging curiosity, and wonder – wondering if there were other people out there like her. People who would log on to this site and actually 'talk' to each other about this stuff!

With fingers trembling, Tracy went to the little laptop that was 'her' computer. Laboriously she followed the instructions on how to log on. After several minutes of struggle, she finally managed to enter the site, which lit up as a crudely drawn castle appeared, with the words BDSM PALACE emblazoned

across it. She was invited to sign up, choose a 'nickname', and create a profile.

She felt like a kid in a candy shop, moving from screen to screen, scrolling through other people's submissive fantasies, and reading scholarly articles written by professor types about how S & M wasn't perverted, and occurred naturally in many people, in varying degrees. She felt as if she were standing at the edge of a huge canyon, one she had never known was there. Did she have the courage to jump?

Then one day, those words, suddenly appearing in red at the bottom of her screen, "I'll be your Master." The nickname attached to the message was

"Sir Stephen." A real person out there somewhere wanted something from her. She knew on some level she desperately wanted to give something. She had responded with an inane, "Excuse me?"

"I'll be your Master. I read your profile. I liked what I read. I want to know more. I want to learn about you. To teach you, if we seem to fit."

"I'd like that," she typed back, hoping she was coming across cool, but interested. "I am very new to all this, but fascinated with what I've been reading. Are you into this in 'real life'?"

"If by that you mean, not just typing to other people across a void about our mutual fantasies and dreams, then yes, I am 'into it' in 'real life'. Very much so."

Her heart actually gave a little jolt as she read the message. He went on, "Where do you live?" Tracy didn't respond at first, suddenly having fantasies of some creepy stranger breaking down her door to kill her. He must have understood her hesitation because he typed quickly, "I mean, what state? You are American, aren't you?"

Well, no harm in that, surely. "I'm from Texas. Houston, actually." There, that should be ok. Houston was a huge city, after all.

"Oh. I'm up in New York. Thousands of miles away. And yet here we are, typing to each other as if we were next door. Technology is amazing."

She agreed, not sure for the moment,

if she were relieved or sorry that he lived so far away. She was just going to check this 'Sir Stephen's' profile when Kyle called from the other room that he was hungry.

As they drove to the restaurant, she was quiet, considering her immediate denial to her husband about what she had been doing on the computer. It wasn't just that she was at a 'sex' site; that probably would have turned him on. He frequently mentioned his fantasy of them 'getting it on' with another woman. He liked to point at various strangers and even suggested some of Tracy's friends as possible partners in their threesome. She wasn't totally against it herself, but she was reasonably sure it was just a

game to him, and she certainly hadn't tried to do anything about it.

No, she already knew it was more than just going to a sex site. She was thinking of a stranger for the first time in her marriage. She was thinking about a specific man out there somewhere – a man who used the nickname 'Sir Stephen', and wanted to be her 'Master.'

Tracy realized, as she sat demurely, looking out the window, that she had just betrayed her husband. She hadn't done it in words or deeds, but in some secret essence of herself. She was about to embark on a journey from which there would be no return, and on some level, in some part of her that she didn't have the courage to confront yet, she knew it.

It was five o'clock the next evening, and Kyle hadn't come home yet. The first thing Tracy did when she got home was log on to her computer and go to the BDSM Palace. Looking around, she didn't see any evidence that Sir Stephen was logged on. Darn! Her disappointment was keen, but she at least could check out his profile. "Sir Stephen," she typed, in the profile library, and it took her to:

Nickname: Sir Stephen

Desire: To find a submissive female with whom to explore the romantic

world of complete submission and control. When I find her, I want to own her completely – mind, body and soul. I want a real life lover who is willing and eager to give herself completely to me. And I in turn would give myself completely to her.

Experience: I have read widely on the subject, and explored my own deep-seated dominant impulses and desires. I have had many discussions and shared hopes and dreams online and through email. In 'real life' I have had a few mostly unsatisfactory liaisons with submissive women, but the romantic connection I deem essential wasn't there.

Availability: I have just ended a seven-year relationship with a lovely

woman who, sadly, isn't the woman of my dreams. I am, as they say, as free as a bird. I'm happy to just explore with you online, through email and telephone and perhaps, eventually, in person. I am most emphatically NOT looking for one night stands, so please don't bother if that's your intention.

Stats: Male, age 35, single, 6'1", 190 lbs.

Tracy read the profile several times, liking him more each time she read it. "The romantic world of complete submission and control." What a lovely way to describe it. What had always been secretly 'dirty' to Tracy, was being described as romantic by this man. And, "...I in turn would give myself

completely to her."Another novel, but very appealing idea to Tracy.

Much of what she read in the these past few weeks on the site, talked extensively about the submissive's 'duty' to submit, and what her role and place were, and how she was to fulfill that role. There was much talk about the role of the Dom, and his responsibility to care for and control his sub. Tracy found it all very exciting on a primordial level.

There was very little discussion about the reciprocal nature of it all, about trust and the Dom giving of himself in return. After all, wasn't Sir Stephen talking about a love affair? That's what seemed to be missing in much of the writing – the aspect of love.

Maybe that was appropriate for what many of these people were seeking. They weren't necessarily seeking love at all, but variety of experience, and the excitement of 'taking' what you wanted, or of having it 'forced' from you.

And what did Tracy want? Surely she wasn't seeking love! She had love here at home, with Kyle. Didn't she? An aching loneliness welled up within her, as she admitted without words, that something was terribly wrong. From the beginning, she had craved the mutual 'giving of self' with Kyle, that Sir Stephen referred to. She wanted it so badly, that perhaps some part of her allowed herself to think she had it, just because she wanted it.

Are our powers of denial and invention really so strong as to carry us, convinced for years, that we were deeply in love, when in fact we were not, and never had been? No! Tracy chided herself, at her disloyalty to her husband and her marriage.

She couldn't help thinking, if we are so in love, why do we spend so much time apart, and when we are together, we sit at separate computers and type our secrets and our dreams to other people? And if I feel so lonely, does Kyle feel that way too?

Tracy was just promising herself to try and connect with Kyle tonight, to really talk to him, when Sir Stephen whispered, "Hi there!" All thoughts of

her own troubled marriage vanished in the cyber-ether.

"Hi!" she typed eagerly.

"I'm so glad I found you again! You just sort of disappeared the other day."

"Oh, yes. I'm sorry, I had to go suddenly." She didn't say, 'My husband was looking over my shoulder.' She hadn't told him she was married. What a serious omission, she thought, and yet, not one she was ready to correct.

"I was just reading your profile."

"And?"

"I liked it." Tracy flushed slightly, glad he couldn't see her.

"What did you like?"

Tracy thought a moment. He was testing her, right? He was 'interviewing'

her to see if she was a good candidate. She felt suddenly uncomfortable, challenged.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, did you think I was a total moron, or would you, maybe, like to get to know me a little?" Tracy laughed out loud, relieved, and mentally chided herself for judging him so quickly.

"Oh no! It was great. I mean, I thought it was really insightful. I liked your ideas about romance. About it being romantic and all."

"Yes, to me that's a given. I know that isn't always the case, especially on this board. But you have to remember, this is mostly kids out to get their rocks off. Don't imagine most of the people

here are over 20, or that they want to find anything meaningful. They're here to flirt with each other, and with the idea of whips and chains, and Great Danes. Of 'perversion' as they perceive it, and how exciting and cool they are to be dabbling in it. A game. Which isn't a bad thing, but it isn't what I'm about."

If any tests were being given, Tracy was giving them, and Sir Stephen was passing with flying colors, oh my, yes. She loved the way he wrote, and what he was saying. He sounded so grown up and sexy. His quiet sureness of his convictions made him very sexy indeed. After several days online of her own silly flirtations, the very thing he was describing, it was so refreshing to 'talk'

to someone who seemed to be thoughtful and have a brain in his head.

She said as much to Sir Stephen, who seemed delighted with her. He kept asking her for her opinion, and how she felt about things. Was this only pretense, or did he really care? She realized with some sadness that Kyle rarely asked her opinion about anything. They did it his way, period. It bothered Tracy sometimes, but for the most part, she was content to go along, since from their early relationship, the two of them had somehow tacitly agreed that Kyle was 'the smart one' and the dominant force in their relationship.

Tracy thought back to one of her favorite stories by Carson McCullers -

The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, where the author talked about most relationships being made up of 'the lover' and 'the beloved'. The lover was the one who leaned forward when the beloved pulled back. The lover was the one who kept it going, who adored and yearned for the beloved. The beloved sat back and soaked it up, but wasn't the needy one, the one who waited up, wondering when the other was late.

Tracy had chosen Beloved as her nickname on that bulletin board. At the time it seemed like a nice name, something sweet, and not so overtly sexual and obvious as most of the nicknames were - Sex Slut, Sissy Boytoy, Torture Master... Was her subconscious

trying to tell her something? Was the lover yearning to be beloved?

That's how it had always been for Tracy, in any relationship. She was the lover, who sought out someone difficult, then spent all her time trying to keep them happy and 'in love' with her. On some level she required this; it kept things alive for her. On the occasions when she found herself as 'the beloved' she invariably ended the relationship. On another, deeper, level, she played out her childhood pattern of seeking the love and approval of withholding parents.

Up until recently, she would have denied all of this vehemently. She and Kyle were in love with each other, she would tell herself and anyone who cared

to listen. The fact that Kyle didn't behave as if he were in love with her was 'just his way.' He wasn't given to effusive displays of affection and romantic gibber, as she was. He rarely told her he loved her, but, he would remind her, when she occasionally got up the nerve to mention this, he showed her his love. After all, he had married her, hadn't he?

She would content herself with this. Kyle was Kyle. Brilliant and aloof, not given to 'blather', but somehow, he deigned to fall in love with her. With silly nervous little Tracy, who had never figured out why he chose her when he could have had anyone. She had actually been grateful when he proposed to her, since they had broken up only several

months before, leaving her bereft, full of self-loathing and loss, begging him to take her back, which he eventually did.

They met at Rice University, when Tracy was a sophomore and Kyle a junior. They were both 19, but Kyle was on a 'fast track', due to advanced placement courses in high school and a narrowly ambitious pre-med program that would get him out of college in three years.

Tracy got an apartment her junior year and, while ostensibly still in the dorms, Kyle essentially moved in, only staying on campus when 'things were too intense' in the relationship. It was understood, at least by Tracy, that they would one day marry, maybe after she

finished graduate school in a field she had yet to determine.

In fact, they married when they did as a practical matter, since his parents didn't approve of their 'living in sin' and had told them they would not help with medical school costs if they didn't marry. Since there was no way Tracy could do it on her bank teller salary, even with the sizable loans they could get, she and Kyle agreed to marry right after Kyle graduated, telling each other they would have done it anyway, later, so why not now?

Tracy's half formed ideas of world travel before 'settling down' vanished at the thought of becoming Mrs. Kyle Becker. It seemed so grownup and

exciting, and the tall handsome Kyle Becker wanted her to be his wife. Things moved quickly after that, and they were married, hitting the ground running with medical school, never really having the chance to look back.

Maybe it was because he had finally finished all the training, and was a full-fledged staff doctor. Maybe that was why Tracy was allowing herself to think these disloyal, almost 'blasphemous' thoughts about Kyle and their relationship. He no longer 'needed' her, at least financially, but now that it was her turn to stay home and have babies, he wasn't upholding his end of the 'deal'. He didn't seem to want children at all, though he denied it. There was always a

sound, rational reason why it wasn't a good time.

As much as she wanted children, maybe he was right. If he didn't want children, should she try to force him to bring a baby into the world, especially now that she was questioning their very union? No. She wasn't doing that. Was she? She wasn't suggesting they split up. They were Kyle and Tracy. The names went together. Kyle and Tracy are coming over for dinner. Call Kyle and Tracy, and see if they want to go to the movies with us. It had been Kyle and Tracy all her adult life, she realized, and now that she had allowed these dangerous seeds of sedition to be planted in her brain, was she watering

them by 'talking' with this 'Sir Stephen'?

She and Sir Stephen typed back and forth for a while longer, until Tracy heard the front door opening, and knew Kyle was home. Again, she had forgotten dinner. Guiltily she hurriedly typed to Sir Stephen that she had to go, and logged off. Rushing into the kitchen, she pulled out some hamburger meat and a head of lettuce.

"Hey there," Kyle said, as he breezed in. He leaned down and lightly kissed the top of Tracy's head. "What's for dinner?"

"Oh, um, just hamburgers, I guess. I was late getting home." Another lie. It seemed as if ever since she had gotten online the lies just slipped out of her

mouth like little toads.

Kyle seemed unconcerned, but remarked, "Well, hurry up, will you? I missed lunch today and I'm starving."

Tracy thought, with some irritation, that he always expected her to have the dinner ready, even though, since he'd finished his residency, he was usually home before she was. Not only was she still expected to do all the cooking and cleaning, she realized a little belatedly that he hadn't been in the least interested in why she was supposedly late from work. Nor had he volunteered why he was an hour later than usual.

She didn't say a word. She didn't dare bring up the housework thing – and, anyway, it seemed so trivial, since soon

she would be a full time mom anyway. She didn't ask him why he was late, either, since it would no doubt come round to her, and she would have to lie again.

With a small sigh, Tracy mixed seasonings into her hamburger meat and formed the patties. She thought about Sir Stephen, wondering what he looked like, what he was doing right now. Her fingers itched with the desire to log back on the computer and 'talk' with him, but the rest of her dutifully and sensibly continued what she was doing. After all, Kyle was hungry.

CHAPTER 2

Betrayal

As the weeks passed, Kyle and Tracy seemed to grow more and more distant. He was often late, sometimes by as much as two hours. He volunteered that he had a heavy patient load now, and had to make 'good' as the junior doctor on staff.

Until recently, his long hours away from her would have upset Tracy, though she wouldn't have protested. Before discovering 'the Palace' she had basically lived from moment to moment that Kyle was around. She didn't attend

the bank 'happy hours' on Fridays, preferring to rush home to her husband. She didn't have many friends, and Kyle discouraged her from spending too much time with those she had.

"We're all we need," he liked to tell her, as he caught her in a big bear hug. She was delighted with this, thinking it spoke to his total love and adoration of her. She patiently explained to girlfriends that she couldn't go with them to the movies or shopping, because Kyle needed her to be there. She felt secretly superior to them, because she and Kyle had 'real love.'

Now, she was almost relieved when he didn't come home. She still didn't spend time with girlfriends, or attend

bank functions after hours. Oh no. She was rushing home to her new secret life online. She was rushing home to Sir Stephen, though she wasn't at the point to admit that yet. She still 'talked' to others on the site, and actually did check out some cooking and parenting sites, but in her heart of hearts, it was Sir Stephen she looked for, hoped to see, when she waited for her internet connection.

Sir Stephen was charming, easygoing and never pressed her. He seemed to find her witty and educated. There was no Kyle to compare her with, and she realized that she loved it. She found an old photo and sent it to the bulletin board, which scanned it for her and posted it in the 'picture library.' To her

utter delight, Sir Stephen wrote her an email extolling her beauties, and actually made her blush as she read it – which she did, about fifty times.

"I love the shape of your face," he wrote. "Your round cheeks tapering into that cute pointy little chin. Are you sure you're 28? You look more like 19. And those eyes! Tracy, those eyes could kill a man, so blue, like a perfect autumn sky. And your dark, lovely hair, curling against that white and pink skin. You're like some lovely peach I could just eat!

"I'll have to unearth some photo for you. I'm afraid I'm nothing special at all. I'll probably scare you away. Perhaps I should let your fantasy of me live on, whatever it is. What is the point, after

all, since we're unlikely to ever meet."

That made Tracy inexplicably sad. She realized with a jolt that he was probably right; why would they meet? After all, she was a married woman. She thought back to when she had confessed this to him.

"Sir Stephen, you should know something about me." Her heart pounded, as she realized this might be the end of their 'relationship' such as it was. He was, after all, looking for a 'real life lover.'

"Yes?"

"Well, I'm married."

"I knew that, Tracy." He always called her by her 'real' name. And though he'd told her his name was Paul, she

persisted in using his 'handle'. Somehow that made it more of a game; less real, and thus less dangerous.

She felt chagrined, then relieved, and curiously, disappointed. He knew? He knew there was no chance of their being lovers? Inately she typed back, "You knew?"

"Well, I was pretty sure. Married or living with someone. Why else would you 'have to go' so suddenly sometimes? And you've always avoided answering, or changed the subject, when I've tried to maybe bring up the chance of us meeting sometime. I figured you had to be involved. My God, someone as sexy and lovely as you, unattached? Not likely."

Tracy sighed. She loved the beautiful

things he typed to her. But she was surprised too, and said so. "So why do you stick around? I mean, what's the point? There's no future for us."

"I guess the point, as you say, is that I like you! I love talking to you. I love your fresh approach to things, and your willingness to honestly explore your feelings. If I'm to be totally honest, a secret part of me says, if she's always online, talking to me, things can't be that great at home. Who knows what might happen?"

That was too much for Tracy. It was one thing for her to question her own life and motives, but for Sir Stephen to do it was just too much. She typed quickly that she was very much in love with her

husband and they would never, ever meet. This was just fantasy.

There was a long pause before Sir Stephen responded, and Tracy worried for a moment that she had gone and done just what she'd feared, and scared him off. She realized during that long pause that she was lying, and it was way more than just a fantasy. She had feelings, real ones, for this man she had never seen. But the die was cast, and she sat on tenterhooks, waiting for his response.

Finally, a reply scrolled across the screen. "Tracy, I believe you believe that right now, or want to believe it. I'll take whatever I can have with you. If we're just to be online friends forever, I'll take that too. For you, I'll wait a

thousand years."

Something changed after that. Now that she had told him she was married and in love with her husband, it paradoxically freed her up to behave just the opposite. When he suggested that they begin to really explore her submissive feelings together, she didn't protest, but was eager to do so. Their talks became markedly more explicit, with what it was really like to be tied up, to be whipped, to be controlled in every aspect of a sexual relationship. Tracy inhaled the conversations as if they were air. She needed them to breathe.

He had gotten his picture loaded for her, and she was delighted with it. He

was much older looking than Kyle, who was just her age of 28. Where Kyle was tall and thin, with thick sandy colored hair, Paul was shorter, but more heavily, solidly built. He looked strong, as if he worked out. His hair was dark and pulled back from his face. His eyes were a rich dark brown and his face was tanned. Deep lines etched on either side of his nose, which was long and regal looking, reminding Tracy of a hawk. He looked so different from Kyle, which pleased her on some level – kept them totally separate in her psyche – the tall fair Kyle, whose face was still unmarked by life's experience, and the strong, dark Paul. He looked vibrant and alive, his sensuous mouth curved in just

a hint of a smile.

"Tracy, I know I'm just your 'fantasy Master' but I think we can find something real together, without compromising your relationship with your husband. I want you to begin a series of exercises to explore your true feelings; to see if what you think you want and what you're willing to do coincide."

She didn't know exactly what he was getting at, but sat still, heart in her throat, waiting for the words to scroll. What he typed next surprised her. "I want to speak with you on the telephone, Tracy. I want to talk to you, and explain what I want you to do. Are you willing, or able to do this? I have an 800 number at work, so you could call me anytime.

Will you call me?"

Her heart pounding, Tracy said she would. They agreed on the next morning; Kyle left for work a good thirty minutes before she did. Nervously, Tracy punched in the number he had given her and waited, trying to catch her breath and remain calm. It rang once, twice and a third time. Shit, he wasn't there.

"Paul Wilson," a deep voice answered, somewhat breathless, as if he'd rushed to the phone.

A pause and then, shyly, "Hi."

"Tracy?" He sounded so hopeful and eager, that she couldn't help smiling as she admitted it was she.

"I'm so glad you called, Tracy. I was afraid you might change your mind."

"Well, I called." She felt tongue-tied, ridiculous, like a teenager. But his voice... It was so sexy – so deep and melodic. She loved the sound of it instantly. Paul Wilson. What a lovely name. Paul.

"Do you have time?"

"I have a little time till I have to leave for work, about fifteen minutes, I guess."

"Good. Sit down, Tracy."

Tracy sat, savoring his use of her name. One of her pet peeves with Kyle was that he never used her name. He called her 'hon' or 'babe', but for some reason he wouldn't say 'Tracy'. It confused and upset her, and she didn't understand it. Somehow it kept her at a

distance, as if an imaginary hand was being held out, keeping her from him. She complained about it, but he laughed it off, or shrugged. He didn't seem to understand it himself, and she had, as with most things, let it go.

"Tracy," Paul said, "I think you're ready for a new step in your exploration of your submissive tendencies. Do you agree?"

"Yes," Tracy whispered, not sure what she was agreeing to, but very excited.

"Today you are going to test your submission to me. Now, on the phone. You are going to pull down your pantyhose and your panties, and spread your legs for me, and touch your cunt."

Tracy had heard him clearly, but couldn't believe what he was saying. All their talks up till now had been academic, hypothetical. Nothing like this, although they had discussed in detail what it meant 'to submit', and how the submissive's body 'belonged' to her owner, if she chose to give it to him.

Online, on the screen, she claimed to 'belong' to him, at least for the few moments a day when they typed to each other. But now, this flesh and blood man was talking to her across the phone lines, and his beautiful stern voice was telling her to pull down her panties.

"Tracy? Are you there? I know we don't have much time. I'm not asking much from you, just this token display.

Do it. Now. For me."

Slowly, as if she were in a trance, Tracy stood and wriggled out of her confining pantyhose. She slipped her underwear down to her ankles and sat again, perched on the edge of the chair, spreading her legs as Paul had instructed her to do.

"Have you obeyed me, Tracy?" His voice was calm, deep and almost hypnotic. Tracy found that she was deeply aroused, yet curiously calm.

"Yes," she whispered, imagining the picture that she must present, stockings and panties around her ankles, bared pussy peeking between lewdly spread legs.

"Now touch it. Touch your lovely

little pussy for me. Put in a finger. And tell me, is it wet? Are you wet for me, Tracy?"

Oh god. She flushed, feeling the heat flame into her neck and cheeks as she dropped her hand down to her own sex, and pressed a finger into the hot, tight opening. She wasn't wet; she was sopping. He was arousing her as Kyle had never done. He understood her in a way Kyle never could have.

"Touch yourself, Tracy, my little slut. Touch yourself." She did. She began to rub and tease her already swollen labia and clit. Her breathing became labored and audible to the man on the other end of the phone line.

He let her continue for about two

minutes, listening as her breathing deepened, then ordered, "Stop."

Tracy continued for a few seconds more and Paul again said, "Stop. Take your fingers away, pull up your panties and stockings and sit back down on the chair." Tracy whimpered slightly and Paul said, "Tracy, do what I say. Remember who you belong to."

Tracy pulled her hand away, fingers slick with her own arousal, and reluctantly obeyed him. She was literally throbbing with need now, desperate to come, and also slightly amazed at her own brazen behavior. Why was he stopping her? She knew men loved to hear a woman come over the phone. At least they'd asked her enough times

online, though she'd always refused, feeling slightly affronted.

Then Paul, he was 'Paul' now, she realized suddenly, had ordered her to drop her panties and touch herself and like a total slut she did what he said, and she was the one who wanted it to continue. What was going on?

"Tracy, that was your first lesson. A very small lesson in submission, and control. The lesson is this: Your master controls your orgasm. Not you. I know we've discussed this before, but this was a real 'lesson.' You got to actually feel what it is to obey another. How do you feel, Tracy?"

"Hot," she whispered, not wanting to talk, still wanting to come.

"Good. Stay that way. All day. When you get home tonight, you can come. Even if you orgasm with Kyle, I want you to think of me. Think of me, then in your head, ask for my permission. Say, 'Paul, can I come?' Imagine that I am saying yes, and remember that you belong to me, then come like the slut I know you are, hidden under that proper little banker facade."

"Paul," she said, still unable to express the longing he had created in her.

He heard it in her voice, and he knew. "Tracy. Hang up now and go to work. And remember me tonight." With a click, he was gone.

She should have pulled up her

panties and pantyhose, as her 'master' had ordered. She was his 'slave' now, wasn't she? She started to, but her hand brushed her swollen pussy, and she sat down again, ignoring his order to delay her pleasure. Feverishly, she rubbed and finger fucked herself, and Paul, not Kyle, was in her mind's eye as she came.

That day at work Tracy was in something of a daze. It was Friday, at least, and this evening she would make a nice dinner for Kyle. Guilt over the phone call this morning was certainly a motivating factor, as she promised

herself to try and pay more attention to her husband.

As five o'clock rolled around, Tracy called Kyle, who had told her earlier at lunchtime that he wouldn't be home till around 7:00, due to a staff meeting. She was going to find out just what he wanted for supper and pick up whatever she needed on the way home to make him a delicious meal. She'd make his favorite dessert. She'd get candles too, and some wine.

When he didn't answer his office phone, she called the main line and asked for Dr. Becker, not identifying herself as his wife. Tracy very rarely called Kyle at work. He was usually with patients and didn't like to be

disturbed.

After a moment and a rustle of paper, a nasal female voice informed her, "Dr. Becker left at 3:00. Unless it's an emergency, you should leave a message for him, and he'll return your call on Monday."

"But what about the staff meeting?" she asked, confused.

"Excuse me, ma'am?" the bored voice responded.

"Doesn't he have a staff meeting tonight?"

"Dr. Becker has left for the day; I already told you. The doctors' staff meeting is on Wednesdays at 4:00. Who is this?" The voice became sharper, no doubt assuming Tracy was just another

crazy patient trying to track down her shrink.

"Oh, nobody," Tracy mumbled, hanging up, her heart beginning a slow drill against her ribs. Gone at 3:00. No staff meeting. Where the fuck was he?

Tracy sat staring down at the piles of unattended paperwork on her desk, when a male voice startled her. "Hi there, Tracy." It was Guy Gray, the new loan officer the bank hired earlier in the week. Looking down at her, his smile flirted with insolence. His eyes were a pale blue, and he wore round, wire-framed glasses. His voice was mild, deep and flat, and he had a slow drawl.

A bit overweight, and balding, Tracy hadn't been impressed at first, but Guy

went out of his way to let her know he appreciated how important the head teller was in keeping things running smoothly. Tracy knew he was probably full of crap, and just schmoozing her, she had liked the attention just the same.

"Say, Tracy. It's happy hour, tonight, my first one. I hope you're coming? First drink's on me. We're going to that little Mexican joint down the road. We don't even have to drive."

"Yes, Tracy, do come, just this once!" Theresa, her best teller, was packing her rolled coins into their heavy metal boxes to be put away in the vault. You never come with us. Please?" The younger employees of the bank, all in their 20s and 30s, regularly went out on

Friday night to 'get the weekend started properly' as Theresa said. Tracy never joined them.

Tonight, she looked at both of them, smiling eagerly at her, and thought, why not? Kyle wasn't coming home till 7:00 – and he could get his own fucking dinner, or let whoever he's with get it for him! She nodded at them and said, "Let's go."

Guy was true to his word, bringing Tracy a frozen peach marguerita and a Coors for himself. There were about 10 of them, ties loosened, high collars unbuttoned, leaning back. Most of them drank beer from frosted mugs, and munched on the chips and salsa placed in large brightly glazed bowls along the

center of the long wooden table. Guy sat next to Tracy, who was still in her own world, thinking about Kyle, and the fact that he had lied to her, and was off somewhere unknown.

Distractedly she took the drink Guy offered, thanking him, and took a sip. It was delicious, and she sipped it again, enjoying the frozen sweetness of peach and the underlying tang of tequila. The pragmatist in her had to admit that whatever Kyle might be doing, wasn't she just as bad? Only this morning, she had pulled down her panties and touched herself for another man. Perhaps Kyle had sensed her emotional withdrawal, and was seeking his own solace.

Guy was speaking and she realized

he must have asked her something because he said, "Wow, you're off in some other world, aren't you, Tracy?"

"What? Oh, I'm sorry, I guess I am."

She tried to tune in to the conversation and heard Theresa say, "Yeah, we rented this really wild movie the other day, called Nine and a Half Weeks? Ya'll ever see it? He, like, spansks her and stuff, and makes her eat strawberries and whipped cream blindfolded. It's wild!"

Tracy perked up to this conversation. She was familiar with the movie; Paul had asked her if she'd seen it, and had recommended it. She knew what it was about, and was surprised it was considered an acceptable happy hour

conversation.

Guy turned toward her and said, "You ever seen that one, Tracy? Anything with whips and chains does it for me." He was grinning, his tone light, but his eyes focused directly on hers.

She felt herself flushing slightly and hid behind a big gulp of her drink.

"Let me get you another," he said, rising, and was gone before she could protest. He returned with a fresh drink, the slice of peach perched jauntily on the rim of the glass, and handed it to her with a flourish. As she ate the slice of peach, a little juice spilled down her chin. Embarrassed, she swiped at it with her napkin, aware of Guy's eyes still keenly on her.

"So, you didn't answer my question. Ever see that movie?"

The others in the group were engaged in various conversations, fueled by beer and joy in the impending weekend. They were loudly discussing the merits and detractions of feeding food to your lover.

Whips and chains do it for me. Guy had just said that, hadn't he? Was the whole world into this BDSM thing, and she was only just coming round? What did he mean by that remark? And why was he staring at her so intently? Wasn't he married too? She decided to call his bluff.

"No, I've never seen it, but I know what it's about. Whips and chains do it

for me too." She'd started out trying to be cool, but her ears burned and she realized the tequila must be getting to her quicker than she thought. How could she have just said that?

Guy nodded, smiling. "Then we have something in common, I see," he said quietly. He moved closer to her, letting his large meaty thigh touch her own slender one. She didn't move away, but kept sipping her drink, her mind momentarily on pause.

Guy turned away from her, joining in the conversations around him, seeming completely at ease. His thigh still touched hers, and almost against her will, Tracy felt herself responding to him. What was going on with her? When

he brought her a third drink, she didn't even bother to question herself any longer. He suddenly seemed witty and urbane, and she threw back her head as she laughed at his jokes. She was drunk and happy, her face flushed with alcohol and her eyes bright with possibility.

By 6:30 the party was pretty much over. It was drizzling outside, and the idea of waiting for the bus in the rain held no appeal to Tracy. When Guy offered to give her a ride home, she accepted, not letting herself think past just getting to the car.

On the ride home Tracy became suddenly shy. She was still drunk, but now more aware of herself, and the fact that they were alone in the car together.

Not that he would try anything, surely. They worked together, after all. Guy didn't say anything, but focused on the road; she knew he'd put away a few himself.

"We should have lunch sometime," he said casually. "Discuss our, um, shared interests." He didn't look at her as he spoke, eyes still on the road, fingers clenching the steering wheel, and she realized he was as nervous as she was. That assured her somehow, and she felt a little calmer, smiling at him.

"We should."

When Kyle got home thirty minutes after Tracy, she didn't ask him where he'd been. He had takeout Chinese with him, which would have ruined her plans if she'd actually made him the nice dinner she'd been thinking of earlier, but she hadn't made him a thing. He didn't notice, acting pleased with himself that he had provided the sustenance for the evening. He set it out, opening each little carton and announcing the contents within.

"Rough day?" Tracy remarked with elaborate casualness.

Kyle loosened his tie and sighed a loud histrionic sigh. "Man, that staff meeting took forever. Those guys just love their meetings. Through the whole

thing, I was thinking about you and getting home."

She didn't call him on it; didn't say a thing. Her usual response to such a statement would have been to throw her arms around him, and feel grateful that he had missed her – but he was lying, and she knew it. How many other times had he lied to her these past few months? Maybe it was this, not the online forays, that finally decreased his sex drive. He was 'getting it' elsewhere.

The odd thing was, instead of feeling devastated, a part of her was quietly relieved. She was angry, she had to admit, and felt betrayed, but also relieved. Because wasn't she, in fact, just as guilty? She may not have actually

fucked anyone, but her thoughts and behaviors were just as damning as his actions. Not that she even knew for sure what he was doing.

Maybe he just needed time alone. Becoming a doctor was a big deal. Maybe he was feeling the responsibility too keenly. Maybe he spent those afternoons in a park somewhere, weighing his responsibilities.

Yeah, right. She knew that was crap, but she didn't want to know the truth right now; not specifically. Knowledge might be power, but for now, she chose to remain in the dark, though the ignorance felt less than blissful.

Tracy didn't get online that evening, and neither did Kyle. They watched TV

for a while, then read their books, listening to Kyle's music. "Your tastes are just too 'teenager bubble gum' for me," he'd explained to her years ago, and her records and CDs had gradually been moved aside to make place for his more important works of Mendelssohn and Beethoven. Tonight, Mahler's Sixth was regaling them from Kyle's expensive stereo system, and as it ended, Tracy thought the three hammer blows in the final movement of the "Tragic" seemed fitting.

They went to bed early, and Tracy was surprised when Kyle wanted to have sex. In her mind, he'd been fucking some little nurse from the hospital all afternoon and would be too spent to

want Tracy as well. Kyle was hard as ever, as he pressed his large erection against her back, arms encircling her, grabbing at her round breasts.

Tracy stiffened, angry with him for the lies, angry with herself for her own, and for her inability to talk to Kyle about it. They really didn't communicate at all. Had they ever? Kyle pressed between her buttocks, trying to force her legs apart so he could stick his cock in her and come.

No kisses, no nuzzles to her neck. No loving words or whispers in the dark. How long had it been like this? They were connected only at the groin, and where his fingers roughly twisted her nipples to attention.

He removed a hand from her breast for a moment, and she heard him spitting on it, to lubricate his cock. The gesture sickened her and she pulled away from him murmuring, "I'm really tired, Kyle."

"That's ok, babe. You don't have to do a thing. Just spread those legs of yours and relax." He slipped his now wet fingers between her legs, his erection still pressed against her back, and briefly massaged her clit before moving down to her opening. She felt dry as a bone, but he didn't seem to notice or mind. A moment later, his cock was at her entrance, and he pressed it against her, entering her from behind.

"Kyle, I don't want to."

"Shh," he stopped her words with a

hand on her mouth, and Tracy stilled. She knew it was useless to argue; he would get what he wanted; he always did. His hand on her mouth aroused her, against her will. It fit neatly into her fantasy of being raped. As usual, she would get through this one by fantasizing about being 'taken'. Wasn't that what he did, really? Take her against her will, over and over again? But somehow it wasn't sexy – because it wasn't fantasy. What he did, was plain rutting. And she was his come bucket.

Yeech. The image repulsed her and the tentative mood she tried to create was lost. She felt the pain of ripping flesh as he pushed his thick hard cock into her unwilling orifice. She cried out

a little, which he confused for desire. "Yes, baby, yes. You know you want it." He pushed harder, and she moved a little to try to better accommodate him. His hand had dropped from her mouth, and she wished he would put it back. She dared to whisper it.

"Cover my mouth again."

No response, as he writhed against her, his long thin body heating rapidly against her. "Kyle, cover my mouth again. That was sexy."

"What? What are you talking about? What's sexy about that?" She didn't respond, and he didn't pursue it, getting lost again in his own gyrations inside her. Then she remembered Paul's words this morning.

"When you get home tonight, you can come. And even if you orgasm with Kyle, I want you to think of me. Think of me, and in your head, ask for my permission. Say, 'Paul, can I come?' And imagine that I am saying yes. Remember that you belong to me, and then come like the slut I know you are."

She saw Paul's image in her mind, the dark eyes, the enigmatic expression, and something in her softened. Kyle's cock thrusting in her didn't hurt so much now, and she barely heard his grunting in her ear.

Licking her own fingers, she shifted so she could touch her pussy, and began to rub herself in time with Kyle's thrusts. Confused images of herself this morning,

panties down, legs spread, of Paul's photograph, of Guy's large thigh pressed against hers, and her usual fantasies of a faceless man holding her down and raping her, filled Tracy's mind and body, loosening her to the point of orgasm.

She barely noticed as Kyle came inside her, moaning a primal grunt as he shot his seed into her. Her own hand was busy as she finger fucked herself to orgasm, unaware that Kyle had slipped out of her and rolled away from her, leaving her back covered with his sweat and her pussy gooey with his come.

Paul, she thought, Paul, can I come? She didn't hear his answer in her head, as she exploded into a lovely orgasm, and fell asleep next to the man she'd

vowed to love till death did them part.

CHAPTER 3

Good Ol' Boy

On Monday, Guy and Tracy went to lunch. Tracy didn't usually take lunch, preferring to eat at her desk and run errands. They went to a little Italian place near the bank and Tracy kept looking around nervously, waiting for some of their coworkers to enter and accuse them of something.

"Relax, girl," Guy had admonished her. "You look like a cat that stole the canary. There's nothing wrong with colleagues having lunch together. It's perfectly natural for the head teller and

the new loan officer to have lunch and discuss business, and how we want to fund the next loan and all that stuff." He grinned laconically. Guy was one of those good ol' boys who didn't believe in working very hard, and who were used to having the world handed to them.

Sailing through Southern Methodist University with mediocre grades, the frat boy partied so much, he barely learned a thing. It didn't really matter, since Guy was offered a job at his daddy's bank, immediately after college, where he made real estate loans and played lots of golf with Houston's movers and shakers down at the Houstonian. He did discover he had something of a knack for it, luckily. His move to Tracy's bank was

really for a change of scenery. He was tired of Daddy's watchful eye.

He brought a sizable account with him, mostly comprised of his parents' friends and his own wealthy friends' personal loans. He didn't need to work himself, but he liked to get out, and liked the idea of having his own office, and wearing nice suits.

In spite of his seemingly shallow lifestyle, he was a decent fellow and a nice enough man. He married young to the 'right' girl, from the 'right' sorority, with the 'right' background, who would have dropped dead in horror if he'd dared to mention his own fantasies of whips and chains and taking a girl by force.

On the contrary, he was the Southern Gentleman to her Southern Belle, and for a long time it had been enough. But, two kids later, the bloom was definitely off the rose, and Guy was looking for adventure.

Guy took control, as he ordered for both of them, then sat back and eyed Tracy appreciatively. "You're a beautiful woman," he said, his voice lazy and southern.

Tracy looked down, pleased, but embarrassed. She truly wasn't used to other men's attentions anymore, or to Kyle's for that matter. Guy knew how to play her. He was slow and careful, not bringing up the subject they both really wanted to talk about, until she was fairly

jumping with eagerness.

When he finally turned the subject that way, she responded just as he'd hoped she would. "So about those whips and chains," he said, grinning.

"I've thought a lot about what you said," Tracy admitted, feeling relaxed with the glass of wine he'd persuaded her to have. She leaned toward him, her body language clear.

"I take it you haven't had much chance to explore your thoughts along those lines, am I correct?"

Tracy shook her head.

"I can take you there, Tracy. No pressure, no hurry. Whenever you feel ready, I can take you there. I can show you what it feels like to be chained, to

be whipped, to be taken by someone against your will."

Tracy sat in stunned silence. He had been so direct about it all. His words burned a path in her brain right down to her pussy. She didn't process all the words, or the serious intent behind them. What she heard was his offer to make her fantasies come true.

Guy continued, emboldened by her silence, which he took for acceptance. "The beautiful thing, Tracy, is that you and I come with no strings attached. We're both married, happily I presume, and we both want one thing – to explore our mutual interests, without hurting anyone. We don't even have to have sex, if you don't want; just the game – the

excitement of a little rope, a little restraint. Shit, it's better 'n sex!"

"Let me think about it, Guy. This is a lot to consider." Tracy was twisting the edge of her napkin into a little point, seemingly so focused on it she couldn't look over at him.

"It is. And you take your time, sugar. No rush, none at all. If it never happens, hey, that's cool. Just knowing you're out there. Another compatriot after my own heart. Hey, it's good to have a friend. Now let's get back to work before anyone misses us."

Later that evening, with Kyle tapping away in the other room, Tracy found Paul and confided in him. She told him about Guy, the happy hour, lunch, and

what Guy had proposed.

A little piece of her wanted Paul to protest, to say she was his property, and who the fuck was this Guy person, but he didn't. Not, in retrospect, that she would have expected him to. One thing Paul never did was to press her in any way. After that one sentence telling her sweetly that he would wait 'a thousand years' for her, he had never mentioned any possibility of their getting together in any way.

He never mentioned her marriage, or the fact that it mustn't be too great for her since she was always online, and lately also on the phone, with him. Now was no exception. He asked questions, making sure she felt safe with Guy, that

he could be trusted.

"Oh, and his saying it's better than sex? He's lying. He wants to fuck you, make no mistake about that. Just be ready for it is all I'm saying," Paul warned.

He reminded her that fantasy, which was all she'd really had to this point, and reality, could be two very different things. She might find out, after all, this wasn't her cup of tea – which was fine, but was something she should be prepared for. She should make sure Guy understood and respected her limits.

"Are you asking for my permission?" he finally typed, when Tracy kept going round and round about it all.

"I guess I am, kind of," Tracy

admitted.

"You don't need my permission, Tracy," he responded. "You don't belong to me; not in that way. Not in 'real life.' That's something you'll have to decide on your own. Just remember, sweetheart, to be careful. Don't get yourself in a situation where you could be hurt, or compromised. Make sure you know this guy and his motives, before you commit to something that could have ramifications you aren't ready to deal with. And, Tracy, just to be safe, please tell someone where you're going to be. A trusted girlfriend, someone. I know you work with the guy and all that, but people can get crazy. I want to know you're safe."

"And now," he went on, "topic change. I want to know how you felt the other day, after our little phone call. How did it make you feel when I made you stop?"

Tracy paused for a while, her fingers poised at the keyboard. She pressed her lips together, her eyes bright with embarrassment as she remembered what had actually happened that morning, when, instead of pulling up her panties and obeying his command, she had wantonly made herself come. Did she tell him? Admit it and confess? Or did she pretend and make up how it had felt to be left on the edge?

Let me honest with someone in my life, she thought, thinking of the secret

web of lies she and Kyle were steadily building around each other. She typed, "Um, I kind of didn't do what you said."

"Meaning?"

"Well, I was so turned on by what you did, that I," again her fingers lifted, not wanting to type what she knew she must. Taking a deep breath she wrote, "I made myself come after you hung up. I was just too hot; it just kind of happened."

"Ah." She waited, but nothing else scrolled across her screen.

"'Ah?'" she finally typed back. "Is that all you have to say?"

"What do you want me to say?"

"I don't know; I guess I'm expecting you to yell at me or something. To

punish me." As Tracy typed that sentence her perverse little pussy tightened, and she waited expectantly, though she wasn't sure for what.

"Do you deserve to be punished?"

Tracy felt silly; why was he making her say it? She had had some vague notion that he would bluster with pretend rage and tell her she needed a whipping for being such a slut. This quiet interrogation was unnerving her.

"I asked you a question, Tracy. Do you deserve to be punished for your complete lack of control? For your obvious indifference to my express direction that you pull up your panties and cover your hot little wet cunt and go to work like a good girl? Do you

deserve to have your ass bared so I can spank it till it's cherry red, till you're crying for me to stop?"

Ah, this was more like it! Grinning, Tracy typed back, "Yes, sir, I deserve that."

A pause and then, "Well, I disagree."

What? She wasn't following him at all. He explained, and her face burned as she read the words. "You want a game, Tracy. You want your 'stern master' to order you to do stuff, so you can refuse and get pretend punishments, which of course aren't really punishments at all, but a way of getting yourself off. You want to use me to get yourself off, don't you, little slut?"

God, he was right. That was exactly

what she had been fishing for. Maybe it was all just a game to her? How would she ever know, ever get to find out if it was more? She was chagrined, and a little ashamed, because they had so much more than that. If only they could talk on the phone, she could apologize. He could hear in her voice that she meant it.

"If only I could talk to you right now."

"Call me."

"I can't. He's here."

"You need something at the store. You forgot. You'll be right back."

"We are low on milk," she responded, her mind churning, thinking how to phrase it best to convince Kyle she should run out without arousing any

suspicion. He was clacking away at his keyboard. "But are you still at work? It's 8:00 in New York."

"Where else do I have to be?" he answered. "I have a big project, actually, that I'm supposed to be working on, but instead I seem to find myself always online typing to some little slut girl." He typed a little happy face, to indicate he was teasing.

"Ok," she answered. "If I can do this, I'll call you in about ten minutes. If I don't call, get back online and I'll be here."

"It's a deal."

Tracy logged off and went up behind Kyle, feeling like a heel, but wanting to talk to Paul too much to care. "Hey,

honey, I forgot we need milk and a few other things at the store. I think I'll go now, when it won't be crowded. Want to come?" A risk, but it made it more plausible.

"What?" Kyle distractedly responded, quickly minimizing whatever he was typing. "Oh, no, no. That's fine. You go on ahead. Just don't be too long, ok?"

Tracy smiled to herself, and grabbed the keys, then drove to the corner convenience store and hurried to the payphone. She dialed the 800 number that was already committed to memory, She glanced about nervously, waiting for his phone to ring and his sweet voice to be on the other end.

"Paul Wilson."

"Hi," she said, feeling shy as she always did when they first spoke to each other.

"Hi, Tracy. I'm glad you could get away."

"Yeah, but I don't have long, you know. I wanted to say, well, I wanted to apologize."

"I know. It's over, anyway. It's forgotten. You were right you know; you do deserve to be punished. If you were mine; if you were with me now, you'd be punished. You know what I'd like to do?"

"What?" Tracy whispered, feeling her whole body respond to him.

"Well, first I'd start by chaining you

to the headboard. Your head would be facing the headboard, and you would be on your knees, wrists chained up high. I would spank your naughty little ass for a while till it was good and red. Then I'd shove a dildo up your pussy and tell you that it better not fall out while I continued to spank you. If it did fall out, I'd have to shove it up your ass."

Tracy started, not sure she liked how the fantasy was going. But he continued, "When I got tired of that, I'd get underneath you and tongue your little cunt until you were insane with desire. I'd bring you to the edge over and over, until you were practically crying with the need to come.

"But I wouldn't let you. I'd leave you

chained and on fire while I watched TV or read next to you for a while. If I felt like it, I might eventually let you down so you could sleep at my feet. Of course I'd cuff you for the night so your naughty fingers wouldn't 'accidentally' find their way to your hot little pussy."

He sighed a little, then said, "But of course, you're not up here, and you're not mine, so that won't be happening."

Tracy suppressed her own sigh as he continued. "But I can give you a taste of it, even from 2,000 miles, if you want it, Tracy. Do you want it?"

"Yes," she breathed, her nipples hardening against her light t-shirt.

"You're too special to me for this to be just a game, Tracy. Do you think

you're ready to move to the next level? Because it involves some level of commitment, on both our parts. It is going to affect you emotionally; take you away from your husband in that regard. That isn't something you want to do lightly. Don't even answer now. We'll talk about it some more online tomorrow.

"But for tonight, just for tonight, I will give you a little punishment. When you get back home, go into the bathroom and strip. Examine yourself in the mirror. Touch your nipples, cup your pussy, feel its sweet heat. Think about me, and what I would do to you if I owned you. Touch yourself. Arouse yourself. Make yourself hot and needy.

And then, this time, really stop. Really experience what it is to be on fire for me.

"Then I want you to kneel down, and whisper to me, 'Paul, these are your breasts. This is your body; this is your cunt. I exist to serve you, Paul. I am your slave.' Say those exact words, and feel once more how hot and wet you are. Then get up, put on your nightclothes, and go read a book or something. If Kyle wants to fuck you, let him, but don't you dare come. You don't have permission to come until I tell you to. Understand?"

"Yes," Tracy whispered, her body already tingling with anticipation.

"Now go buy your milk. I'm gonna try and get some work done, so I won't

be online anymore tonight. I'll talk to you tomorrow. 'Night, sweetheart."

The next morning, early, Tracy found this email in her mailbox. "Hi slave girl. Since we've decided to take this new step together, I'm going to begin a little training with you. Even online and on the phone, you can begin to experience what it is to submit. I want to teach you about control, and loss of it. I want to teach you to submit with grace, obeying without hesitation, no matter how much it might 'embarrass' or humiliate you. I want to teach you how to let go, sexually and on a deeper level, so that you can truly give of yourself without a hidden agenda of what you can 'get' out of it.

"I guess what I really want to do is

help you decide if you are truly submissive, or just a masochistic slut girl out to get herself off with a little pretend dominance and little pretend pain. (Which doesn't make you a bad person! I've known many a sexy masochistic slut girl. Just be clear it's very different from being truly submissive.)

"If we were together, physically, we could find out rather quickly. You could experience my lash, my whip, my crop, and really understand what it is to suffer. You could feel the bite of my nipple clamps on your breasts, the cut of the cane against tender thighs.

"It would become quickly clear if you were just into experiencing the

heady mixture of pleasure and pain, or if you truly were willing to accept the responsibility of belonging to someone else – because it is responsibility, and a willingness to trust in your lover. To give yourself so completely to me that if I took a knife and held it to your spread open pussy, you would keep it spread for me, and wait for whatever I chose to do to you.

"Submitting with grace isn't about having no fear; it's about getting through the fear and, like a fire to metal, creating a stronger alloy of love and passion, not despite your fear or pain, but partially because of them.

"God, Tracy, I want you. I know I don't say that much, because I don't like

to compromise you, and I won't, ever. You don't ever have to come to me, in a physical sense. But I'll always be here for you, waiting, as I once said, for a thousand years.

"But enough of that. We'll begin with a series of assignments. You'll complete each one, and then write me a detailed email telling me what you did, how it felt, and what you think you got out of it. It will be an adventure for both of us."

Tracy was surprised by her first assignment. She had expected more sexual denial and withholding her own pleasure, which had been an intensely erotic experience. When Kyle had entered her that night, she was truly wet and open, though not for him. In her state

of arousal, she was able to relax sufficiently to really enjoy Kyle's thrusting and pummeling.

She found herself responding to his body, and had tried to kiss his mouth, but he pulled away, intent, as usual, on his penis inside of her, and little else. Closing her eyes, Tracy imagined it was Paul taking her body, and felt a rising heat and a lovely pressure building inside of her. Shit, she was going to come! He had expressly, directly, ordered her not to.

She tried to still her body; to control her reactions to Kyle's cock in her pussy and Paul's image in her mind. A moan escaped her lips and Kyle responded with his own grunts of pleasure. "You

feel so good tonight, babe," he murmured, his voice low with pleasure. "Oh, God!" he cried suddenly, ejaculating into her. Tracy braced herself for his final thrusts, which were always the hardest and usually hurt her. Tonight they didn't hurt, and she was almost sorry when they subsided.

Tracy could feel Kyle's heart pounding against her breasts. She was still on fire with lust, Paul's voice still in her ears, but she had obeyed him. She hadn't come, and now she would close her legs, keep them closed, and go to sleep, with fiery dreams and his name on her tongue.

Remembering it now, with a little shake of her head, Tracy brought herself

back to the present, and Paul's email. Her first assignment was to go to an adult boutique and get herself a small butt plug! Eww, was her first response. Kyle had never shown the slightest interest in her ass, and that had been just fine with her!

She had a boyfriend in her freshman year of college who had tried to convince her to have anal sex, but she had wanted no part of it. The very idea frightened her. That little hole just wasn't meant for something so big and hard as a cock!

One day, teasing her, the boyfriend, whose name was Steve, had playfully wrestled her to the bed. They were naked and kissing, not yet having made

love. He had pinned her down, with her belly to the bed. They were both breathing hard and laughing, and Tracy was more than a little turned on. He lifted her by the hips, forcing her into a position on her hands and knees, and he had stuck his tongue against her puckered little asshole.

Eighteen year old Tracy was shocked, and jerked away from him. He laughed, and said, "Come on, baby, you'll love it. I promise. Let me show you!" She wouldn't let him near her bottom, and he finally gave up.

One thing he did do, she now recalled, that had been a big turn on for her, he held her wrists when he licked her pussy. It had happened one day by

accident. He was licking and suckling her, and she was close to orgasm. She didn't want to come yet, but wanted to wait until he was inside her, so she pushed his head away.

He ignored her and moved right back into position, licking her clit, drawing her close to the edge of release. She pushed his head again, more roughly, and he grabbed a wrist in each hand, holding them tightly so she couldn't struggle out of his grasp.

It had been wildly exciting to her, though she was still too repressed at the time to admit just why. With her wrists held tight, he continued to lick her to blinding orgasm. She had been a limp rag doll after that, but he didn't seem to

mind as he climbed over her and fucked her, coming quickly as a nineteen year old boy will do.

After that, she always pushed his head away, and he obligingly grabbed hold of her wrists and held her still while he tongued her to orgasm. Their relationship fizzled out, but she had always remembered the feel of his strong fingers, tight upon her wrists.

With Kyle, whom she met during her sophomore and final year of college, she tried to recreate the experience, pushing his head away, hoping he would grab her wrists as Steve had.

Kyle, not knowing her secret agenda, obliged by reasonably assuming she didn't want him to do that anymore,

which suited him, since, for him, it was just a means to 'get her ready' for his sizable cock.

She also tried to get him to wrestle with her, and pin her down, as Steve had, but he didn't understand the game, and she gave up rather quickly, not willing to explain herself or even to try and understand her own motives better.

Thinking now of Steve, whom she hadn't thought of in years, she remembered his hot wet tongue on her ass, and wondered if today she would still push him away. Probably. Yet Paul wanted her to go into an adult bookstore, which in itself was embarrassing enough, and buy a butt plug – and use it on herself. He told her to get some

lubricant and press that little plug up into her asshole. While she was doing that, she was to remind herself whose ass it was. Not hers, but his, to do with as he pleased. Today it pleased him to have her debase herself in this manner. Erotic humiliation, he called it. Just the words made her shiver.

Once it was in, she was to wear it all day at the bank. When she got home, she could take it out, then he wanted a full report.

Tracy entered the adult boutique in a seedier part of downtown, feeling a little anxious about being there. Certainly she wouldn't see anyone she knew. Nonetheless, she glanced around furtively as she entered the dingy little

shop, which was called the Pink Pussy Cat Boutique and promised hours of exotic pleasure for the adventurous.

As she opened the door, a little bell jingled halfheartedly. A bored looking middle-aged man stared at her indifferently as she entered. He looked back down at his slick magazine, leaving her to take in the place without being disturbed. Mercifully, the room seemed to be empty of other customers. There was a large magazine rack in the center of the poorly lit room, filled from top to bottom with 'girlie magazines' sporting women with impossibly huge breasts, leering lasciviously at the camera.

Along a few sagging shelves were items guaranteed to enhance a couple's

sex life, including a variety of dildos and vibrators. They were made from metal and rubber, some shaped like silver bullets, others of a soft flesh colored rubber pressed into the shape of a real penis, complete with its own set of balls. There were oils and lotions designed to delay, or induce orgasm, and various bits of feather, lace and underwire that passed as lingerie.

There were also black leather dog collars with metal studs, and leashes. A few poorly made whips hung along the wall. It wasn't much, but Tracy took it all in, eyes wide, fingers twitching nervously against her shoulder bag. The collars and whips drew her eye again and again, as did the bright red ball gag

tied around the head of a wig stand dummy.

The clerk chose that moment to harrumph loudly, as if to ask her what her business was. She jumped a little, disconcerted, and refocused on the task at hand. Stepping nearer the dildo display, she found what she was looking for. There was an array of anal plugs, ranging in size from several fingers to flat out huge. Tracy picked up the smallest one. It was made of a very hard rubber, and was encased in plastic shrink-wrap. It was narrow at the top and widened at the base, flaring out with a little circle of rubber to keep it in, she supposed.

She was to buy this and use it on

herself? No fucking way, part of her said, but not the submissive part. Not the masochistic part that was secretly, wildly eager to try this new erotic torture upon herself. Glancing at her watch, she realized she had to get back to work. Tracy hurried to the counter, placing the curious little item on it as she dug into her purse for the cash.

The clerk attempted to make eye contact with her, but Tracy wasn't having any. She was embarrassed enough without seeing his leer. She could smell the stale odor of dried sweat and cigarette smoke wafting from him. He rang up the purchase and put it in a little brown paper bag for her. His fingers grazed her palm as he gave her the

change, and Tracy had to keep herself from shuddering with disgust.

The next morning, after Kyle had left, as Tracy was doing her makeup and getting ready for work, she took out the little item she had hidden in her tampon stash. Smearing it with copious amounts of lubricant, she knelt on her little bath rug, the lower half of her body naked, and gingerly touched the hard cold rubber to her asshole.

Pressing gently, she felt the head of it pop in. It hurt a little, but not terribly, and she pressed harder. As the widening phallus was pressed home, the pressure of it increased. The last bit made her cry out in real pain, but it was securely in. She had done it. Carefully she stood up,

testing that it stayed in place. Turning her back to the mirror, she spread her ass cheeks, looking at the little black circle of rubber that was all that could be seen. The rest of it was firmly embedded in her ass.

A lovely sensation of submissive desire settled over her and Tracy knelt to do her morning ritual, whispering aloud to Paul, to her master. "These are your eyes, my master. These are your breasts, your nipples. This is your cunt. This is your ass. I exist to serve you, Paul. I am your slave."

She wrote a little essay for Paul that evening, about the heightened sensations she had experienced all day, keenly aware of the little phallus in her rectum

that physically reminded her of her 'status' as his slave girl. She had found it difficult to concentrate, and had gone to the bathroom briefly to rub herself to a quick orgasm, as she explained, just to take the edge off. She hoped that was ok, since Paul hadn't expressly said she couldn't touch herself.

She'd been so hot and bothered, even though she didn't really like the invasive feel of the plug. She had to be very cautious how she sat, so it wouldn't move uncomfortably inside her ass. Despite that, she'd loved the idea of 'erotic discomfort' Paul had described for her, which she was now experiencing.

Sometimes when they talked, he

encouraged her to go back in her life; to remember the earliest erotic fantasies she had had. Did they always center on submission, on a loss of control and erotic suffering? She recalled things she had thought forgotten, packed away like childhood toys and puzzles.

Tracy recalled an image of herself as a six-year-old girl, running, squealing gleefully across the playground, chased by a blond haired boy, whose name was long erased from her memory. But memories of the game they played remained. It was a wonderful game, where the little boys chased the little girls until they caught them. Then the girls were taken behind home plate, which was protected by a chain link

fence. Behind the fence were long hanging vines, which the boys seized and pretended to whip the girls, who were their prisoners.

Of course the girls would giggle and squeal in mock protest, and then 'escape', only to be rounded up again. For Tracy, the play wasn't just fun; it was intensely, wildly exciting. She wasn't mature enough to understand its sexual undertones, but for her, they were certainly there. While the other children soon tired of the game, Tracy could have played it every day.

She remembered an uncle once, playfully wrestling with her. She must have been about seven, as he only visited after Tracy's father had been

killed in an airplane accident. This uncle, probably in an effort to cheer her up, was roughhousing with his little niece, and caught her in a headlock with his strong legs. Tracy still remembered the thrill of being caught, of being restrained. She couldn't move, struggle as she would, and he held her that way for quite a while. Finally, she remembered lying quite still, hoping he would 'forget' to release her.

As she grew older, she and her girlfriends had a rich fantasy life, in which they often starred as the "College Girls in Apartment 1A." Tracy would invariably attempt to twist the plot of their usual boy meets girl stories to involve someone getting abducted and

tied up and forced to do awful things, like kiss their abductor. She could have played those games forever, especially when she got to be the one who was tied up with rope they'd managed to find in a basement or attic.

When Tracy reached the ripe age of 14, and discovered her own blossoming sexuality, nothing was ever the same. Tracy was a solitary sort of girl, since her family had moved so often once her mother remarried to an army man who moved from place to place every year or two and dragged them all with him. So often 'the new girl', Tracy didn't develop many close friendships.

What she did have was books. She had heard of Marquis de Sade,

described briefly in some history book as a depraved French philosopher. She was aware that the word sadist, a word that had aroused her when she read its definition in the dictionary, was derived from his name. Not surprisingly, she found nothing by or about him in her school library.

One day, dropped off by her mother to do a research project at the large public library downtown, Tracy forgot about her assignment and went in search of the Marquis. Hidden in the dusty old shelves of little-read scholarly works, Tracy found what she was looking for.

She didn't dare check out the books, but would pore over the collected works, which included extensive

passages from Justine and Juliet, and The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom. Tracy skipped past the esoteric rhetoric about the virtue of vice, but lingered, innocent eyes wide, over the explicit passages of torture and debauchery. Even as she was shocked and horrified by some of the more graphic depictions of violent sex and torture, her innocent body felt a rising desire.

Perhaps if she had had a gentler introduction to the potential pleasures and romance of erotic submission, it might have spared her years of self-censure and a feeling that she was secretly depraved, herself.

At any rate, after that first heated

afternoon at the downtown library, Tracy poured herself a hot bath and climbed in while it was still filling up. Her head still swimming with images of naked women, bound and brutalized, she tentatively touched her own sex.

Remembering an elaborate water torture the Marquis had devised, she scooted up to the faucet, positioning herself, legs crouched on either side like an adolescent frog, so that the spray directly hit her spread nubile pussy. Ah, the water felt wonderful. It tickled a bit at first, and then something lovely began building up inside her as the hot spray massaged her virginal clitoris.

Suddenly, the pleasure became blindingly intense and she shuddered

involuntarily against the porcelain tub. A moment later, the spray was no longer pleasurable, but began to irritate, and she pulled back, realizing her heart was pounding.

Tracy was remarkably clean during the months that followed. Luckily, she had her own bathroom and was rarely disturbed. As she discovered she could pleasure herself with her own fingers, the tub became less popular, but the strong images of women bound and suffering erotically remained firmly etched in Tracy's consciousness.

"And what about you," she would ask Paul sometimes, wanting to know him better, and to understand where his dominant impulses came from.

"Let's see," he mused, "what was my first exposure. I don't think I was, like, born with a whip in my hand or anything like that. I do remember when I was pretty young, like 12 or so, and I found this little comic book thing stuck between some old National Geographic magazines in my dad's closet. I think nobody was home at the time but me, and I was kind of snooping around in my parents' bedroom, probably looking for loose change to get a Good Humor bar.

"Anyway, I found this little booklet thing; it was a kind of comic book, I

guess. Instead of Spiderman or Batman, there were these great drawings of this incredible Dominatrix, in latex thigh high boots and a little corset, wielding a whip over some cowering little worm of a guy. There was some lame dialog, I think, but I've forgotten it.

"I stole the comic book from my dad, who never came asking for it – surprise, surprise. He was definitely not the type to share anything like that with me, or anyone else. I never even saw him touch my mother, much less let her use a whip on his butt!" Paul laughed a little, and continued.

"Anyway, the pictures were very graphic; I mean, they caught the intense expressions on the characters' faces.

That's what I remember. The way she looked so impossibly regal and magnificent, lording over that poor bastard.

"I identified totally with the Domme, not the guy. I thought how cool she was, and how I'd like to be in that position. I used it to masturbate with, with my flashlight under the covers like millions of boys before and after me, I'm sure.

"I never really did anything about it. I certainly didn't try anything with the few girls I dated in high school. But I remember freshman year at NYU, there were a lot of drugs at this particular party, and speed and pot were being freely passed around. I took some speed, smoked some dope, and felt really loose

and uninhibited.

"There was this couple there, already 'into' the scene, into S & M and both dressed in leather. He told the crowd she was his slave and anyone who wanted to could whip her. He tied her hands up over a door and asked who was first. I got really turned on, and was so stoned I wasn't afraid to take the whip he offered.

"It was a big heavy flogger, the leather was dyed a bright red, I remember. She wasn't naked or anything; she was still in her leather vest and black leather pants. I wanted to pull her clothes off but he wasn't going for that. Still, it was so hot to whip her. She seemed to really get off on it, and I didn't

want to stop.

"Everyone was crowding around, oohing and aahing. It was a weird scene. After a few minutes, he took her down and they went off into the bathroom, to fuck, no doubt. I'd been their 'foreplay' I guess you could say, but it got me hooked.

"After that I sought it out. I'd drop hints with girlfriends and see how they reacted. I always tried to playfully 'spank' them, and see how they responded. I didn't have the nerve to be more up front about it, but I'd 'test' them. Like, I'd hold their wrists above their heads during sex and see how they'd respond.

"A lot of girls were really into it.

You'd be amazed how many women like to be spanked – at least playfully. But I had to be careful about going too far. I figured out after a while not to bring out the cuffs or rope too quick. That was too much for most girls, and they'd freak out.

"It's not like I was dating a million girls and tying them all up or anything. But I was always looking; the BDSM antennae always waving.

"There was this one girl, junior year, who liked me to tie her up and smack her around. We had great sex. Unfortunately, we didn't have much else in common. Her primary interests, other than sex with me, were horses and tennis. I don't think she ever read a book in her life, except when she had to for school. She

was there on a tennis scholarship, and academics were incidental. But I do remember, before we broke up, she gave me a really great birthday present. It was an illustrated version of 'The Story of O,' you know, that classic S & M novel everybody gets a secret copy of in college."

"Maybe in New York City," Tracy replied. "Not down in Texas. I've heard of it, but I've never read it."

"Required reading, S & M 101," Paul said, laughing. "I'll have to get you a copy. It isn't really that great, I mean as a piece of literature, but there are some very hot scenes between Sir Stephen and O. O is his personal slave, or submissive. Her lover 'gave' her to him,

to Sir Stephen. There's all this implied homosexuality between him and Sir Stephen, but we don't get to hear about any of that, but there are lots of hot bondage scenes. Like when he ties her to the chandelier in a hotel room, and has all these creepy guys take turns whipping every part of her totally naked body. She's gagged and tears are pouring out of her eyes, and he says something like, 'This gag will come in handy since we're in this public place. Usually I don't gag her. I like to hear her scream.' Something about that line always sent me over the edge. 'I like to hear her scream.' Man! Very good for one-handed reading, if you know what I mean."

"Sir Stephen! That's your Palace

name."

"Give the lady a prize," Paul said, laughing. "But enough about me. You're probably asleep by now, listening to my boring stories."

"I could listen forever," Tracy assured him, and meant it.

Talking online and emailing Paul was wonderful, but Tracy wanted more. Like a starving child given a few bites of food, she realized she was ravenous for the experience, for the sensation of erotic pleasure and pain. She needed more than emails, more than a

disembodied voice over the phone lines. She needed something tangible if she were ever to move past fantasy.

Paul understood her need, and though he never voiced it, longed to be the one to introduce her to these delicious pleasures. She had never once said to him, Paul, I want you to do these things to me. And though he knew he could have manipulated her into asking him, indeed, begging him, to come to her and have his way, he didn't want it that way. It had to come from her. It had to be her idea. She wasn't yet free for his claiming, but he was a patient man, and a realist. If she were to be his lover in fact, that love and submission would have to be offered without coercion or guile.

When Tracy told him of Guy's overtures, he was supportive and offered advice, forcing himself to think of Tracy and her desperate newfound need for discovery. He advised her, in a word, to 'go for it.'

CHAPTER 4

Games

Still, Tracy waited another month before she decided to 'take the plunge.' She liked working with Guy. He treated her tellers with respect and always behaved like a complete gentleman at work. He continued to invite her to lunch occasionally, where he would tell her, in increasingly graphic detail, what he would do to her if they ever got together.

"I've got a lot of toys," he informed her. "Fun stuff like paddles and riding crops and whips and chains. We'd start

out slow, of course. I'd just take you to the level you could handle. Maybe just a teeny tiny bit further." Tracy always shivered when he said this. She realized it was a matter of time before she said yes, and agreed to meet him.

Earlier in the week she had finally agreed to a rendezvous that Friday afternoon, when the rest of the 'gang' were at happy hour. Tracy hadn't told anyone else where she was going. It was fine for Paul to advise that, but who in the world could she tell? Tracy realized sadly that she really didn't have any close girlfriends. Her focus for so many years had been Kyle, and only Kyle. She had considered it romantic that they were all they needed. Not that it was his

fault, but there it was.

Guy passed by her desk and laid his loan folder on it, telling her in a professional tone that the papers she needed were all inside. After he'd walked away, she opened the folder and saw the little envelope, which contained a key. The key to the motel they had agreed upon a few miles from the bank, which she could reach from her bus stop.

Slipping the little envelope into her lap, Tracy gripped it in her hot palm. She could feel the sweat breaking under her arms as she stared down at it, her face at once hot and cold as she contemplated what she had at last agreed to.

Guy told her at lunch that if she

changed her mind at the last minute, if she stayed on the bus and rode home, it would be ok. He'd just kick back in the room and watch the game. No big deal. No pressure. As he said these comforting words, his eyes penetrated hers and she felt him commanding her.

She wanted what he offered.

Fingers shaking, Tracy finally managed to unlock the motel door. She told herself for the thousandth time, she couldn't believe she was doing this. Yet here she was, breaking her wedding vows, and walking into a situation she

knew could be potentially dangerous, and all with her eyes wide open.

Guy had given her specific instructions, and she had tried to follow them to the letter. She wanted this to be 'real' – as real as she could get with a coworker who didn't particularly appeal to her, except for their shared interest in BDSM.

As she opened the door she took in the room. The slightly mildewed smell of motel air conditioning filled the air. A polyester spread with a nondescript pattern covered the king size bed, which dominated the room. A cheap reprint of a beach scene in various shades of beige, painted with a palette knife, in broad strokes against the canvas,

covered one dingy wall. Then she saw them on the long low bureau that sat against the wall, below the picture.

Handcuffs. Real, metal cuffs with a little key set beside them, along with a neatly folded piece of paper. For a moment, Tracy felt a surge of panic.

What in God's name had she signed up for here? Tracy's thoughts turned to Paul. He knew what she was doing, but he didn't know what motel she was at, or when precisely she was meeting Guy. He didn't even know where she lived, except she was somewhere in the big, sprawling city of Houston.

What was Paul feeling tonight, knowing that Tracy was going to explore her fantasies, not with him, but with

another man? Shit, now she had two men to feel guilty about. It wasn't fair!

As far as Kyle and the rest of the world knew, she was going shopping for shoes at the mall. She had even purchased a pair in advance at lunchtime to make the story believable, and not a living soul, except the man she was meeting, knew exactly where she was.

Tracy stood irresolute for a moment, debating whether she should stay or go. It was a silly detail that made her decide to stay. She noticed the ice bucket with two Dr. Peppers nestled in it. She smiled slightly, thinking that if Guy was going to kill her, he wouldn't have thoughtfully provided her favorite soda.

Tracy picked up the note and read it,

recognizing Guy's precise, cramped script."Take off your clothes and hang them in the closet. Put on the outfit I have purchased for you. You'll find it in the drawer. Wait for me at the foot of the bed. Don't sit on the bed; kneel on the floor next to it. I will be there at precisely 5:30. I have my own key."

Tracy's heart began to thump wildly, as she thought about stripping for another man. It had been so long. Would he find her attractive? She opened the drawer and took out the flimsy little garment Guy had put there for her. It was a bustier type of thing, with attached garters, and there was a pair of black stockings and high heels in her size. My God, he had thought of everything, hadn't

he?

She felt slightly ridiculous as she hung up her clothes and then tried to step into the garment, pulling it awkwardly up over her hips and breasts. Her 36C breasts were too large for the bust of the skimpy outfit, and they spilled over the edges, forced together, creating a deep cleavage. Tracy looked over at the small plastic clock by the bedside. The little red digital numbers showed 5:21. She panicked slightly as she tried to get the stockings on and attach the stubborn little clasps, which were still stiff from never having been used.

Finally, she got them on and slipped the impossibly high shoes onto her feet. She felt like a total slut; a cheap whore.

But instead of this making her ashamed, she had to admit to an excitement building deep in her belly. She was achingly nervous, but determined to carry on, come what may. She had spent too many years running from her desires. Tonight she was going to face them head on.

The little clock blinked to 5:28. Thank goodness he had instructed her to kneel and not stand! She didn't think she could stand very long in these heels. She spent the next few moments wetting her lips and drying them again, and adjusting her outfit, hoping it didn't make her look fat. Her eyes strayed again between the door and the shiny cuffs on the bureau.

At precisely 5:30 she heard the key

grate in the lock and watched in fascinated, edgy anticipation as the door opened. Guy came in, still in his finely tailored dark blue suit, his shirt white against it, his red 'power' tie neatly knotted at his throat. He had a duffel bag with him, which he set down on the bureau next to the cuffs.

He was looking at Tracy, his eyes narrowed, his expression inscrutable. He didn't say a word and neither did she, but she felt a warm flush against her neck and throat and knew she was flushing and blotching in that ridiculous way she had when she was really nervous.

Guy undid his tie and hung up his suit jacket. He unbuttoned his shirt and

removed it, revealing a pale blue t-shirt of heavy cotton beneath it. Tracy realized she had never seen him in anything other than his 'banker outfits.' He looked softer, more accessible, in the t-shirt and she relaxed slightly. He hadn't said a word, but finally ordered her, "Stay there. I'm going to the bathroom."

He took his duffel bag into the bathroom and shut the door behind him. Tracy realized she had to pee, but had been too nervous up to that moment to think about it. She wondered whether she should use the bathroom after him, and if she should ask permission. She knew she would feel stupid asking permission, but he had been very clear about that at lunch.

"When we get together, you will be my slave for that time. What that means is you will do exactly as I tell you, at all times. You will not say no to me, and you will not do anything without asking me first."

At the time it had sounded very exciting. After all, this was just Guy talking – paunchy, old bald Guy. If it got too 'intense' she would tell him to cut it out. It wasn't as if she would really be his slave. But now, at this moment, in her tiny outfit with her garters and high heels, kneeling in a motel room waiting for him to come out, she felt vulnerable and uncertain.

Guy opened the bathroom door and went over to the lamp, which he turned

off, leaving only the light from the fading evening, and from the fluorescent bulb left on in the bathroom. Tracy was grateful in a way; things seemed easier in the semi-darkness.

She saw that Guy had put on jeans, which made him look even less threatening to her, and she calmed down again, almost smiling at him. Guy didn't smile back. "Stand up," he said, his voice harsh.

Tracy stood somewhat awkwardly, trying to balance gracefully on the heels. Guy let out a low whistle that made Tracy blush. She hugged herself self-consciously until Guy said, "Drop your hands. Let me see you. Don't you dare cover yourself in front of me. Ever.

Understand?" His voice was rough and deep, and had less of a Texas twang than when he was in the office. She could barely recognize easygoing good ol' boy Guy Gray in the man standing in front of her.

As much to put off what he was asking as because she really did have to go, Tracy blurted out, "Um, Guy, I have to, um, go to the bathroom."

She saw his eyes flicker with amusement for a second, but he adopted a stern expression as he said, "You should have thought of that before."

"Please, really," she stammered. Now that he was denying her, the pressure in her bladder suddenly seemed acute.

"Oh, ok, go ahead," he said, grinning, unable to keep up the 'stern master' persona he had been adopting.

Tracy sighed with relief and wobbled toward the small bathroom just off the front entrance of the room. She shut the door, clicking the lock into place. When she was done, she opened the door to a room that was now totally dark.

A strong hand seized her wrist and she was jerked roughly into the room. "Don't you ever lock a door on me, do you hear! You will never close any door to me. Period." Guy's voice was low and he sounded really angry. His grasp on her wrist hurt and Tracy squirmed and struggled against him.

She realized she couldn't get her breath and felt dizzy. Guy pressed her roughly against a wall and slammed his body against hers. Standing in her high heels they were eye to eye, and he pressed his face close against hers, forcing her mouth open with his. He was kissing her roughly, still holding her wrists, which he had pinned against the wall.

His breath smelled like beer and she realized he'd probably had a drink on the way over. Maybe he was scared too? He was married, after all, and she doubted he made a habit of meeting coworkers after hours for illicit sex. Though who knew?

Thoughts flew out of her brain as his

mouth mashed against hers. Her body was reacting to the rough stolen kiss, to the grip on her wrists and to his body, surprisingly strong, pressed hard against hers. She felt herself responding to him, and for a moment the chatter in her brain was silenced as feelings of desire, fear and lust, melded into a heat that left her weak.

He pulled away suddenly and Tracy sagged against the wall, her lipstick smeared, her breasts heaving. "You look like a slut," Guy hissed, his voice hard, the slow drawl now completely absent.

"Stand up and put your wrists behind your back. Do it. Now."

His tone brooked no resistance, and slowly Tracy stood up from the wall,

still trying to catch her breath. She lowered her arms, feeling her heart thudding against her ribs like a caged bird.

"Put your hands behind your back," he repeated, "wrists together." Guy walked over to retrieve those shiny cuffs from the bureau. It was happening. She felt almost as if she were in a dream as she clasped her wrists behind her and waited to feel the cold metal. Even though she was expecting it, still she gasped as she felt the steel against her flesh.

There was a grating sound as he pressed the bracelets together, ratcheting them tightly against her wrists. He half led, half pushed her toward the end of

the bed, where he pressed her to kneel once again, her face now resting against the spread, ass displayed. Guy rummaged for a few minutes in his duffel bag and came back, waving something in front of the still kneeling Tracy. It was a whip! A huge black bullwhip. With a braying laugh, Guy flicked it sharply near her face, making the lash whistle in the still air.

Tracy jerked up, screaming with fear and indignation. "Get that thing away from me! What the fuck are you doing!" In that moment she had become convinced Guy was crazy, and was going to kill her. It was an irrational fear, and one that was quickly reabsorbed in the crazy kaleidoscope of

feelings she was experiencing. He stepped back, looking nonplussed, and lowered the whip.

In agreeing to meet Guy at the motel, Tracy had mistakenly thought he knew what he was doing, and could handle all protests and run the show, so to speak, without breaking his stride. Despite his rather confident talk at their little lunches, what she didn't realize was, while his fantasies were much better developed and acknowledged than her own, his actual experience with any real bondage and discipline was quite limited. The only real experience he had with whips was one time in college with a girl he used to tie to a tree on their camping trips, and lightly whipped with

a little flogger before he let her down and fucked her.

He had purchased this present, rather forbidding looking whip a few years ago, in a seedy adult boutique while on a business trip. He kept it, and a slowly growing collection of bondage paraphernalia, hidden in the garage under his fishing tackle, safe from the prying eyes of his prudish, repressed wife.

He was so excited now by the sight of his coworker, almost naked, her sexy curves stuffed into the little slut outfit he had gotten from Frederick's of Hollywood and had had delivered to a secret P.O. box, that he had pulled out the whip with some vague notion of

using it, though he hadn't a clue.

Tracy's protest jerked him out of the role he was playing, the tough guy Dom, to her cowering submissive. Neither one realized they couldn't just leap into a ready-made Dom-sub relationship, complete with the trust and love which should accompany such a relationship. For both of them, it was still a game, albeit a very exciting one.

Now he dropped the whip, murmuring, "Ok, ok, I wasn't really going to use it. Chill."

"Take these off me!" she ordered, confused and flustered by the changed atmosphere in the room. Guy dutifully obeyed, taking the little key from the bureau. Tracy massaged her wrists for a

moment. There were red marks where the metal had bitten into her skin. How would she explain those marks if they didn't disappear?

At least he had put down that horrible whip! Tracy calmed down, relieved, but also, what? She felt, paradoxically, disappointed. He had backed down so easily. He hadn't 'forced' her to 'submit'. Instead of the rough 'master' telling her she had no choice in the matter, the Guy she knew from work, the passive, easygoing Mr. Gray, had dropped the whip and given in.

While Guy himself wasn't so articulate in his own mind as to what had gone wrong, he knew something had, and

the momentum was momentarily lost. His aching cock wasn't about to let things die down, and without thinking further, Guy sat in a chair behind Tracy and commanded, "Come here. Now."

Tracy got up, slowly, her heart no longer pounding with the same fierce excitement, but still aroused. Guy was still fully dressed, and Tracy was aware that he was self-conscious about his extra weight. It made him less threatening to the also self-conscious Tracy, who hadn't been with another man for nine years. It also was sexier, in a way, imagining herself the naked slave girl to her fully clothed master.

"You need a spanking for refusing me," he said. "Get over here."

Hesitantly, but wanting it, Tracy draped herself over his knees, feeling his rock hard erection pressing into her thigh as he shifted, pulling her across his lap. Her pulse was racing again, beating a tattoo against her throat and ribs. She felt Guy pull aside the silky fabric to reveal her naked bottom. She blushed, her face against the soft denim of his leg, glad he couldn't see her.

Guy stroked her flesh for a moment, and she heard his own rapid breathing. He let his hand fall against one cheek. Spanking was something Guy had some experience with, and he felt confident, back in control.

At first it didn't hurt, and Tracy stayed still, waiting. Then he smacked

her harder and she flinched slightly. Perhaps taking courage from her stillness, and its implied permission to continue, Guy became emboldened, and slapped her ass harder, making Tracy gasp a little, and jump against his lap.

He continued to smack her bottom, the sound of his hard palm against her ass rang out in the room, accompanied by the whirring and snuffling of the window unit air conditioner. Tracy began to breathe hard and fast, and felt dizzy with her head down at Guys knees.

As he continued to spank her, the sting and heat flowed to Tracy's pussy, making her wriggle as much with lust as a desire to avoid the hard, smacking hands raining down on her tender

bottom.

Tracy kept expecting Guy to stop and flip her onto the bed and make love to her. Instead he kept on, spanking her in a hard, steady rhythm, until the lovely stinging heat began to shift to actual pain that made her jerk and cry out for him to stop.

He didn't stop. He was so on fire with lust that he didn't care about, or barely noticed her protestations. When she reached back to try and cover herself, he grabbed her hands and caught them between his knees, imprisoning her between his strong thighs. Tracy slipped from erotic pain and excitement to real fear, and began thrashing in earnest against Guy, close to panic.

At last her protests penetrated his concentration and abruptly he released her hands and let her roll from his lap to a disheveled heap on the floor. One breast had popped out of the confining little outfit and Tracy's hair was wild and covered half her face. Guy didn't see Tracy, the quiet little bank teller, and he certainly wasn't Mr. Gray, the genial loan officer and church-going family man at that moment.

He was the swashbuckling conqueror, and she was his whore, as he scooped her up and threw her on the bed, ripping the flimsy outfit from her, baring her breasts completely, plunging his hand down to press greedy fingers into her sex.

Tracy moaned. The cool slick polyester of the spread felt good against her hot ass, and Guy's fingers opened her, making her ready for what was surely to come. After a moment, Guy stood and opened his pants, pulling them and his underwear down just enough to reveal his small, but very erect cock. Tracy stared at it, aware he fully intended to fuck her, aware, too, on some level that she would never, ever have chosen Guy as the man with whom to break her wedding vows, if whips and cuffs hadn't been involved.

She was still very aroused from the spanking, and willingly spread her legs for him as Guy grunted and let himself down onto her, to take her quickly,

missionary style, coming after only a few minutes. As he lay there, panting and sweating on top of her, Tracy waited, her pussy still pulsing with need, to see what was next.

Guy rolled off her, looked over at the clock and said, "Holy shit, it's 6:30! I have to go!" Before she knew it, he was up, pulling his clothes on, tucking in the shirt, re-buckling his belt. Tracy lay still, feeling a thin trickle of sticky semen on her thigh, semen from a man who was not her husband, who was not even her lover, but a fellow she worked with, and now would have to see tomorrow, at the bank.

"Listen," he called out from the bathroom, where water was running,

"Take your time. I've already paid for the room. Just leave when you're ready." Tracy sat up slowly, feeling totally deflated. Guy came bustling out of the bathroom, hair slicked back over his balding pate, round face shiny, the scent of his cologne permeating the air.

Efficiently he collected his various 'toys' from around the room, while Tracy still sat on the edge of the bed, silently watching him. Guy leaned down to her, fully in command again. There was no evidence he had just spanked and fucked a woman who was not his wife, in a seedy motel near downtown, where, she realized, he had probably met other women who were not his wife, for similar clandestine adventures.

He kissed her lightly on the forehead and said, "You were great." Taking one of the Dr. Peppers from the melting ice, he thought to ask, "You ok?"

Tracy nodded, smiling slightly at him, knowing she wanted something, but also knowing it wasn't him. She let him go, sighing as the door clicked behind him.

She fell back on the bed, staring at the ceiling, which had a large water stain in one corner. Gingerly she touched her ass, which was sore. Slowly, she stood and pulled off the now tattered and ruined little outfit, pulling the stockings off too, one of which had a sizable run along the calf.

Bundling it up, she hurled it toward

the little trashcan. "Two points," she half whispered, as it landed squarely in the can. Walking to the full length mirror on the back of the bathroom door, she examined her sore bottom, and saw to her fascinated horror that it was not only red, as she had imagined it would be, but was mottled with little blue and purple bruises. He had marked her. Oh my God, how will I explain that to the Kyle? She would have to make sure he didn't see her ass, or her wrists for that matter, which bore little red marks in a circle where the metal cuffs had been too tightly placed.

She was angry for a moment, thinking about how careless it was of Guy to mark her skin, both her wrists

and her bottom, but a secret part of her was also thrilled. She had been marked. Like a true slave girl, marked by her master. Like the stories she had read as a teenager, where the slave girls are 'marked' every day with the whip by their lords and masters, as a constant reminder of their 'place.'

But Guy certainly wasn't her master. No indeed. He was nothing like 'Sir Stephen', like Paul, who was so eloquent and certain. If only she could meet him! But that was a dream. How easily he had let her go to Guy. How little he asked about her marriage and her 'real life.' He lived thousands of miles away, and whatever they had, it was a fantasy. She knew that now.

Wearily she dressed, the need of an orgasm receding as she pulled on her work clothes, wishing she had thought to bring jeans and a t-shirt, as Guy had. Still, one thing was for sure – she had loved the spanking. She had thrilled to the cuffs, to being restrained, to being told she must never close a door to her master, to having him rip her clothes off and fuck her with such fury. It wasn't just a fantasy anymore. She had tasted submission, tasted the masochistic thrill of being spanked, and found that pleasure and pain had combined in a combustible pattern that left her weak with desire, and the need to experience more.

CHAPTER 5

An Affair Signifying Nothing

It took Tracy a while to process what had happened with Guy. She found, somewhat to her surprise, that she wasn't collapsing under the weight of guilt over having betrayed Kyle. She did feel guilty, but it was ameliorated by the fact she was reasonably sure he was having an affair himself. And what she had done was really more of an experiment in her mind, than an out and out affair.

She certainly didn't love Guy; no question there. If anything, her feelings

for Paul were far more dangerous to her marriage than the fact that she had let another man fuck her. The sex with Guy, she had to admit, had been almost incidental. Good thing she was on the pill, since Guy hadn't even brought up the issue of protection.

Now he constantly hovered around her at work, dropping her little notes, trying to get her to go to lunch again. For some reason, she refused him. It wasn't that she was avoiding him specifically. She wasn't ready to face what she was sure would be an onslaught of effort to convince her to meet again.

It had been exciting, to a point, but it wasn't the stuff of her dreams. Still, what else was there? One day, about three

weeks after their first little fling, Guy left a note on her desk that made her flush as she read it, before crumpling it into a tight ball in her hand.

"Slave. Time's up. I am tired of waiting for you to make a move. Now I am taking over, and you have nothing to say in the matter. Here is the plan. This Friday after work, you will meet me at the same motel. I'll provide the key and room number as before.

"You will be naked and lying face down on the bed when I arrive. You will not turn around or move when I enter the room. I am going to bind you, slave, in strong white rope that will completely immobilize you. I am going to gag you so you cannot scream.

"You will be totally at my mercy. If I want to whip you, I will whip you. If I want to fuck you, I will fuck you. If I just want to leave you there while I watch TV that's what I'll do.

"You will be my total and complete slave girl for the hour I have you. My complete whore slut. Again, I'm not asking your permission; I'm informing you of what will happen to you this Friday.

Master Guy"

The normal Tracy, the rational Tracy, would have laughed out loud at this man's presumption. How dare he inform her of what he was going to do to her, and she had nothing to say about it. The submissive woman in her, the one

irrevocably awakened by the past months' explorations, responded on a gut level to his demands.

He may not be the man of her dreams, or a 'real' Dom, but he had just pushed the right buttons with the head teller at Houston First Federal, and when he dropped the key at her desk Friday, she put it in her purse without protest.

This time, at least, she didn't have to try and fit into any frilly little getups. The room, though not the same one as before, was identically decorated and

had the same dank smell. Again, a part of Tracy couldn't believe she was here, but she hushed that part of herself and stripped off her banker's suit and silk blouse, hanging them carefully in the closet.

Hesitating in her bra and panties, she looked at herself in the mirror, trying to summon the courage to get completely naked for 'Master Guy.' He was due in five minutes, which made the decision easier for her. Without thinking anymore about it, she unclasped her bra and slid her little panties down her smooth thighs.

Tentatively she started to lie down on the polyester bedspread. It didn't smell especially fresh and she recoiled,

images of clandestine couples copulating on it without even bothering to ready the bed. She remembered with a sheepish grin and a little shudder that that was precisely what she and Guy had done the last time.

Carefully she pulled the spread down, pinching an edge between finger and thumb to avoid contact with it as much as possible. At least the sheets looked clean, and they smelled like laundry detergent.

Hearing the key scrape in the lock, Tracy hurriedly lay down as she had been instructed, glad for his command that she be face down, as she hid her face in the crook of an elbow.

She heard him enter. "Very fine.

Very fine indeed," he said, the drawl on in full force. Tracy tried to stay still, resisting her impulse to sit up and look around at him. She wanted this 'game' of theirs to be as real as possible.

She heard much rustling, zipping and unzipping of pants and duffel bags, and random sounds as Guy readied himself to 'take' his slave girl.

She could smell his cologne, which was a heavy piney scent she didn't particularly favor, as he stood near her and ordered, "Put your hands behind your back, just above that little ass of yours. Touch your wrists together and don't move, no matter what I do."

Tracy obeyed, and her pulse had begun to race as she felt his large hand

on her wrists. And then the rope, a thin but very strong nylon that he had cut into strips in preparation for binding his slave girl.

She felt the nylon close tightly against her wrists, pulling them together, ratcheting her arms up higher against her back so that she was almost uncomfortable and certainly immobilized.

Tentatively she tried the bonds, pulling gently at first, then harder, against the rope. It didn't budge. Guy remembered his knot tying skills from his Boy Scout days, and had finally found a good use for them.

Tracy felt that thrill of being bound; of being unable to escape. A certain

indefinable languor seemed to settle over her, and her breathing slowed from its shallow flutter to something deeper and more profound.

She gasped when he pulled her head up by the hair and slipped a scarf around her mouth, tying it behind her head. Unaware of what was happening with Tracy, only knowing that his own erection was almost painful against his proper white briefs, Guy moved quickly, slipping a pillow under Tracy's hips to make her inviting ass and pussy more accessible to his attentions.

She had expected him to tie her feet at the ankles, and so was surprised when he pulled one ankle and looped rope over it, securing it against a corner of the

mattress by tying off the rope underneath the bed to the metal bed frame.

Then the other ankle, forcing Tracy to splay her legs and offer her sex like the captive whore she was at that moment, open for whatever this man planned to do to her. Even though it was only Guy, the experience was an intense one for Tracy, who had only ever dreamed of being completely bound and truly at another's mercy.

She felt his hand, large and warm against her bottom, as he smoothed and kneaded the flesh for a moment. Then a light slap. Was she going to get another spanking?

Tracy wriggled slightly, recognizing that her body was eager for another

spanking; her ass tingled with anticipation, but she was disappointed. Guy was too eager to fuck this delectable slut he had tied, spread eagle, on the bed before him. Had she known, Guy wasn't especially dominant at all. He didn't care a whit about the finer aspects of control and submission.

No, his interests lay in subduing a woman. In holding her down and taking her by force; in tying her up so she couldn't resist him and then fucking the shit out of her. Where Paul was subtle and deeply romantic in his dominant tendencies, Guy was practical. He knew what got him off and he sought it out.

Usually his only release came from porno downloaded from the net, or

videos watched furtively in the middle of the night while his wife snored softly in the upstairs master bedroom, wrapped in the armor of her full length nightgown and no nonsense cotton briefs. Their two little children snuffled in their own dreams, tucked snugly in their designer bedrooms down the hall.

Today he had the real thing, and by God, he wasn't going to waste another minute with foreplay. If he'd taken the time to think about it, he knew Tracy wanted it. Too bad, she was his cunt for this hour, and he would do as he pleased.

With only a cursory exploration of her spread pussy, to make sure she was wet enough for him to use her, Guy

straddled Tracy and entered her from behind. Moaning his pleasure, he immediately began to buck and writhe on top of her.

He was heavy against Tracy's thighs, and she felt his fat belly slap against her back as he fucked her unceremoniously. What the hell was she doing here? How had she let this happen? The erotic sexual languor that Guy had succeeded in creating by binding her was completely erased by his base and animal claiming of her, as if she were a dog or a pig in heat.

He came into her, jerking himself roughly against her, hurting her still bound arms as he fell heavily onto her. Quickly he rolled off, his penis rapidly

going flaccid. He lay still next to Tracy, and said, "Shit. You were just too fucking sexy. I couldn't help it. Next time it'll be for you, I promise." As he spoke, he removed the scarf gag from Tracy's face, then collapsed with a satiated sigh next to her.

She realized with a sharp prick of disappointment that he was done. Like so many men, the second he orgasmed, the jig was up; the game was over. If he had been her lover she would have protested, but it came to her with startling clarity that he most emphatically was not her lover, and not even her friend.

He had used her, plain and simple. He had played upon her desires, taking

advantage of her virginal ardency to taste the forbidden pleasures he seemed to offer. Despite the trappings of bondage, what had really just happened was a typical, 'wham bam thank you ma'am'.

She felt used, and frustrated. "Untie me, Guy," she said, her voice tight with controlled anger.

Perhaps Guy sensed at last that she was upset, because he tried to 'clean it up' by saying, "That's right, slave girl. I'm going to untie you so you can make yourself come for me. You're gonna make yourself come, like the slut you are."

Tracy didn't respond, waiting until he had released her before saying,

"Wrong, Guy. I'm going to get dressed and go home."

"What?!" Guy spluttered, attempting outrage, thinking she was still playing a role. He seemed to be trying to figure out if it was 'stubborn maiden needing to be subdued' or 'haughty whore' needing to be put in her place. Truth to tell, the excitement of tying her down and fucking her like that had completely worn him out and what he really wanted to do was take a nap.

Instead he gamely commanded, "You will lie down this instant and come for me, slave girl, or get a thrashing you won't soon forget!"

Tracy ignored him, irritated by how obviously this was all a stupid little

game to him. Grabbing her clothes, she went into the bathroom, using a wet towel with soap to try and wash away the smell and feel of him from her body.

She came out fully dressed a few minutes later. Guy was lying on the bed, still naked, his penis ridiculously small against his large white belly. Repulsed, and angry with herself for succumbing to his ruses yet again, Tracy grabbed her purse and said simply, "Don't get up. I'll see myself home." And she was gone.

Ironically, it was Paul who helped her to see that the experience hadn't been a total waste. She had typed furiously to him that evening, even though Kyle was in the next room. She told him everything that had happened, and how stupid and

used she felt by the whole thing.

Paul sympathized with that aspect of it, but suggested, "Tell me about the good parts. Focus on what excited you; what turned you on. Forget Guy as a fallible horny jerk who used your trust and innocence to get himself off. Think about what you took away from it; what he unwittingly gave you even though he clearly wasn't doing it for you.

"You got a little taste of bondage, of being bound and truly unable to move. What did that feel like? You felt what it was like to be gagged; to be unable to scream."

Remembering the gut level thrill of being tied down, actually tied down, just like in her endless fantasies, gave Tracy

a little zing in her pussy as she sat there watching Paul's words scroll across the screen.

He continued, "Beyond that, you learned some things you'll want to avoid in the future. The 'wannabe's', the pretenders, who use the chic guise of BDSM and Dominance and submission, but who really only want a passive woman to fuck."

Tracy thought about what he wrote, and had to agree he made some good points. She felt as if she hated Guy now; he had used and tricked her. Again Paul disagreed, suggesting she try and think of it from his point of view. She hadn't confided very much at all to Guy. He knew nothing, really, about her secret

dreams or longing for a connection.

She had pasted her image of what she wanted in a Dom onto Guy, who remained happily oblivious of her intentions or expectations. He couldn't be blamed for being a horny guy who would jump at the chance to get into her pants. It was her own expectations she should find fault with; not him.

Guy continued after that to try and reconnect with Tracy. On some level he knew the experience had been less than satisfactory, but he wasn't insightful, or involved enough, to really understand.

Tracy had been a delightful diversion, and was still a constant temptation, as she was always in his direct line of sight at work.

She, on the other hand, no longer had the slightest interest in meeting him again 'after hours'. His attempts with further little letters 'ordering' her to comply, were ignored, as were his efforts to try and get her to another happy hour, presumably to get her drunk and compliant.

She did finally agree to go to lunch with him, to explain herself and make it clear, once and for all time, that whatever they had had was definitely over. To his credit, Guy backed down like a proper southern gentleman, when

he finally saw it was hopeless. There was a cute little thing in collections he had his eye on, anyway. Tracy was just too much work.

Tracy found she no longer had any ill feelings toward him. As Paul had said, he was really just a guy as frustrated and lonely as so many people were, trying to find something in his life that approximated joy. And again, Tracy realized Paul was right. She also acknowledged another thing that had been growing like a secret seed in her mind and heart for some time. A little flower of admission pushed up into her consciousness – it wasn't Guy she wanted; and it wasn't an abstract experience of being dominated by

another. It was Paul.

CHAPTER 6

The End and the Beginning

It was a beautiful spring day when Tracy's secret world came crashing down around her. She had spent a pleasant hour picking out the perfect bouquet for Paul's birthday, with a card to be signed, "Your secret admirer." She was going to call the florist back tomorrow with the address to his office, as soon as she got it from Paul's receptionist, and have the flowers sent. She smiled as she imagined his surprise and delight when he got them.

There was still a trace of a smile on

her face when Tracy opened the door to her home. Tonight, Kyle had gotten there before her, and at once she knew something was up. He was there to meet her at the door, something he never did, and his expression was grim. "What's the matter, Kyle, you look like you've seen a ghost."

"You could say that," he said, enigmatically, his voice flat.

"What are you talking about?" Tracy asked, as she dropped her suit jacket over a chair and slipped out of her uncomfortable pumps with a little sigh of relief.

"This is what I'm talking about." He led her into the living room, where her laptop sat, its little lid hanging by one

hinge, several of the keys smashed out, and the power source ripped from its socket.

"What the hell..." Tracy trailed off. At first she thought they'd been robbed, but that didn't make sense. They would have taken it, not destroyed it. Then she knew, and a cold sick feeling flooded her gut, making her want to either pass out or throw up.

"That's what I want to know, Tracy," Kyle said, his voice cold.

"You ruined my laptop!"

"You've ruined my life."

"What?" She was stalling for time and knew that he knew it.

"Cut the shit, Tracy. I got in there. I read all yourfucking emails to

thatfucking Paul person. I know about him. And about all the sick twisted shit you're into. You disgusting bitch! You slut! You cunt! " His voice got louder and louder as he loomed over her, all 6'5" menacingly poised in a fighter's stance, his fists clenched in rage. Tracy took a step back, adrenaline flooding through her body like ice blasts.

"How could you? Oh God, how could you?" Kyle's voice slipped and broke into sobs, as he collapsed on the floor beside the chair.

Tracy reached out to him, even as her gut still clenched in terror. "Oh, Kyle," she whispered, fear shutting her mind down, his tears breaking her heart.

"How could you, Tracy, after all our

years together? How could you betray me like this?"

Tracy looked over at her destroyed computer, and thought with fledgling rage and indignation that Kyle had read her personal letters, her secret thoughts and dreams that she'd never felt safe sharing with him. It felt like a rape, not the sexy dream sequence rapes of her fantasies, but a violation, pure and simple.

"Me? What about you, Kyle? What about all those months of coming home late, pretending you were at meetings when you weren't even at the hospital? Where the fuck were you then, Kyle? Where were you?"

Kyle's tears stopped abruptly and he

looked up her, his expression sheepish. "Oh, Tracy." He sounded almost apologetic, but his expression clouded again. "So you were spying on me then, huh? It seems like I don't know you at all. The simple sweet girl I married never existed."

"Don't turn it around like you always do, Kyle, answer my question."

"Fine. I was seeing someone. But it's over. It's been over for a long time now. And there certainly wasn't any question of love. None of that disgusting blather you and your online boyfriend were puking all over each other. And that filth! All those talks of whippings and slaves and torture. And that Guy whoever he is! That you met at some

sleazy hotel downtown. You make me sick. I'm physically ill over this. God, I don't even know you!"

Tracy barely heard him, focusing on her own shock, though of course it shouldn't have been a shock at all. "Seeing someone?" she said, her voice trembling. Of course she'd suspected, known even, but having him admit it point blank, threw her off balance, broke off another piece of their crumbling marriage.

"Jesus Christ, it was just a release, since you're so cold and ungiving in bed. Damn it, a man has to have his needs met, and God knows, you've never met them!"

Tracy was stung by his remarks.

After all she did to placate and accommodate his constant need to rut, for that's what it was in her mind, and he had the gall to say she didn't meet his needs! What about her needs? What the fuck about her? She was ready to fight back; to respond in kind, but Kyle crumpled on the floor again, leaving her helpless.

She'd only seen him cry once before, years ago when his grandmother died. It had been a gentle thing then, where she could take him in her arms and soothe him. But this out and out sobbing – raucous and uncontrolled – frightened Tracy. She knelt awkwardly, trying to put her arms around him.

"Oh, Kyle, I'm sorry. I'm so, so

sorry. I never meant to hurt you. Never."

"Don't you love me, Tracy?" Kyle whispered brokenly through his tears. He'd said her name, at last, but in such a heartbreaking way, she felt tears pricking her own eyelids, sliding down her cheeks.

"Yes, oh, yes, I do," she promised, no longer sure in her own mind what she felt about anyone at all, most especially herself.

"Don't cry, Kyle. Please, please don't cry." Together they sobbed on the floor, arms around each other, hearts breaking along the myriad of cracks they'd been hammering into each other for so long.

"You have to close all the doors, Tracy. All the doors and windows. No Exit. That's the sign you need to see in your head."

The marriage counselor she agreed to see with Kyle was a youngish man, not much older than she or Kyle. She found him, actually, a Rational Emotive Therapist, remembering Paul's recommendation early on in their relationship, before love had entered the equation.

Of course, she hadn't told Kyle how she found him, but told him she had asked a friend who had had success with this professional. She secretly felt Kyle

would feel less threatened by a man than a woman counselor. Despite his protestations to the contrary, he was a closet chauvinist.

As the counselor spoke, a big red NO EXIT sign flashed in her brain.

He was referring, of course, to Paul. Kyle filled him in when they entered the room, explaining that they were there to try and save their marriage after Tracy had been having an extended online affair with a sex pervert named Paul.

Tracy didn't bother to add the detail of his own physical affair. She felt too tired, too drained to even bother.

The counselor listened to Kyle's tirade, his expression bland, then turned to Tracy. "It's your turn, Tracy. And

Kyle," he looked meaningfully at him, "please don't interrupt your wife while she's speaking. Let her have her full say as well." Kyle nodded, as if offended that he would even suggest such a thing, but it was a relief to Tracy to know she had a few moments to try and get her thoughts in order.

Gently the counselor said, "And you, Tracy? Why are you here?"

"To save our marriage, I guess. If it can be saved." Kyle started to interrupt, but a raised hand from the counselor silenced him.

"What do you mean? Don't you think it can be saved?"

Tracy sighed, not really knowing herself what she meant. Surely, she

owed it to Kyle, and their relationship, to try and make it work. All these years together had to mean something. To just throw it away...

It's what she'd told Paul on the phone yesterday, as she tried, tearfully, to explain that Kyle had found their emails and read them all, including things she'd thought she'd deleted, but he somehow knew how to recover.

"I was afraid that might happen sometime, Tracy," Paul had said quietly. "Are you safe? Is he threatening you in any way?" Ah, darling Paul, thinking at once, as he always did, of her safety, her wellbeing.

"I'm safe, Paul. Kyle would never hurt me, not physically." Even as she

spoke, the image of her smashed laptop, lid dangling by its hinges flitted through her mind, juxtaposed against her husband, crumpled and sobbing on the floor. Swallowing, not yet ready to admit the horrible details of that evening she said, "He's never raised a hand to me. No, it's not that. It's," she paused, nervous, wondering how to tell Paul what she had to tell him.

"It's just, you see, I've, um, promised him to," just say it and get it over with, she urged herself, "to try and work it out. To see a marriage counselor. To, um, take a break from you."

Silence.

"Paul?"

"Yes."

"Did you hear me?"

"Of course I heard you."

"Well, so, I can't call you for a while, or go online. I promised him. Two months, I promised I'd give it two months."

"Good luck, Tracy," was all he said, his voice cracking.

"Are you crying?" Tracy felt her heart tear with a ragged pain at that moment.

"None of your damn business," and he was gone.

Tracy tried to focus on the

counselor's words, tried to mentally shut the door on her darling Paul. "I want to try. To try and, um, close those doors and work on the relationship. On what we have."

"Ok, then, we can get somewhere. Tell me about when you first met Kyle. What made you fall in love with him?"

Tracy talked, and Kyle didn't interrupt, and then he talked, and she listened. Remembering them as they were at the beginning, the sweetness, the shyness, the need and love they had felt for each other, helped Tracy recapture some of those earlier feelings. When they left after that first session, she felt closer to him than she had in a long time. He must have felt the same way, because

he asked her, almost shyly, if she'd like to have dinner somewhere quiet. It'd been a long time since they'd gone out together.

She nodded and tried to not pull away when he took her hand under the table while they ate a fine French meal with lots of red wine. Later that night, in the shower, Tracy wept, big silent tears coursing down her cheeks. She thought of the flowers that would go undelivered to the man who still held her heart firmly in his hands, even if she desperately tried to pretend otherwise.

Tracy meant to keep her promise to Kyle that she'd give it two months. She had no idea if it'd work or not, but she was serious in her promise to at least try. To Kyle's credit, he was solicitous and gentle with her, almost as if they were courting again. He seemed especially attentive when they made love, and he actually engaged in foreplay, getting Tracy 'ready' before he plunged in. Tracy tried to focus on him, and not close her eyes and dream of someone and something else, as she always used to do.

Kyle admitted that maybe he hadn't paid her the attention she deserved, and she must have felt terribly lonely to have to seek attention from another man. He

promised that would change.

He still emphatically didn't understand, or forgive, her submissive urges and needs, even when she tried to get him to read the articles that argued it was just a sexual orientation, like being gay. "Don't feed me that shit, Tracy. That's just rationalization, pure and simple, for people to indulge in whatever perversions they want to. And I'm sorry, but to think you have those sick little fantasies, it just grosses me out. How can you be like that?"

His underlying message was that she better cut it out, if things were going to work out between them, but she couldn't do that – not any more. It would be like cutting off a piece of herself. She could

no longer deny such a significant part of who and what she was.

Her first reaction to his 'disgust' of her was embarrassment. She was embarrassed and ashamed that he had 'caught her out' as it were, with her dirty little secrets. Until just a few months ago, she had agreed with him, at least on some level.

Instinctively, she had never shared those 'dirty little secrets' with him, no doubt expecting just such a reaction. Through her recent months of reading and talking with so many people, not the least of whom was Paul, she came to accept that she wasn't sick, wasn't perverted, and had nothing to be ashamed of.

The only shame here, she thought, was that she had never been allowed to experience who she really was. She married at the age of 21 to a boy, the same age, who was as sexually repressed as she was. They had never dared explore anything other than standard intercourse and oral sex.

Her second reaction was anger. How dare he judge her like that? She actually voiced this anger, something she wouldn't have dared to do before counseling, but the counselor had encouraged her to express herself, without fear of repercussion. He assured them both, over and over, that they should feel safe, while in these sessions, to express themselves honestly and

openly.

"If the two of you are serious about this, absolute honesty is the only way."

Kyle had nodded to the therapist as if they two were the consulting physicians on this difficult case of patient Tracy. She had literally squirmed with discomfort and annoyance in her chair as Kyle started to lecture in his calm 'psychiatrist' voice. He explained in a gentle tone that Tracy was going through a difficult time, developmentally. He admitted that he, Kyle, had been so busy in his studies for his medical matriculations, he hadn't had the time to devote to his wife, who was immature, sexually speaking. She had found the need to go outside the

marriage, first with little emails, then actually meeting on the sly with some slimy colleague to experiment in their shared perversion. She hadn't felt herself able to come to him for counseling and support. He had, he admitted magnanimously, failed her in that way. He was willing to forgive her and try to start again. He loved her that much, he explained.

Dr. Pearson listened impassively, and Tracy found herself wildly irritated that he seemed to buy this bullshit. No longer able to keep silent, she burst out, "You said you wanted total honesty. Then let me just lay it out there. Let me elucidate what Dr. Becker is skirting around." Both the counselor's and Kyle's

eyes turned toward her, the former curious, the latter's, sliding over her nervously.

"We've never really been open with you about the nature of my little emails, as Kyle calls them, or my perversions."

"Oh, Tracy, that isn't necessary," Kyle interjected, "We don't have to share every sordid detail with Dr. Pearson. That isn't what he meant by being honest."

"Don't interrupt, Kyle," Tracy shot back at him, maybe for the first time in her life. He shut up and she went on, "I want to tell him. I want him to know what so horrified and astounded you. Why you think I'm such a sick bitch, to paraphrase."

"I never said," Kyle began, appealing to the counselor.

"No, you're right. Your exact words were, let me see, 'sick, twisted, disgusting bitch, slut. Oh, and total cunt. Have I missed anything? I'm sure I've blocked some of it out."

Kyle sat back, crossing his arms over his chest, his expression saying, 'it's your funeral, have at it.'

The counselor pursed his lips, but said nothing, waiting for Tracy to continue.

"Kyle's horror is over the fact that I'm submissive. My fantasies lean toward bondage and discipline. S amp;M. You know, slave girl in chains, that kind of thing."

Tracy couldn't believe she was saying this out loud, but like the disenfranchised homosexuals of the fifties and sixties, she felt a certain exhilaration at 'coming out' like this. It was one thing to share it with others of like mind, like Paul and even Guy, but here she was admitting it to a practical stranger, in front of her deeply disapproving husband. If she weren't so nervous, she would have laughed with pleasure at what a release it was.

Dr. Pearson's hands didn't fly to his mouth in horror. He didn't scream or run from the room. He didn't pull out a scarlet letter to attach to her bosom. He just nodded and turned to Kyle. "You're a psychiatrist?" he asked, his voice

neutral.

"I am," Kyle nodded back, looking self-important.

"And yet you still harbor these beliefs that a particular sexual orientation is morally wrong, evil as it were?"

Kyle looked surprised and spluttered, "Well, I, that is, yes. I mean, this isn't covered in the standard diagnoses. This is outside the realm of psychiatric treatment. It's just, shit, man, it's sick!"

Dr. Pearson nodded thoughtfully, and turned to Tracy. "And how does it make you feel, to know he feels this way about your sexual orientation?"

"Lonely," Tracy whispered, and

started to cry.

Tracy called in sick the next day. She wasn't really ill, but she felt sick at heart. Her yearning for Paul was almost physical, and she realized she had to admit to herself at least, that she hadn't closed any doors. Since Kyle had destroyed her computer, Tracy went over to his and logged on.

Anger spurred her on, as she recalled his numerous self-sex marathons, pants around his ankles, cock pumping purple and turgid in his hand, while he typed away to his sex buddies

online. But this was ok – this was just masculine release, don't you know.

Typing rapidly, before she changed her mind, Tracy logged on to the Palace and waited impatiently as the letters scrolled across the stick drawing of a palace, indicating she was 'in'. She scrolled slowly through the list of people on the board and her heart sank when the names jumped from SexyGirl to SMKing, with no Sir Stephen in between.

Halfheartedly she scrolled through a few of the newer articles about 'the life' and then suddenly, at the bottom of her screen, the words, "Sir Stephen invites you to join him in his chat room 102." Oh god! He was there. And he wanted to

talk to her. She longed to call him on the telephone, but didn't have the nerve, after their last heartbreaking call.

Quickly she typed the words to accept his invitation, and entered the room.

"Hi," she typed.

"Hi," he typed back.

"What are you doing on here?" she asked. It was, after all, the middle of the workday.

"I could ask you the same thing," he typed back.

"I'm sick. Took a sick day."

He didn't respond. She typed another line, her heart in her throat. "Can I call you?"

"You know the number."

When he answered Tracy's heart squeezed so tightly, she could barely breathe for a moment.

"Oh, Paul! Oh, Paul, I've missed you so much!"

"Me too, Tracy. Are you ok? I've been so worried about you."

"God, I'm sorry, Paul." Softly she began to cry.

"Tracy. Stop that. What is it? Why are you crying? I knew the deal going in. I knew you were married. I knew this could happen, would happen really, if you're to stay married. I was never good

at picking women." He laughed ruefully.

"No, it's not that." Tracy sniffed loudly and said, "It's your flowers. You didn't get your flowers. Your birthday."

"Oh, stop. I'm glad I didn't get flowers. I hate my birthday. No one even knows I have a birthday around here. Good thing you didn't ruin it." His voice was teasing and kind. Tracy laughed in spite of herself and sniffed back her tears.

"Seriously, Tracy, how's it going?"

"Not so good, Paul. I'm trying, but it just isn't working. Kyle's ashamed of me, basically. He doesn't understand me. I think he's willing to forgive and forget, as long as I forgive and forget his little affair, but he wants me to change. He's

willing to love me, he says, in spite of my 'peculiarities', if I can control myself. Frankly, I don't think I can."

"Do you want to?"

"No."

It was that simple, wasn't it? She didn't have to think it over, to make a decision; it was already made. She was who she was, and Kyle was never going to accept that. It was too much to face at that precise moment so Tracy changed the subject, saying, "Wasn't it amazing that we both logged on to the Palace at almost the same time? What are the odds of that?"

"No kidding, that was amazing," Paul agreed, not telling her that he had been logging on every day, sometimes ten or

twenty times in a single day, since she had told him it was over those three weeks ago. Each time he logged on, he would hope against hope to 'see' his 'Beloved', his Tracy there.

Each day he told himself he was being an ass, and today would be the last day to do this, but the next day he would be logging on, over and over, hope springing eternal, even as he cursed himself for his stupidity.

When he'd seen her name in the 'logged on' list he'd actually whooped with joy, sitting there alone in his office. His fingers flew over the keys as he hurried to invite her to a chat room before she disappeared.

And what did it mean now, that she

had broken her 'promise' and called him before the two months were up? Would things go on as before? Could they, now that secrets had been split open and bared to the harsh light of 'real life'? The questions hung, unspoken and unanswered, between them.

Tracy and Kyle sat opposite one another in Dr. Pearson office. They had come in separate cars, as he had suggested.

"Why do we need two cars?" Kyle had asked, his tone anxious.

"Because some of the issues we are

going to deal with might leave one or both of you feeling, uh, a little vulnerable. You might want to be alone. You might not want to ride together. I'm not predicting the future, just trying to give you options so you don't feel trapped by anything. This is standard at this stage in your marriage therapy.

"We've gotten some real issues out there, and we are going to dive right in next time."

And that's what they did. Since Tracy had broken her promise, and was secretly again communicating with Paul, the last few therapy sessions felt like an exercise in futility.

Tracy was finally able to admit to herself that what she had so wanted to be

the 'perfect marriage' was a constant series of compromises, primarily on her part. She had spent most of her adult life trying to conform to another person's idea of what she should be. She seemed to have lost something of herself in the process, or more accurately, let it atrophy, like a useless, withered appendage. The reawakening of her sexual self, of her independent self, instead of being easy and joyous, was sometimes painful and frightening.

She realized there was no place in their marriage for this 'different' Tracy, the one who didn't always concede to whatever Dr. Becker felt was best. She could no longer push her own dreams and desires into some tidy box to

occasionally take out and sigh over. She was close to admitting to herself that there was no point in continuing with the therapy, or the marriage, but she was terrified to admit this to either Dr. Pearson or Kyle.

She and Kyle had spent nine years together, seven of them married. Divorce was something she never considered, though she wasn't always happy. From the beginning, her parents had predicted divorce, because Kyle and Tracy were so young when they got married. Tracy had been determined to prove them wrong. Both her older sisters had divorced, but she would be the one to 'show them' what a happy, loving relationship was.

She and Kyle had grown up together, but now, she sadly admitted, they had grown apart. She remembered the final time he had broken up with her, just before they married. He once told her then that he was no longer sure what was love and what was obligation between. Now, ironically, she found she completely understood what he had meant. More than that, she found she didn't respect Kyle in the same way she had once. In fairness to him, what she had done for so many years of their relationship was to put him on a pedestal. She admired him completely, and felt that his opinions automatically superceded her own. She didn't give him a chance to be fallible; to be human.

In fact, Kyle was as deeply insecure as his wife, probably more so, and had come to require her constant admiration and their mutual subtle 'put down' of Tracy in order to make himself feel less vulnerable and less worthless. When she began this newfound discovery of herself, gaining confidence and tentatively voicing her own opinions and desires, the very fabric of what their relationship had been based upon had begun to unravel.

She hadn't only been dabbling with sex outside the marriage; she had been eroding the very foundation of the life they had built together. A harsh light shone on what she had always idealized in her mind as a 'perfect love', and it

was badly tarnished. On some basic level they both realized it, but like so many people caught in prisons of their own making, they were terrified at the prospect of unlocking the gates.

And so Tracy continued with the charade, until that final therapy session when Dr. Pearson suddenly turned to her and asked, "Why are you here, Tracy?"

"Excuse me?" She didn't expect the question, feeling put on the spot.

"I asked, why are you here? What do you hope to get out of this? You've been coming for several weeks now, twice a week, like a 'good girl'," his fingers marked the air with imaginary quotation marks. "And you promised, at the beginning, to close the doors,

remember? To seal off the exits and really give this relationship your full attention.

"But it doesn't seem to me that's what's happening here. You don't seem to be 'present' any longer." She looked at him, her eyes full of fear. Her knuckles, white with tension, clutched the arms of her chair.

Dr. Pearson continued. "I'm going to ask you a question, Tracy, and please answer it honestly. You won't do Kyle or yourself a bit of good if you give me the answer you think I want to hear, or that you think is expected of you. I've been in this business long enough to know that you can't will a marriage to work. You have to want it; to long for it

and be willing to give it one hundred percent of yourself to rebuild it.

"So listen hard, Tracy, and take your time responding. You're safe here. My question is this. Do you want to continue to work on this marriage, or do you want to work on how to say goodbye? There is no right answer. It's a matter of the heart, and you can't force your heart to feel something it doesn't feel."

The room seemed to close in on her, and she felt as if she might faint. It was as if she were in a movie, and the camera had just zoomed in for a close up of her face. Sounds were muffled and the world seemed to slow to a standstill as they all, even she, waited for her response.

"I want to work on saying goodbye," she finally managed to croak, her voice little more than a whisper.

Suddenly the world flicked back on and she could hear again, her breathing audible in her ears. She saw Kyle stiffen in his seat, as his large thin hands gripped the arms of his chair. She felt the heat in her face and neck and a curious lightness in her body. What had she done? She finally admitted what had been lurking in her heart, hiding even from herself. She wanted out. She wanted to be free.

"I can't stay here anymore. I can't stand to be around you," Kyle announced a few days later. He had stormed out of the counselor's office, the tires of his fancy late model Aurora screeching, leaving his wife and Dr. Pearson staring at each other. Dr. Pearson remained calm as always, but Tracy was stunned, as if she'd been sucker punched.

She'd left the office soon after, unable to listen to the therapist's calm advice. For the next few days, she and Kyle continued to share the same space in the same house, but the marriage was broken and neither of them had the slightest idea how to fix it.

Kyle stood in front of the breakfast table, holding his garment bag and a

large duffel. Tracy was relieved. At least something was happening. "It's over between us, Tracy. I should never have married you. We were never suited. Knowing what I know now, that you were never committed to me or to our marriage – it just sickens me."

Tracy started to protest, but Kyle held up a hand, his whole countenance forbidding her from speaking. "Please," he intoned, determined to continue what was probably a carefully prepared speech. "I don't want to hear your feeble protestations. You've made your bed, as they say, now go lie in it. Even if we'd continued that counseling, I could see from the beginning it was a waste of time. I was just trying to give you the

benefit of the doubt, to see if you were willing to put that immature sexual deviance behind you and behave like a mature adult woman. I was willing to give you another chance; to love you in spite of all you've done to me.

"But I can see now what you really are; what you've always been, hiding behind that timid little facade of yours. You're a slut, Tracy, pure and simple. A pig. And for every pig, there's a pig fucker, but it sure isn't me." He left the room. "You'll be hearing from my lawyer," he called back to her. His words were punctuated by the front door slamming.

Tracy sat in her chair, completely still for some minutes. The scathing

remark about pigs and pig fuckers had shamed her, making her ears burn scarlet with a blossoming rage.

She let out a long, deep sigh, and said aloud, "Well. That's that then." Tracy realized with a little spark of excitement that she was getting out, and she didn't have to run to do it. Kyle sprang the trap for them both. He had unlocked the prison door and taken off. Tentatively, she put a foot over the threshold, then stepped out herself, feeling the shackles of a lifetime fall from her shoulders.

CHAPTER 7

The Girl in Apartment 1A

Things weren't too terribly different after Kyle left, Tracy found to her surprise. After all, they had been avoiding each other more and more as their relationship deteriorated, except for the brief 'honeymoon' Kyle tried to create at the beginning of their marriage counseling.

Why should it be different now, she thought. After all, Tracy had always been the one to keep the house, buy the food, pay the bills and generally keep things running smoothly. Her only

concern in staying in that house was how to meet the mortgage, but her attorney had told her Kyle was going to have to cover it until the agreement was settled, as his income was so much higher than hers.

Ironical, she thought, with a little toss of her head, he is finally 'the primary bread winner' and he ends up walking out on me. If she were honest with herself, he may have been the one to physically leave, but they'd left each other. He wasn't all to blame.

She didn't care about the money, and discovered she actually enjoyed being alone. For the first time in her life, she bought just the foods she wanted, and prepared her own simple little meals in

the evening, instead of the lavish full course dinners Kyle preferred. The bed was easy to make now, since she still slept on her half, which was really her third, since Kyle was so much bigger than she was, and needed all that space to comfortably fit his 6'5" frame.

She ate ice cream straight out of the pint, not worrying that Kyle would be 'grossed out' by her germs. She left her pantyhose drying over the shower rail and didn't hide her tampax away when she was having her period.

She still kept the house clean as she always had; that was too deeply ingrained, and she was neat by nature. As Kyle came by periodically to remove his things, she was happier with the

place, which she had always felt was too cluttered with his extensive 'objets d'art', the knickknacks he liked to collect and line every available shelf with. Not to mention his 10,000 CDs and his fancy stereo system which had taken half the space in the living room.

Over the weeks Tracy bought a few pictures of her own, and a small CD player. She slowly replaced her record collection with CDs, listening to an entire Joni Mitchell CD without anyone constantly remarking how childish and tedious it was, and finally demanding she put on headphones. She bought another laptop, charging it to their joint credit card. She lay in bed, talking openly with Paul, usually with her hands

in her panties, until he told her to take them off.

She was happy – until one Friday evening, about four weeks into their separation, when she was startled to hear a key turning in her lock. Kyle still had his key. She hadn't thought about it since he had needed to come in sometimes to get his things while she was at work.

He had been so adamant about not wanting to see her ('You're nothing but a source of pain to me now,' he had proclaimed dramatically) it never occurred to her he might come over while she was home. Why hadn't he called if he needed something?

Maybe it wasn't Kyle, but some

burglar who had somehow gotten a copy of her keys? Tracy stood quickly, moving toward the phone. She could call 911 before they got in the door, but the door opened.

Her relief was palpable when she saw it was Kyle. She almost felt affection toward him at that moment. He looked so familiar, the tall gangly boy she had known for so many years, his dark blond hair tousled making him look like a little kid.

"Kyle!" she said, more warmly than she might have, if she hadn't been glad to trade him, in her mind, for a burglar with murderous intent. "What are you are doing here? Something you need?"

As he came closer, she saw that he

didn't look so much the carefree young boy any longer, but unnaturally flushed, and his eyes were bright, the pupils pinpoints, like shiny metal balls at the center of pale blue irises.

"Yeah, something I need. That's right. Something I need."

She didn't understand what he meant, but she did understand the menacing tone. The man must be high on something, or drunk, or both.

"Look, Kyle," she began, trying to sound tough. She was going to say this was her house now, and he had better leave, but her words died in her throat as he came toward her, his hands out, moving fast.

Before she could react, he had her in

his arms, and was roughly trying to kiss her. She smelled gin on his breath, and something else, something bitter that she couldn't identify. She struggled to get out of his grasp, but Kyle was strong, certainly much stronger than she.

"Stop! What are you doing!" Tracy spluttered and struggled, trying to get away from him.

"I'll tell you what I'm doing, bitch – what I should have done a long time ago. I know what you like, don't forget. I know you like it rough, you sick cunt. Well, I'm gonna give it to you, just the way you like it!"

Tracy screamed, horrified and truly frightened. She glanced toward the phone, desperately scheming in her mind

how she could get to it.

"Stop it. Kyle, get away, you're drunk! You don't know what you're doing!"

"I know what I'm doing all right. I'm going to fuck my wife. You're still my wife, you know, you bitch. We aren't divorced yet. For once in your fucking life, you're gonna get what you deserve. I'll show you what it's really like to be pinned down and raped. And you'd better love it, bitch, because that's what your nasty fantasies are, and you deserve whatever you get."

Tracy was crying, struggling under the weight of her estranged husband. He pulled open her blouse, spraying the little buttons over the carpet. Her skirt

was hiked up and he had her panties down.

He held her throat with one hand while trying to get his pants unzipped with the other. He was clearly impaired, and couldn't seem to work the mechanism of the zipper.

"Please," Tracy begged, "please Kyle. Don't do this. Think about what you're doing. Please! I trusted you!"

Kyle loosened his hold on her throat and jumped up, grabbing a dishtowel that was hanging over the kitchen chair. Holding an end in either hand, he wound it in the air, rolling it tightly. Standing over her, he flicked it against her bared breast, the snap like a razor slicing against her skin.

Tracy screamed in pain, then scrambled up, trying to get away from him. He continued to pop her, hard, on the leg, on the back, wherever he could make contact.

"How dare you talk to me about trust!" he roared, apparently, to her relief, forgetting his former plan of raping her. "I trusted you, you bitch. I trusted that you were what you pretended to be – a good, decent, loving woman, instead of some cold fish who turned out to be a secret sex pervert. I trusted you. I gave you my life. I gave you my heart."

The roaring dulled to a whimper, as he sank to his knees, and began crying. Tracy was at the phone, willing her voice not to tremble, as she turned to

him. "Kyle, you're drunk, you're high and you're out of your fucking mind. Get up and get out before I call 911. Go. Now."

Tracy was relieved when he did get up, weaving slightly, all the bluster gone, a pathetic drunk whom she almost felt sorry for. The welts he had raised with the towel were smarting, and the excess adrenaline still coursing through her made her nauseated. Just go, she willed silently, as he continued slowly toward the front door, which was still ajar.

She followed at a distance, ready to slam the door behind him at the first possible second. Suddenly he turned back to her. Leaning in close, he spat – a glob of thick spittle landing on her

cheek.

He turned again toward the door, as Tracy, stunned and disgusted, stood wiping the slime from her face. The second his feet crossed the threshold, she locked the door as fast as she could, and put on the chain lock. She watched out the window, seeing him drive away and wondered if he'd make it to his girlfriend's house without killing himself or someone else.

She didn't call Paul that evening. She lay in a hot tub, trying to wash away the memory of the spittle on her cheek, and soak away the stench of fear Kyle had created in her home.

After Kyle left, she called a locksmith who had night hours, and was

willing to come over on short notice. He changed all the locks for her, at a hefty price, but she didn't care, in fact, charging it to their still joint credit card. Let the bastard pay for the new locks, she thought.

When the locksmith left, she locked the door behind him, leaning against it with a great sigh of satisfaction, knowing she clutched the only keys in her hand.

Lying back in the tub, and feeling calmer, she thought that at one time her first reaction would have been to call 'her man,' be it Kyle or Paul, or whomever. This time she wanted to handle it herself; not only because Paul had told her a while back he didn't think it was a good idea for Kyle to come and

go as he pleased, and she should consider getting new locks. Paul would never say, 'I told you so.'

She also realized she didn't need to call anyone. She'd tell Paul later, when time had faded some of the original horror. After all, it was just Kyle being an asshole and a bully. He would probably wake tomorrow and feel terrible about it – not that she cared. She toyed with pressing charges, but didn't know what that would accomplish except make divorce proceedings even more tense.

She did promise herself that if he approached her again for any reason, and seemed at all high or threatening, she would go straight to the police and

get a restraining order.

Tracy stepped out of the tub and dried herself, sipping a glass of red wine she had balanced on the edge of the tub. She slipped into her cozy robe, and reflected on something that actually made her smile. She must be growing up.

CHAPTER 8

The Meeting

She wore a little sundress with big yellow sunflowers splashed across a dark blue background. It had taken her three hours and endless trips to the dressing rooms of countless stores in the mall to find just the right thing. Underneath she wore a satin pushup bra and matching pink thong panties, courtesy of Victoria's Secret. Nervously she licked her lips, then mentally cursed herself for messing up her lipstick.

Walking as fast as she could in her

pretty new yellow sandals, which exposed small toes painted a virginal pink, she rummaged in her purse for her lipstick, while scanning the walls for a monitor that would tell her at what gate he was expected. It had taken her so long to find a parking place that she had practically run all the way from the lot to the main terminal.

She read the little piece of paper in her hand, though she'd memorized it by now. American flight 202 from JFK, arriving at 2:08. God, don't let it be late. Worse, don't let him have missed it. Don't let him turn out to be some crazy person. She knew that wouldn't happen, after all the months of talking and writing to each other. They weren't

online lovers meeting for a one-night stand. They were the best of friends meeting face to face at last.

Paul had been supportive this last month, as she struggled to work out a separation agreement with Kyle, who had gone straight back to his old girlfriend, apparently. It was Jane, a psychiatric nurse where he worked, and someone they had actually had to dinner once. Kyle had pretended to find her boring, but obviously that hadn't been the case.

Jane had actually had the nerve to call Tracy at the bank. "Kyle needs some documents you must have hidden somewhere. He's really busy right now so I told him I'd call for them." Tracy

was grudgingly impressed at Jane's sheer gall. She would never consider calling the estranged wife of a man with whom she was having an affair. Did Jane know what her 'boyfriend' had done the other night? Did Jane know he was high on something and drunk as a skunk, trying to rape his soon to be ex-wife?

Had he gone home to her for succor and comfort, telling her he had had to drink because he was hurting so badly? Bad, bad Tracy had hurt little Kyle. Tracy actually grinned at the image as Jane was reciting her little speech over the phone.

The documents in question were his will and life insurance policy, which Tracy had 'hidden' in a safe deposit box

at the bank, along with her own important papers and some jewelry from her grandmother.

She was taken aback by Jane's call, and realized the woman was probably trying on some level to 'lay claim' to her new man. Tracy certainly wasn't going to stand in the way. She told Jane she would mail the documents to Kyle or his attorney.

"I'll pick them up," Jane had said.

"No, sorry. I can't release documents like that to a stranger." Tracy had enjoyed that little dig, and Jane huffed a bit but backed down. She arranged to have them sent by certified mail since, 'It's too painful for Kyle to have to see you right now.'

Tracy bit off her own retort that she'd bet it was. The jerk was probably totally humiliated by his horrible behavior the other night. Either that, or he conveniently didn't remember a thing.

Not referring to the incident, Kyle had recently sent her a long heartfelt letter about her betrayals and said, despite it all, he still loved her. He admonished her that she owed him, owed the relationship, so much more than she had given it. Tracy thought a lot about what he had written. She realized she herself had spent much of their marriage feeling that Kyle 'owed' her something as well. In the end, neither got what they felt was their 'due.'

She had asked Paul, "How do we get

to this point then, where we feel someone owes us something?"

"When we have given more than we should have," he answered.

"Why should? Tracy asked, confused.

"Because. We didn't give because we wanted to be generous. We gave because we wanted to control."

Ah. Bingo.

Things had gone pretty smoothly, once attorneys got into the process, and the proceedings became more impersonal. There were a few phone calls at night when an obviously drunk Kyle called to scream at Tracy, calling her horrible names and finally breaking down in tears over the phone. The calls

shook Tracy badly. She got Caller ID and took to screening all calls after that.

Tracy blossomed as she explored her relationship with Paul. Free at last of the constraints of deceit and obligation, she began to fully realize the possibilities opening up in her life. She couldn't afford to stay in their house alone, and there was no alimony in Texas – not that she'd have taken it. She could take care of herself.

Kyle said he felt attached to the house, and would buy her half of the appraised value, after they paid all their joint debts. This suited Tracy, even though most of the debt was for things Kyle wanted and she hadn't cared about at all, like the large Jacuzzi bathtub, the

ridiculously expensive redwood deck, and his \$20,000 stereo system.

She didn't care about the money. She didn't care about her job, either, and began to dream of finding something new. She didn't know exactly what she wanted to do, but she knew she wanted to dosomething. Maybe she would go back to school and finish her degree. Maybe she would leave Houston altogether, go to New York and find Paul.

Paul, who really would have waited those thousand years, who'd secretly been in love with Tracy almost from the first time they'd spoken on the phone, was the one who kept advising, urging her to wait.

"This isn't the time to leap into action, Tracy. I know it feels like it is, but trust me. I've been there. What's important, is a lesson I learned a long time ago. When you aren't sure what to do, the best thing to do is nothing. Wait; take your time. Let things settle themselves. You and I have all the time in the world."

When Tracy spoke longingly to him of their meeting, of her coming to see him, he said, "Listen, I have a better idea. Why don't I come to you? You have enough going on right now without hopping a plane to New York. Let me come to see you. We'll make a weekend of it."

"Oh, I couldn't have you here," Tracy

responded. The thought of her darling Paul lying where Kyle had lain was repellent to her.

"Not there, silly. I'll get a hotel room. What's the big deal? It'll be better anyway, on neutral territory. Just you and me. We'll get to find out at last if what we feel is real. "

And now he was winging his way to her. Maybe that's why she was so damn nervous. What if it wasn't real? What if it was only their shared desire; their urgent need to connect with someone that had led them to cling to each other? She had spent the last nine years fooling herself that Kyle was the perfect man for her. Apparently, her powers of self-deception were rather remarkable, she

thought ruefully.

Her sandals rubbed her heels. She knew better than to wear new shoes in airports. She found the monitor and stood blinking up at it, applying her lipstick, feeling the contour of her lips with the tube of pretty pink color that matched her fingernails and toenails.

The plane had already landed, and she wasn't at the gate, like she wanted to be. Shit, shit, shit. She hurried toward gate four, hoping he wasn't standing there, thinking she wasn't going to show.

And then she saw him.

He was smiling at her, grinning as he watched her hurrying toward him in her stupid shoes. He moved toward her like a hip-hung jungle cat, his stride

confident and deliberate.

They met midway and Tracy felt suddenly shy. Paul took her in his arms and held her. He was laughing, teasing her. "I looked up and saw this gorgeous woman running down the hallway. I was like, man, who is that girl, in such a hurry? Who is she so eager to meet?" He released her and she looked up at him, a little embarrassed, but he was smiling so widely, so clearly delighted to see her, that she relaxed and laughed with him.

"Fucking shoes," she said.

"Take 'em off, why don't you?"

"Here? In the airport?"

"Sure, why not? It's warm out. You give me the keys and tell me where you're parked. I'll bring the car around."

Paul was dressed in a dark blue cotton shirt with no collar, tucked into very faded and clearly much worn blue jeans. He had probably just grabbed the first thing out of his closet. His dark hair was long, pulled back in a ponytail, shiny against the fluorescent lights of the terminal.

"Where's your stuff?" she asked, as she slipped the useless sandals from her feet.

"You're looking at it," he said, hoisting his duffel bag up over his shoulder. "I travel light." He was only staying for the weekend, after all. But no whips and chains? She mentally grinned at herself, realizing she was a little disappointed, having expected an

arsenal of BDSM toys like Guy carried around.

Reading her mind he nudged her and said, "What, you were expecting a whipping post and a cat o' nine tails? Didn't think they'd travel too well, if you know what I mean."

His accent was so cute, so New York. She grinned up at him, not denying it. She was used to him reading her mind anyway. It was comforting in a way, to be so understood. To be loved for, rather than in spite of, who you were.

God, she was here with him, with Paul, in the flesh! She wanted to kiss him, but he was striding along, eager to get outside and get the car. When they exited the terminal he stopped and

dropped his bag. Taking Tracy in his arms, Paul brought his face down to hers and gave her a long probing kiss that left her literally weak in the knees. It was he who finally pulled away, and Tracy held on, not wanting to let go.

Paul smiled down at her and chided gently, "Let me go, Tracy love. Let me get the car so we can get out of here." A little embarrassed, Tracy let go of him and pointed him in the direction of her car, hoping he'd find it. A few minutes later he pulled up and she climbed in the passenger seat, feeling comfortable with him at the wheel.

They drove along in relative silence, discussing the best way to get to the motel where she had booked a room for

him. She made sure in advance it was nice, and bought a bouquet of pretty spring flowers in honor of his arrival. She also bought strawberries and bottles of water. As she was placing them on the low bureau, she gave a rueful smile, remembering the first time with Guy, and the handcuffs and Dr. Peppers.

When she told Paul about the cuffs, he snorted in disgust. "No real Dom would use metal cuffs! They can break your skin if you struggle in them. That's the point, I guess, but they aren't toys. No, soft leather cuffs are much better." She remembered that talk; he had been so nonjudgmental about her experience, and her reactions. He did seem a little jealous of Guy, though at the time, she

had no idea of his true feelings for her.

"We meet at last," he said, smiling at her as he drove. He had cute dimples in either cheek that delighted her. They hadn't shown in his picture. Feeling excited, but nervous, Tracy chattered about Houston traffic, the horrible humid weather, where he had to turn, what lane he should be in, and when his return flight was. Underneath her chatter, inside her head, a little voice was chanting, "Oh my god, oh my god, he's here. He's here. I can't believe he's here. Oh my god, he's here."

Paul took a hand off the wheel and put it on her thigh. His hand was large and firm, and Tracy felt a pulse of current run from his fingers to her leg,

through the thin fabric of her dress. He pushed the dress up slightly, placing his warm hand on her cool flesh.

"Shh," he whispered, still smiling. "It's me, Tracy. You already know me. Better than anyone ever has. It's just me, and I'm not going anywhere."

Tracy calmed, and the voices stilled. She focused on his beautiful hand on her thigh, and sat back. She recalled something he said recently, during one of their endless phone calls. He told her he had never felt so committed to someone before, and how strange it was, since they hadn't even met yet. "I've always kept my bags packed, figuratively speaking," he told her. "I've always held something back. I've never been able to

share of myself the way I can with you. I can tell you anything, and you're still there for me. I've never felt so trusted, so safe with anyone. Tracy, I feel like I could leave my shoes under your bed, if you know what I mean. Unpack the bags and put them away. No getaway plan, no escape routes. All I want is to be where you are."

When they entered the motel room, Paul dropped his duffel, and took Tracy's purse from her shoulder, then took her in his arms. He kissed her, roughly this time, no witnesses. When he let her go, she still had her head back, her eyes closed, her mouth still open like a little bird's, waiting for more of those wonderful kisses.

Instead he said, his voice hard and sexy, "Are you ready, Tracy? Because this isn't a game anymore. I'm here now. This isn't an online fantasy, angel. This is real; just you and me. Are you ready for it?"

Tracy nodded, opening large blue eyes to stare at the man of her dreams.

"Good. Because after this minute, there's no going back. There won't be any, 'no stop, stop, wait I was only kidding, I made a mistake'. There's no coy girl thing of, 'oh, Paul, I just can't do that!' You will not stop until I tell you to stop, and you will not disobey me in any way, shape or form. You belong to me. We both know that. Now's your chance, Tracy, to prove it. I don't demand

perfection. I wouldn't expect it. What I do demand is obedience, and honesty.

"You can still back out, Tracy. We can go get a bite to eat and discuss the sights of Houston, or the theory of relativity, or whatever you want to talk about. I'm serious about that, sweet girl. You are under no obligation to stay. But if you stay," he paused and put his hand on the back of her head, pulling her toward him. "If you stay, from this moment on, you are mine." He paused, his dark eyes intent upon her.

"If you wish to stay, kneel down on the floor in front of me."

Tracy knelt, her knees sinking gracefully to the thick carpet. Her heart was clamoring in her chest, but she was

breathing deeply, feeling the net of submission fall over her like a bridal veil. It was happening at last. It was happening, and she was ready.

"Raise your arms so I can take that dress off," Paul ordered, and Tracy did as he said. She waited a moment, expecting him, as men always had in the past, to admire her full round breasts, raised up prettily for him in the pink satin. But all he said was, "Take that thing off."

A little flustered, but determined to obey, she did so, and at once her dark pink nipples sprang to attention under his appraising gaze. He knelt in front of her, taking her full breast in his hands, feeling the heft of them, kissing her

mouth lightly as he did so. Bending over her, he took one stiff nipple into his mouth and pulled and bit it, leaving it shiny and impossibly pointed from his kiss. He did the same with the other.

He stood and took off his shirt, revealing a muscled chest, with curly dark hair in a Y up his sternum. Tracy devoured him with her eyes, but he didn't seem to notice. She wasn't sure if she was supposed to stay kneeling, but since he hadn't said anything, she stayed put.

Paul went to his duffel and pulled out a small whip with lots of little tresses hanging from what looked like a small billy club wrapped in soft black leather. It was nothing like that

frightening single lashed bullwhip Guy had produced those many months ago, but it looked ominous enough, and Tracy involuntarily drew in her breath.

Paul came around to the front of her and without further ado, he unzipped his jeans and pulled aside black bikini underwear to reveal an already erect penis; not huge like Kyle's, or small like Guy's, but just right, Tracy thought with an inward smile.

When he proffered it to his slave girl, she took it willingly, eagerly, into her mouth. The flesh was hot and smooth, and Paul pulled her head toward him, forcing her to take it in deep. She felt the lash of the whip before she realized what was happening. It fell with

a thud against her back. Tracy flinched and jerked with Paul's cock still stuffed in her mouth, but he didn't let her move.

Again the whip fell and she jumped, still held impaled against his cock. She was having trouble breathing, both because of his cock lodged so far back in her throat, and because of the the thrill of fear each lash of the whip generated in her. Before she began to struggle in earnest against him, Paul released her, pulling her up onto the bed.

He was on top of her, kissing her mouth, her face, her neck, his hands roaming over her bare flesh, teasing her to a frenzy of desire. His mouth drank her in, his own longing spilling out over her, making them both sigh and moan.

She felt herself completely surrendering to his lovely onslaught, when suddenly it was gone.

Opening her eyes, Tracy saw Paul standing up over her, now completely naked, his penis bobbing and glistening, his belly smooth and firm. "Get up, cunt," he ordered her, his voice husky and filled with the promise of something dangerous.

On wobbly legs, Tracy stood, also naked, eyes bright and lips slightly parted. Firmly he took her by the arm and led her to the small open closet, where a single thick rod of metal held a number of wooden hangers. Sweeping them aside, Paul said, "Grab this bar and hold it. Spread your legs as far apart as

you can. And don't move."

Tracy obeyed, gripping the cold hard metal bar, which was placed so high, she had to stand on tiptoe to reach it. She spread her legs and closed her eyes, waiting for what she knew must be her first real whipping. She wanted it so badly, she felt faint with a delicious combination of fear and aching desire.

Paul returned to her and slipped black leather cuffs around each wrist, securing them with a clip. They were shiny black, and still a little stiff from being brand new, having been purchased just for Tracy. He slipped a small piece of sturdy chain over the bar and using the clips from each cuff, chained Tracy to the bar.

A flick with his toe at her ankles forced her feet further apart. She felt his hand between her legs, his long fingers tugging gently at her labia. She was so wet her thighs were damp with her own moisture.

"I'm going to whip you now, slave girl. I'm going to start slowly, and take my time. I'm not going to stop when you're ready for me to stop. I'm going to stop when I'm ready to stop. Do you understand?"

Tracy nodded, her eyes closed, her head leaning back so that her dark hair streamed down her back. "Kiss me," he commanded, taking her face in his hand, pulling her head back and gently biting her mouth. Tracy kissed him back, her

ardent need for what he was giving her expressed in the passion of that heated, needy kiss.

She tried to hold him with her mouth, since her hands were chained above her head, but Paul pulled away, intent on the whipping he had promised her. It began slowly at first, as he had said it would. The soft tresses of leather grazed her ass and thighs, the tempo and thrust increasing as the whipping continued.

Tracy was quiet at first, deeply excited, proud of herself that she could 'take a whipping' like this with so little effort. Gauging her reaction, deciding she was ready for more, Paul let the lash land on her back, striking her with some force, so that red marks appeared where

the leather had kissed her.

Tracy jerked and screamed. Her breathing was staccato as she began to dance that timeless rhythm of one who can't escape the lash. Paul didn't let up, but continued to whip her rather severely, up and down from the top of her back to her thighs, covering her now sweating form with a crisscross of red angry lines.

Tracy's soft cries and whimpers were a constant in the room now, as Paul mercilessly beat his slave girl. He only stopped because his own need to take her overwhelmed his sadistic pleasure in making her suffer.

Quickly he released the clips and caught Tracy as she fell in his arms. He

carried her to the bed, but not to tenderly minister to her burning flesh. No, he carried her there to claim her completely.

Roughly positioning her, forcing her onto her hands and knees, he knelt behind her and pressed his hard cock into her sopping pussy, fueled by her whimpers and cries. "It's your fault," he whispered fiercely into her ear, as he fucked her hard, holding her hips so he could thrust deeply into her. "You're so beautiful, I had to whip you. And then I had to stop, because you're so beautiful. Oh God, Tracy. I love you!"

Tracy had been writhing under him, arching back into him, her skin on fire from the beating, her pussy inflamed

with need for the only man who had ever tapped into the essence of her. She had been whimpering, not from pain, but with a kind of animal yearning for her lover and what he was doing to her, but she heard his words. She heard him say he loved her.

Neither of them had ever said that to the other. Neither had dared. Tracy felt her heart expand and something tightly wound inside her released itself at that moment, leaving her free to fully give of herself, perhaps for the first time in her life.

"I have something for you, if you want it." Paul said, enigmatically. They were lying in the rumpled motel bed, eating strawberries and idly talking about nothing in particular. They were both naked and Tracy was nestled comfortably in the crook of Paul's arm.

Tracy looked at him expectantly and he continued. "It's a collar. A chain. I want to claim you in a physical way, a way you'll always remember. I want to do a lot of things. I want to permanently mark you one day." Tracy thrilled at this, but stayed quiet, waiting.

"But for today, if you'll have it, I have a little present. It's symbolic really, of ownership. Of claiming you." As he spoke, Paul gently disentangled himself

from Tracy and went to his bag. He took out a long blue velvet jewelry box and solemnly handed it to Tracy.

Smiling hugely, she opened it and exclaimed, "Oh, Paul! It's lovely."

"It looks like a necklace, but it's a collar. A permanent collar, Tracy. Once you put it on, it can't be removed without a special jeweler's tool. I want you in chains. I want you bound to me, and this little piece of silver would be a symbolic gesture on your part that you accept, willingly accept, your own slavery and servitude to me. Do you want that, darling?"

Paul waited, very still, and Tracy knew her answer meant a lot to him, that he had no preconceived notion of what it

might be. Quietly she said, her voice low and sure, "Yes, Paul. Yes, my love. I want that more than anything in the world." With a simple gesture, Tracy lifted the hair off her neck and bent gracefully toward him, offering herself.

Paul slipped the slender silver necklace around her throat, releasing the spring catch that would render it permanent. Tracy sat back, laughing happily, her eyes glinting as she knelt at Paul's belly and took his lovely cock into her mouth, teasing it back to life. Just who was enslaved at that moment was hard to say.

CHAPTER 9

Tracy in Chains

Snow was drifting softly against the window outside Paul's Manhattan apartment. Thirty stories up, no one could see in to a sight that would surely have shocked them.

A naked young woman was bent over, straddling a sturdy wooden sawhorse. She was bound, at the wrists and ankles, with much used soft leather cuffs, clipped to stout eyehooks embedded in the wood. In her mouth was a bright red ball gag like one she had seen months ago, in her former life. It

seemed like eons ago.

Her pussy, which rested bare against the smooth wood, was stuffed with a rather large flesh colored dildo that was operated by a remote controlled battery. In her ass there was a medium sized butt plug, significantly bigger than the one she had purchased for herself and timidly inserted on her own those many months ago.

This one had been inserted by her lover, as she bent over, her own hands holding open her butt cheeks while the color sprang up her neck and cheeks in a hot, rosy rush. Everything to do with her bottom seemed to embarrass Tracy unduly, but Paul worked with her to desensitize her and help her get over

what he called her ridiculous shyness.

"There is no modesty, no hesitation, for a slave girl to her master. That is an essential lesson, darling. You refuse me nothing. The word 'no' is not in your vocabulary. I own you, plain and simple, and as such, I will do with you as I please. I also love you, however, and would never betray the total trust you must have in me."

How different from her relationship with Kyle, though on the surface there might seem to be similarities. Kyle had certainly been the 'dominant' one in their relationship – it was his opinions, his taste in art and music, his moods to go out or stay in – that dictated their lives together. Tracy had been complaisant in

the arrangement, allowing, even encouraging his control, because of her misplaced admiration for him and her own secret sense of worthlessness.

She and Paul were truly friends, partners and lovers – consensual giving partners who both relished their respective roles as sub and Dom and cherished each other. Kyle had been an extension of her parents – withholding, aloof, supremely confident of his abilities, and always questioning, or being indifferent to hers.

Tracy learned to fade into the background. It was safer, especially when her stepfather was drunk and looking for someone to bully. There were many nights, when he came home

drunk and flipped on Tracy's bedroom light, jerking her from sleep, to rage at her for failing, yet again, to clean something to his specifications.

If the dishes hadn't been loaded into the dishwasher, she would be forced to get up and do them at once. If they were neatly loaded and the floor carefully swept, then the cabinets needed washing down, or the trash had been placed too close to the house. Tracy had learned never to look to her mother for support during these episodes. Her mother would vanish, leaving Tracy to bear the brunt of her husband's insanity.

Perhaps that was why she kept her own home obsessively clean – some subconscious fear that her stepfather

would appear and wrench her from her bed, holding her arm so tightly it left bruises the next day.

That was precisely why Paul didn't allow Tracy to do a thing in his apartment. He knew her history, though he rarely referred to it. In his home, for once in her life, Paul was determined she should be treated like a princess.

It had made her very uncomfortable at first, as she was so used to being sole caretaker of the home and had actually come to believe it was 'women's work.' Paul continued to refuse her, gently removing a dish towel from her hand if she tried to wipe down the counter, whisking the dishes from her hand if she went to clear them.

He did allow her to cook; Tracy was a wonderful cook and Paul had a hearty and appreciative appetite. She loved to make him fancy full course meals while he was at work, complete with appetizer and dessert. It was such fun to go shopping in the little markets near his apartment, getting fruits and vegetables in one stall, breads and baking needs in a tiny little bakery nearby. She was becoming friendly with the old butcher on the corner who saved her select cuts of meat.

She realized with a little shock that she had never been unemployed since she was 16. She had some savings from Kyle's 'buyout', but still she was concerned about finances. Having quit

her job, she had no stream of money coming in and no particular prospects.

Paul had convinced her to take just one month. "Please," he had entreated her, "Just spend one month with me here in my apartment. Don't do anything. No housework, no job hunting, no obsessing about the past or the future. Just be with me.

"Be my total sex slave slut girl. Exist just for us, for you and me. Let's take this unique and amazing opportunity and just be together." Of course, she'd allowed herself to be persuaded, and found herself filled with a tremendous energy and deep sense of wellbeing. It wasn't just being in love, and it wasn't being in lust. It wasn't only the fact that

she was finally with the man she had dreamed about for so long, the reality of whom was better than the fantasy! It was all these things, but more importantly, she was finally at peace with herself. She was happy to be Tracy, and didn't secretly yearn to be someone more glamorous, or smarter, or more self-assured.

When she tried to tell Paul this, and tried to give him the credit, he would stop her cold. "Wrong, Tracy. Nothing to do with me. It all was you. Any changes you've made, any changes you feel, they all came from within you. You're pretty terrific, you know."

She grinned, and almost believed him. Maybe in time, she would fully

believe him. At the moment she wasn't thinking about any of that, as she was bent and naked, tied to this wooden beam. She was thinking about how he had ratcheted it up so she was just high enough not to be able to quite balance, which forced her to put her weight on her poor pussy, splayed open against the wood and stuffed with the vibrator he had her pick out.

They were in the Village, and he took her into one of those basement sex boutiques. What a different experience from the dingy little place she'd found in Houston. This one was brightly lit and covered from floor to ceiling with S & M paraphernalia. There were whips of all sizes and colors, riding crops,

collars, ball gags, full leather face masks, cock and ball cages, violet wands and any number of other items, some of which even Paul didn't know what they were for.

It was late, as they had come after dinner and an off Broadway play, and the place was alive with the 'leather crowd', many in full costume. A gay submissive man was being led around on a leash by his lover, who invited a blushing Tracy to feel his slave boy's stomach. "Feel those abs. Abs of steel. I make him work out every day. Isn't he just gorgeous!"

Instead of a few old wooden planks serving as shelves, all the smaller items were encased in glass, so a person had

to ask to see them. Tracy was mortified when Paul instructed her to ask to see the vibrators and the nipple clamps.

Putting his arm protectively around her, Paul whispered in her ear, "Remember who you belong to. Go on, I'm right here." She found the courage to ask, and was presented with a velvet board covered with all sorts of clamps, many of which she had no idea even existed. Not only nipple clamps, but nipple clips, nipple jewelry, pussy clamps and cock clamps.

Paul finally chose for her, a simple three-piece set of clamps, one for each nipple and a single chain that hung down between them. "What's that one for?" she'd asked, realizing as she spoke, what

it was for. Her pussy! No way could she endure the bite of that tightly sprung little clamp on her tender sex!

Paul had laughed at her, his eyes twinkling as he reminded her that she could 'endure' exactly what he decided she could endure. His tone was light, but she knew he meant it. He took her into the shop bathroom, made her unbutton her blouse and remove her bra.

"Get your nipples hard for me, slut," he commanded, his voice low. Feeling jittery with nerves, terrified it was going to hurt too much to bear, Tracy obediently did as she was told, feeling that wonderful combination of fear and pleasure surge through her as she watched him adjust and open one of the

little alligator clips.

It closed down upon her nipple and stung like a bee. She cried out, but just as suddenly the pain was tolerable, and she stilled, waiting for him to attach the other one. She breathed in deeply through her nose, but didn't cry out. Paul had been impressed with her bravery and composure.

"Very good, angel. Very, very good. Let's just leave those on. Close your blouse. Put your bra in your purse and you can close your coat.

"Leave them on?" she had asked tremulously. Her feelings were mixed, as was so often the case when pain and pleasure combined inside her, creating a much heightened sensation that

superceded either. Her pussy felt swollen and needy between her legs.

"Don't worry. They don't do any damage. Nothing permanent anyway."

She became very familiar with those clamps, and learned to tolerate them with barely a sigh – until he took them off, and the blood went rushing and tingling back into her sensitized nipples. It always made her yelp.

Back into the showroom, Tracy was forced to select several vibrators and dildos, with Paul's encouragement and suggestion. She, of course, went straight to the smallest butt plug, but he added two more graduated sizes, playfully squeezing her ass as he did so.

The medium one was now deep in

her ass. She could feel it against the dildo shoved up her cunt. The sound of a door opening, then a click and a whir – Paul had turned on the pussy vibrator and, with the direct contact of the wood against her cunt, Tracy began to shudder involuntarily from the vibration.

Paul, dressed in a simple cashmere sweater and his ancient jeans, his feet bare, came around to his captive slave girl. "You look so incredibly hot, Tracy. Can you feel it? Can you feel that rubber cock fucking your cunt right now?"

Tracy tried to move her head; to nod. With the large red ball pressing her tongue back toward her throat she could only gurgle her response. Paul observed her body, watching the tremors the

vibrator was creating inside her, as her clit throbbed against the polished wood.

Kneeling in front of her, Paul carefully attached the nipple clamps to each distended tip of her breasts, which were hanging freely over each side of the narrow wooden beam she was draped over. The permanent chain around her neck glinted in the soft overhead light.

He saw her eyes widen; the only reaction she could make, bound and gagged as she was. "Are you comfortable, darling? As comfortable as can be, I mean, given your situation." Paul grinned, running his hand lightly over her smooth back and ass, and then checking her arms and legs for

circulation and comfort.

Tracy nodded. Paul was very good about positioning her so that nothing fell asleep or cramped. If they were engaged in extended bondage play, as they were this snowy winter evening, he would check her periodically, to make sure she was comfortable and safe.

"I'll let you down soon, slave. Because I want to fuck that gorgeous ass of yours. But not yet, not yet. I'm gonna whip you first, while that cock's turned on in your cunt, and that plug is shoved up your asshole. And guess what, today's the day you get to get a taste of the cane."

Tracy jerked, trying to lift her head, struggling briefly, uselessly, against her bonds. The cane. Paul had showed her

the set of canes he kept in a little umbrella stand in the corner of the den, which he had converted into their 'playroom'.

Long supple rods of bamboo; some covered in colored leathers, some just varnished and smoothed to a biting luster. All of them were guaranteed to cut the flesh if used improperly, and raise lovely welts if wielded by a master, as Paul certainly was.

Tracy could take a fair amount of pain, Paul had discovered. Not only could she take it; but she was something of a pain slut, he would tease her. She could practically orgasm just from a nice whipping with a heavy flogger. He would whip her until she dropped, or his

arm was tired, and then fuck her, wherever they happened to be. A few thrusts and Tracy was coming, screaming her pleasure as she bucked and arched against him, pulling him into her with her hips, her hands, her whole self.

But she was afraid of the cane, of the slicing sound as it cut through the air, of what it must do to flesh. She'd seen pictures on the net of women ravaged by the cane, their backs and buttocks covered in dark purple welts and bruises, and it frightened her.

"That's not what we're about, sweetheart," Paul had assured her. "That's brutality. It really has nothing to do with what you and I have. Our mutual

pleasure in the giving and receiving of erotic pain. I would never cut your flesh. I could never harm my most valued possession. You have to know that, don't you?"

She nodded; she did know that, but she also knew she was still afraid of those canes, and, so far, he hadn't used one on her. Now, bound and gagged, she had nothing to say in the matter. She couldn't protest, or try to edge away, or distract him from his purpose.

On some level, that freed her to relax. She couldn't get away; couldn't resist, so why bother? Already deeply aroused from this bondage, and from being spread and stuffed with dildos, on display for her lover as he watched her

edge toward battery-driven orgasm, she was open to whatever came next.

What choice did she have? Reading her mind, as he so often did, Paul remarked, "You really have no choice. I've decided you're ready for your first caning. You've earned it, if you will. You deserve it. You deserve to feel the bite of the rod against taut flesh. You want to suffer for me; you say it often enough. Well now's your chance."

His hands were on her ass, smoothing, preparing the flesh. He could feel the dildo, still buried in her pussy, emanating its vibrations from deep inside her. He could see from her flushed skin and the way she was moving that Tracy was near orgasm.

Deliberately, he flicked the switch, turning off the vibrator. Much better to have her right on the edge of release, her sensations heightened, so she could fully appreciate the cutting kiss of the cane.

"I'm going to mark you tonight, my love. Nothing permanent, but it should last a few days. Ready?" Not expecting a response from his gagged slave, Paul brought the cane down on Tracy's right butt cheek, hitting the fleshy mark right across the center.

Tracy gurgled and screamed behind the gag, but very little sound escaped. Paul hit the other cheek, watching in satisfaction as the long thin lines left by each strike were rapidly turning to a dark pink, the skin rising as blood

rushed to the injured spot.

He knew just how hard to hit. It hurt, there was no mistake about it, but he wouldn't cut the skin, or create any permanent marks. Tracy lay still, and he walked around to the front of her to better gauge her response.

"You ok, baby? You just got your first caning. Can you take it?"

Tracy nodded, though her eyes were bright with tears.

"Shall I take out the gag?" Tracy nodded. Her jaw was aching from being forced open for so long. Paul obligingly unbuckled the gag and let it fall to the floor. Kneeling in front of her, he smoothed her hair from her face, licking her dry lips, gently biting and kissing her

mouth.

His cock was straining painfully in his pants, but he would deny himself a while longer. Tracy looked impossibly sexy and he knew he wouldn't last much longer before he'd have to let her down and fuck her. A few more licks of the cane and he'd move her to the futon, already made and waiting in a corner to receive the lovers.

Moving back around his girl, Paul whipped her with the cane, landing well aimed blows across her bottom and thighs, leaving her flesh marked with fiery lines. Tracy screamed with each strike, and was on the edge of begging him to stop, when Paul could contain himself no longer.

"I have to fuck you!" he cried, unclipping her wrists and ankles from their wooden pillory. Quickly and efficiently he removed the vibrator and butt plug from Tracy's pussy and ass, dropping them in the bowl of soapy water he had prepared earlier.

Gently he helped her from her perch, to her feet. He led her to the soft downy quilts piled on the futon and pressed her down toward it, on her belly. Tracy was breathing deeply, moving slowly, as if in a trance. It was what some called 'submissive head space,' and others called flying. It was that delicious and elusive state that a skilled Dom could bring a sub to, where they no longer experienced pain as pain precisely, but

as a perfect extension of pleasure. The two became indistinguishable and equally desirable, both immeasurably heightened.

It had the potential to be dangerous, because at that point the submissive no longer had a clear sense of what was safe; what was appropriate. Paul recalled the scene party he had taken Tracy to, where a woman was bound to a large wooden cross and whipped until she slumped, seemingly unconscious, in her rough rope bonds.

Tracy had watched, fascination and horror doing battle on her face, as the woman was savagely beaten by her husband/Master. "Oh, Paul," she had whispered, "Isn't he going too far? Isn't

someone going to stop him?"

"Don't worry, he knows what he's doing. They've been together for years. She needs that kind of whipping, and in a public place, to really get off. Look at her. Look at all those pale and darker lines covering her entire back, ass and thighs. She's beaten like this regularly, and always kept freshly marked. She loves it; she lives for it. It makes her fly."

"Fly?" Tracy was looking more closely now, seeing the roughened skin and the clear evidence of constant whippings. She found that her mouth was dry and her reaction confused, at once put off, and deeply aroused by what she was watching.

Paul explained in words, what Tracy was now experiencing in fact, for the first time herself. She wasn't in a trance exactly; she was perfectly lucid and aware of her surroundings. She was in something of an altered state – at once deeply at peace and fiercely aroused, ready to do anything, absolutely anything, her master should require of her.

A dominant friend of Paul's once explained, "When my girl gets like that, you could say, 'I'm going to cut off your arm now, darling,' and she would smile dreamily and say, 'Yes, Master.'" The point being that the Dom had the responsibility for both of them, to lead her as far into that little piece of heaven

as she could go without endangering her physical safety.

Paul admired Tracy for a moment, her loose easy way of moving, her head back slightly, lips parted, eyes glistening with a soft love directed solely at him. He remembered that scene party, and how Tracy had surprised herself in discovering she was something of an exhibitionist!

Tracy's blouse that evening was a sheer pale pink, and he hadn't permitted her to wear a bra. The blouse was tucked into a very tight and short black leather skirt that revealed the bottoms of her garters and the tops of her silky black stockings. Her nipples had been poking alluringly against the fabric of

her blouse all evening.

Paul had ordered her to open her blouse so he could attach her nipple clamps, but that night they weren't hidden in a bathroom; they were right out in the open in the rented ballroom of a hotel, surrounded by people in various states of dress and undress. There were other people there already flashing breasts and asses and even cocks, bound in leather or metal, or just exposed for the slave's humiliation and the master's pleasure.

Testing Tracy's self-proclaimed desire to submit to him, to obey him at this party and do exactly what he told her, Paul gave her this order and waited to see what she would do. He watched

her as she bit her lip, resisting her first impulse to refuse, to protest, to keep her modesty.

She looked into his eyes, and, a determined expression on her face, she slowly unbuttoned the blouse, revealing her luscious round breasts with their dark pink tips, all ready to feel the bite of his clamps.

Paul was very pleased with her obedience. He clipped first one and then the other little torture device to her sensitive nipples, as she hissed her acknowledgement of the bite. "Now go get us some coffee," he said, sitting back to watch the action.

Tracy did as he said, her face burning, but utterly determined to obey.

She slid gracefully from him on her high heels, no longer wobbling as she had done so long ago in that horrible motel room where Guy had had her wear imitation ill-fitting patent leather stilettos. These shoes tonight were of the softest leather and fit her feet perfectly. She and Paul had shopped for quite a while to find just the right shoes.

Her long lean legs looked even longer in those 5" heels, and many pairs of eyes followed her appreciatively, as she made her way to the coffee bar. Leaning forward a little to add the cream, Tracy suddenly found herself in front of a short young man whose eyes were exactly level to her bare and chained breasts.

He seemed unsteady on his feet for a moment, as if he were actually going to fall against her, his head landing between her breasts. Stammering something to her, he blushed crimson and sputtered to a stop. She literally didn't understand a word he said, hearing only, "hummina, hummina, hummina," like some modern day Ralph Cramden, at a total loss for words.

The experience amused her, and made her relax more. When she'd first entered the party, it had seemed like a gathering of the 'beautiful people' from some dark Gothic S amp;M dream – all long limbs and leather and chains. Here was just a regular Joe, as nervous as she was, and as unhinged by the nudity and

chains as she would have been without Paul at her side.

She realized she liked being exposed! She felt proud of her body for the first time, and actually stuck out her chest a little as she wended her way back to Paul, coffee cups carefully balanced in each hand.

Paul had observed the whole thing, smiling widely as she returned. He teased her, "What a slut! Sticking your tits in that poor bastard's face! I should give you to him for the night, for leading him on like that!"

Tracy felt her own cheeks turn rosy from his teasing, but she wasn't displeased. She became serious and asked, "You would actually give me to

someone? Like Emmanuel?" (They'd rented the movies.)

"Of course I would, Tracy. If that's what I wanted to do. Do you have a problem with that?"

"I – I don't know, Paul. I mean, without you..." Tracy trailed off, confused. She had promised in theory to do whatever Paul commanded of her, sexually, and that included giving her body to whomever he chose. Somehow, in her mind's eye, Paul would always be there with her.

"I don't, though," he added, smiling. "Right now, I can't envision giving you to someone else without me being there. We will probably play with others, Tracy, when we feel ready, but right

now I can't imagine wanting you to be somewhere I'm not, especially not in the arms of another man!"

Here in his apartment, he watched his lover swaying gracefully, her eyes shining. He wanted her so badly he couldn't wait another second. "Get on your hands and knees; I want your ass," he ordered, his voice hoarse with pent up need.

Tracy crouched as ordered, suppressing a little sigh. She desperately wanted to feel his gorgeous, hard cock thrusting into her pussy. She longed to buck and wriggle against it, to feel her own rising orgasm as he held her hips and used her body.

She didn't ask. These weeks had

taught her that much at least. She didn't ask for her own needs to be met, or what she perceived to be her needs. Paul determined what her needs were, sexually speaking, and Paul decided if she was going to come, when and how, and even with whom, though so far it had only been with him.

"It isn't about you," he would say to her, as he did what he pleased. On one level she understood what he meant. As the submissive, the 'bottom', she theoretically existed solely for his, the Dom's, pleasure. Her orgasms were incidental, or if not incidental, entirely at his whim.

On another level she knew what he said wasn't entirely true. They didn't

share the black and white world of Dom and sub, Master and slave, that was outlined so carefully in the many articles she had read on the subject, and were debated endlessly in the chat rooms by supposed authorities.

Into that heady mix of sadistic sexual torture and submissive yielding, was thrown in the most important piece of the equation. The piece that was missing from so many of the articles and explanations she had garnered in her limited surfing – love.

Paul was so obviously and so hopelessly in love with her that, of course, her pleasure was paramount to him. He understood that her pleasure transcended mere self-indulgent physical

satisfaction. Her pleasure truly did derive in part from serving him, from suffering for him, from denying herself for him, from pleasing him.

It was as if they were two parts of a puzzle that had been made and then broken apart long ago, and now they were together, the various jagged and sometimes broken parts of them fitting together in a perfect, smooth whole.

It didn't imply that 'one completed the other' or that they couldn't have done just fine without each other. As Paul was fond of saying, "We don't need each other. We don't need anyone, really. No adult does, but isn't it wonderful how much we want each other?"

It still surprised her that he didn't

want to alter her. It wasn't that he wasn't interested in her. In fact, nobody in her life had been so supremely interested in her just as she was, but Paul's interest didn't seem to lead on to a desire to mold and modify.

Paul expected people would respect his space, his boundaries, and was prepared to grant the same to other people. He allowed them to come to their own conclusions, by their own routes, down their own pathways. It frightened Tracy at first; this having to think for herself, but in the end, it freed her, giving her the courage to explore her own feelings with more honesty than before. It allowed her, as trite as it sounded, to grow up.

Now she knelt on hands and knees, sinking into the soft down, her ass and thighs a crisscross of fire, her pussy soaked and twitching, her little nether opening being smeared with lubricant by her lover, who would, in a moment, order her to spread her cheeks for him.

The first time he had told her to do that, Tracy had resisted. When she finally obeyed, her face was the color of beets as she imagined him critically examining her puckered little asshole.

In fact, the physical act of holding her cheeks apart didn't allow her to tense her anal muscles nearly as much, and entry was markedly less painful than it might have been. Now she was waiting for his command to grab her ass, as she

felt his warm strong body crouching behind her.

A moan of feral pleasure was wrenched from Tracy when Paul surprised her by entering her pussy, lifting her slightly at her hips to give himself better access. The unexpected but delicious invasion unhinged Tracy, who was already emotionally and physically extended from the lengthy and difficult bondage, and the virgin caning.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," she gushed, the words a constant litany as she arched in feline pleasure against his body.

"Shh, stop that. Don't thank me, silly. Hush. I'm doing what I want. You know that. I only do what I want." Tracy

ignored him, bucking and pushing, seizing the moment before he withdrew, to steal her own desperately needed release.

"Can I?" she whispered, almost choking on the words as he savagely thrust into her.

"Yes, yes. Come for me, Tracy. Now." And she did, blindly, the world exploding. Heart pounding, ass still on fire, she tried to sink into the soft quilts.

"Oh no you don't," Paul said, his hard cock still inside her. "I'm not done with you. Spread your little ass, slut girl. You're not done till I am, as you well know." Tracy forced herself back to her hands and knees, reaching back to spread her welted cheeks for her master.

She was still stretched from the butt plug and his cock slid easily into her nether opening, with only the slightest pain.

Paul moaned his very evident satisfaction as her tight ass squeezed his cock until he exploded with pleasure, all the delicious longing of the last hours honed down into this final perfect experience. He came hard inside her, then fell heavily against her.

She was permitted, at last, to fall to the soft bed and lay still, his heart dancing against her back, his face next to hers, his voice whispering softly how he loved her. Was this the happily ever after ending? Oh no, it was only the beginning.

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