

LOVE'S CARESS

by JLNicky

CHAP 1

Subtitled: Sheri

Being the only girl of five children, Sheri had been forced to learn the girl's ropes of life on her own. Although her mother was available for some information, she didn't always feel satisfied with the answers she received.

Why do we have to sit down to potty? Because, women are not physically made the same as boys are, dear. Why do boys get to take off their shirt outside and girls can't? Cause that is the rule dear. When you're older you'll understand.

Her four older brothers were helpful only to a certain degree, which Sheri decided was far into the colder region of the thermometer. She discovered they were completely ignorant concerning feminine matters and it made her frustrated. So, in standing with family tradition, she sat down and made a list. Since she was only four at the time, her mental arguments seemed a bit scattered and one sided, nonetheless, important to her four-year-old way of thinking. Her crayon scribbles resembled some of the letters, but the list was literate only to her. She used blue for the boy's side and pink for the girl's side. A black line split the paper down the middle. When she was finished, she brought it down to the family dinner table and put it beside her plate. Once dinner started and food was shared, she asked her mother if she could make an announcement. Her mother quieted the table and looked over at her four-year-old daughter with an indulgent smile.

Sheri thanked her mother and sat up on her knees on the chair to address the crew. Her father looked over at her mother and noted a small shrug thrown his way, their eyes meeting with silent communication.

Sheri began by reporting to the curious six pairs of blue eyes studying her that she had made a very important decision. Unfolding her crayon list, she calmly stated boys are different and girls are better! It was such a profound statement in her own mind that she was instantly puzzled by the response. Her four brothers laughed. Her father and mother both raised their eyebrows at her statement and turned to give each other another silent look. Sheri had been brought up in a household where rudeness was not accepted. She felt an ember of anger grow inside and frowned at her brothers' laughing antics with displeasure.

Her mother noticed the storm clouds growing in the young girl's eyes and clapped her hands once. The four boys quieted instantly.

"You boys listen to your sister. She has something important that she wants to tell you."

Sheri thanked her mom again and looked down at her own writings on the list. Glancing

at her mother once more before continuing, she received a nod. She didn't notice the suppressed smile on her mother's lips or the slight heightened flush of her father's face as she begins listing the obvious factors that made her decision.

Girls were pretty. Boys couldn't be.

Girls were honest. Boys were known to lie.

Girls were cleaner. Boys never stayed clean.

Girls loved animals. Boys were bad with animals.

Girls could sing better than boys

Girls can cook better than boys

Girls can wear make-up and perfume and boys can't

Sheri looked up to see her family looking back at her with different expressions. Her mother was smiling widely. Her father wore a sheepish grin. All four of her brothers were rolling their eyes. She looked back at her mother and gave a small smile. Her mother nodded agreeing with her. Sheri relaxed slightly.

"Why do you think this is important, Sheri, dear?" Her mother's sweet voice asked the baby girl.

"It's important cause they..." she pointed to her brothers who all grinned back at her with various looks of sarcasm, "...don't know anything about girls!"

Her mother looked at the four boys sitting at her table. She grinned widely and then looked over at her husband. Sheri didn't understand why her daddy turned his eyes down to his plate.

"Don't you agree with me, Daddy? Girls are better than boys?" she asked, in her sweet high-pitched innocent voice, her earnest expression seeking agreement and approval from both her parents.

He looked over at his dark haired baby girl and back at his boys, who looked back at him with glances that displayed their confidence in this matter. Their dad would straighten out the girl issue. He helplessly looked over at his wife. She sat grinning delightedly, her eyes as blue as the summer sky. He fell into her gaze once again. Yep, he thought internally and turned to respond to his littlest. "Girls sure are better, pumpkin."

The boys gasped in astonishment. They looked at him as if he had grown three heads. He hardened his gaze at their vocalized reproach. Looking over to his wife, he sank

into the love he found staring back at him. He reached out and took her hand and kissed her palm softly.

Sheri smiled with delight and clapped her small hands repeatedly. Holding up the list she had made, she finalized her new philosophy with the best argument she could make.

“I know girls are better ‘cause I’m a girl.”

Her father leaned over to his wife and murmured into her ear, “You just had to have a girl, didn’t you?” They both chuckled together, eyeballing their four-year-old miracle.

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It didn’t take too long before her brothers came around to her way of thinking. Within a year’s time, the eldest child, Thomas, started to agree with her. Before long, another was on her side, then another. Her world began to ring with the sounds of talk about girls.

Although she was only at the tender young years, the boys began to ask her opinion about things. What shirt should I wear? Do I look OK? Do you think I should give my Twinkie to her? Will she like that?

Sheri drew a line internally as she grew. She refrained from discussing any girl’s likes or dislikes with her brothers, feeling they should learn these things on their own. Up until her 10th birth year, she thought the cause was hopeless. This was the year she caught her oldest brother, Thomas, learning the definite likes and dislikes of his high school freshman prom date, Mitzi Anne Carmichael.

She encountered them getting familiar in the backyard tree house. With her years of finesse and expertise in snooping, she refrained from interrupting by viewing her study subjects through the available tree house window.

This was her first visual experience with sex. They were both naked. It was the unknown adventure. Sheri felt thrilled, but found it ended so quickly. She almost wondered if something was wrong. They were together touching, then suddenly apart. Mitzi lay quiet and Thomas rested, lying half on top of her.

“I’m sorry, Mitzi. I didn’t mean to...”

“It’s OK, Tom. It felt good,” she murmured softly.

Sheri didn’t stick around much longer, as her subjects both began to move around. She made it back to her room to wonder at what she had seen. She felt overly proud of herself for not giggling at the bare backside of her brother wiggling in the air. She also made a solemn vow not to tease her brother in the future. Somehow, she knew in her

young mind there just might be more opportunities in the future.

As she grew up, she bloomed into a young lady. Her shape moved from short to gangly to tall and statuesque. She raced upward in height along with the others in her family. Height aside, she was still popular and outgoing. School became a chore in which she excelled, but escaped from by daydreaming. She had much to think on. To see such wonderful sights of sexual exhibitions was the ultimate distraction. She did have four older brothers to learn from, after all.

Although for some it might have been harmful, Sheri spent an extreme amount of time studying and examining the different styles and conversations. Her young mind found the entire subject of sex fascinating. From her brother Thomas to Danny to Jeffrey to David, she pursued the knowledge of sexual intercourse. The tree house seemed to be the preferred spot for the brothers' adventurous exploits. She had a very effective research plan and was quite positive of the end conclusion when it came to her TV screen of life. Sex was good and she wanted to try it too!

At the age of fourteen, she started her monthly womanhood ritual. She recognized this as a signal. It would soon be her turn in the tree house. She began to search for a suitable candidate she could be with.

She went through almost the entire school year without an answer to her problem. Then, she noticed Peter. He was available and cute. He was smart and nice. Most of all, he kept glancing at Sheri all throughout their sixth period algebra class. Now she had a boy, a plan, and, of course, she had the tree house.

It was like cutting soft butter to get him to enter the aerial house in the huge oak tree. It was like spreading the butter to get him excited. Sheri drew on years of information stored in her synapses. She used many techniques of touching, kissing, and sounds. Peter temporarily left the earth for a heavenly plane somewhere above.

Sheri realized her dilemma slowly. She was not excited. How did her brothers manage that one? They always seemed excited. Sheri drew a blank on how to accomplish this task. She wanted to fall into the pleased state that she had seen her brothers visit time and time again. Thinking through each scene she had witnessed, she only remembered the touching and kissing of foreplay. She began to question herself. *Why wasn't I trembling like JoAnn? Why didn't I lose control and moan like Susan? Why wasn't I glistening with perspiration like Debbie?*

Suddenly, she felt a chill. Looking down at herself, she discovered she was bathed in a light film of sweat. Her thoughts tumbled around as she realized she was extremely excited. She checked to see what Peter was doing. Nothing much. What had caused the passion to flare?

Sheri took a few precious seconds to block out Peter and think.

What was I doing? I was thinking of Debbie's skin then my skin was like hers. That made no sense. Maybe it was the moaning like Susan made? No? Suddenly, her mind shattered with the realization. It wasn't one of the girl's reactions it was all of the girls' tendencies. The girls!

Thoughts of the girls moaning, trembling, and sweating with desire fanned the flame of passion in Sheri. She almost swooned with excitement. She suddenly remembered the hardened nipples of Patricia, the excited whispers Susan made, the harsh gasp of pleasure as bodies moved together.

Sheri reveled in the fire of her body and returned to guide Peter onto his back. She raised herself over Peter and pictured a girl's swollen sex being rubbed. The arching of JoAnn's back as a tongue touched her nether lips. The desperate cries of a wanton woman rang in her ears. She didn't hear Peter anymore. She heard Susan, Patricia, and Debbie moaning in her ears, as she lost her virginity in a frenzy of climactic excitement. She exploded within and felt her world tremble in its foundation.

She must have said goodbye and returned to her bedroom, though she didn't remember it. She must have slept through the night and rose with the alarm to dress for school. She must have ridden with her brothers to be dropped off at her high school. But, she really didn't remember anything until her classmate Sandy raised her arm in class to answer a question. Sheri realized Sandy wasn't wearing a bra.

After ten long years she sat back in her chair and realized the plain facts once again. Girls were much, much better than boys!

CHAP2

Subtitled: Kate

Kate was born into her parents' busy careers. The unplanned pregnancy and eventual birth of a daughter were incorporated into the grand scheme of things and dealt with in stride. Professionally, her parents were very successful. Parentally, they immediately ensconced the infant into a nanny's care. Having borne the fruit, they left the nanny with funds to polish.

Through their broker, they purchased a provincial district house and installed Kate and the nanny inside. The elegant six bedroom, two story house became Kate's stomping grounds for early childhood.

Her parents interposed their extensive travels with visits to see their offspring, bestowing gifts and luxury items in exchange for time. Eventually, they left an exhausted child wondering if they would return. Although not unloved, she was neglected and began to feel a missing element.

At the tender age of five, Kate entered an all-girls private tutorial academy. She began the learning process. Broken from the solitude of being the 'only' child, she absorbed

the strict atmosphere unconditionally. She began to make some friends. She began to play with others. It filled a part of the neglected portion of her life a spring well of pleasure she had been acutely unaware she needed.

She began to excel in all schoolwork. She reached forward and pushed hard to be able to show her parents her worth. The school considered her an apple off the exceptional parental tree. Her parents begged apologies at being unable to attend her birthday celebrations. They began to send birthday checks directly to her instead of to the nanny. Kate ignored the depression and pushed on.

The competition encouraged among the children in tutelage was expected. Kate seemed to out distance her peers easily. Through letters, the school made references to advanced training beyond their capabilities and suddenly Kate was scooped up and reestablished into a pre-teen all-girls boarding school. The school held higher achievement in academics than any other around.

Without questions, Kate buckled down in her new environment and learned the new ropes to climb. She progressed quickly and developed new interests in her academic world. The added expansion of art, history and music were adapted into her ever-excelling world of arithmetic, science, English and sports.

Invariably as she grew intellectually with time, she also grew physically. Her body developed fast. She started her period at eleven. Her breasts grew larger. She stood among her peers as petite and gorgeous. Her shorter stature with blonde-haired pale features often had her being mistaken for younger. She barely noticed. She took the changes in stride.

During her final year at the teen academy, they held a mini prom night. Boys were the discussion of the week and they were discussed a lot! Kate felt a curiosity surging forward that could not be held back.

Her isolated world of girls turned her interest in boys from healthy to obsessive. She managed to talk a few girls into sneaking out and going over to the nearby 'Boarding School for Gentlemen'. The mini prom had most on edge and a few were ready to see the 'future' of their calling.

Kate met Sean that night.

Sean was a cool kid whose parents hit it big with investments. He was sixteen and made Kate feel things inside. With one glance, she fell in puppy love. Her green eyes sought his brown and locked together as if they were inseparable. His words were soft and direct. He told her he liked her. She was amazed. She finally felt like number one to someone else. Her fourteen years of life held no foundation for such affection. She floundered in her neediness and craved his attention.

They met again at the dance and Sean begged her to take a chance with him. He

kissed her that night. She became a reckless girl from then on. Her academic program became secondary as she began to take greater risks, meeting with him again and again. She led a double life, daylight versus night.

Once the routine was established and Kate was taking the bite Sean fed her, he began to reel her in. Promises of forever and constant I-love-you's filled a void Kate held inside. She had been so thirsty for love throughout her life; she didn't want to probe the significance of his groping hands and forward touch.

Touches and long kisses awoke her hormones and brought them into the fray. She lost her virginity in his dorm room one night. In the fever of her love, she gave all, infused by her deep desire to be loved. Sean took what he wanted and enjoyed it immensely.

He talked her into experimenting. He guided her down a slippery path of sexual deviation, exploring alternative methods to satisfy his growing twisted appetite. And she let him, wanting him to have what he wanted. He took her 14-year-old body and molded it to his whims. They tried different positions, he brought out sexual toys; a few times he tied her up. His appetite grew as they both neared graduation.

She would be graduating to attend a private high school closer to her hometown. She dreaded the finality of their eventual parting. Sean knew this and played on it for everything he could get. He was turning 17 and graduating to leave the state. His little play toy would never see him again.

Kate heard him ask for one last night. She cried at his remorseful tone. They hugged and made plans.

That night she snuck out of the dorm was the night before the girls' graduation ceremonies. Her cap and gown had been laid out to retrieve easily. She was wired from excitement and transferred the feelings into a need for Sean.

When she arrived, Sean looked ready to ravish her. He stepped back from their embrace and nodded toward the bed. Kate saw the strings tied to the corners and recognized the familiar setup of restraints. He blindfolded her with care. She submitted to his will and stretched her body out for his caress. His caress never came.

A knock at the door made her freeze. She whispered Sean's name but heard nothing. Suddenly something was shoved into her mouth. The next hours became a nightmare.

Sean and two others, Kate thought, began to tear her life apart as they had their way with her. She screamed, only to have it muffled through the gag. She clenched her hands in the restrains until blood flowed from her fingernails driving into the skin. Nothing stopped the multiple assault or the grunts of animalistic pleasure she heard. She couldn't even block out the cheers and high fives. She blacked out from pain and fear.

When she awoke she was lying outside of the girls' academy against a brick building. She was completely dressed and painfully hurting throughout her body. The night breeze chilled her skin as she managed to creep back into her dormitory room. She lay awake on her bunk, hurt and confused and shivering.

She must have fallen asleep, only to wake up to graduation day. Bells pealed across the quad with cheerfulness, 49 happy girls chattered and squealed on their way to graduation. She struggled with inner demons and managed to clean up, get dressed, and make it down to breakfast to pick at a plate of fruit.

Dazed throughout the day, she faded more into herself as the hours went by. She watched for someone to recognize the agony she had been inflicted with, but no one spoke. The ceremony had begun; she walked a path of accepting a diploma that she would repeat in her lifetime more than once. Her parents called her to congratulate her. She eventually retired from the dorm celebration to cry herself to sleep in the early evening.

She took the next month off, pleading a need to recuperate from the finals. Her parents authorized the deal and she returned to her childhood house to be alone. She never saw Sean again. She never mentioned to anyone her abusive horror. She continued on to high school and received a scholarship to study science at the University of Sacramento.

She spent four years on the Dean's list to receive her Bachelor's in Biology, graduating at the age of 23. Her parents could not have been prouder. They pulled some strings and got her into UCLA to begin to work on her Master's.

The first week before classes began she arrived in Los Angeles looking for an apartment.

CHAP 3

Subtitled: The Apartment

The bulletin board was full of handwritten requests for people needing, wanting, and selling items. Kate perused the chaos. 'Typewriter for Sale', 'Books for Sale', and 'Golf Clubs for Sale' her dirty blonde eyebrows arched in amusement. "I'll come back to that one when I have a spare quarter," she thought laughingly. A slender finger tracked her eye movements as she read the different messages. Her finger stopped on top of a typed index card listing 'Apartment for YOU'. The only other information on the card was a price range and a telephone number, which Kate wrote down. Turning and spotting a nearby pay phone, she shoved a stray lock of blond hair behind her ear, and made the call. After two rings the phone was answered. A woman's voice responded with "Hello?"

"Hello, I'm calling about the apartment for me? Is it still available?"

An amused chuckle was the response. "Oh yes. It's not technically an entire apartment. It's a bedroom with a bath. You'd be sharing with a roommate."

Kate stared at the price range she had written down from the card and mentally shrugged.

"That's OK too! Who's the other tenant?" She improvised, insinuating herself into the picture.

Another light chuckle. "The other tenant would be me! My name is Sheri Taylor. I'm a full-time student at the University. I am studying physical therapy." There was a pause. Kate filled in the gap rapidly.

"I'm a student too! Sorry. My name is Kate Sheffield. I'll be studying for my PhD. I'm extremely quiet and read a lot!" She smiled, shoving her best 'roommate' qualities to the forefront.

"It's a pleasure, I'm sure, Kate. Let's meet and see if you're still interested. When can you stop by?"

They set up a time to meet.

As Kate drove up she was stopped at a gate where a guard was positioned. She was granted permission to enter and he opened the gate. She followed a short winding road and stopped outside a nice two-story brick condo that overlooked a small man-made tributary flowing behind the house. It was beautiful.

She glanced briefly through some wide split wooden slats covering the downstairs windows then knocked the lion's ring against the door.

A woman answered within minutes. Kate took a brief moment to study the sari wrapped around the woman's body. Blue flowers on a cream background. The dark hair, in contrast, was pony tailed behind her head. Kate connected the phone voice with the person before her and smiled in greeting.

"Kate?" Sheri inquired, taking a moment to glance over the petite woman whose short blonde hair fluttered with the slight breeze. Her jeans and light green button down shirt were without wrinkles. *She is very pretty.* Sheri acknowledged to herself right away. When her own blue eyes met the smiling green, she found herself drawing in a breath of surprise. Long lashes framed the emerald depths. Sparkles of gold were seen swimming within. Sheri felt a moment of déjà vu strike her. Feeling a tension growing between them, she broke herself from the stare.

Kate had felt the weight of blue descend onto her. Those cobalt eyes reflected such depth. She suppressed a shiver of unease. An instant of a memory flickered through her mind and was gone again.

Sheri extended her hand. Kate broke from her trance and reached out to accept. They held each other's hand without movement. Sheri squeezed gently and felt a return greeting. Releasing the smaller woman, she stepped back slightly. Her gaze drawn irresistibly to the wonderful face before her. Waving her hand back toward the depths of the house, she motioned for Kate to enter.

Kate stepped into the entrance foyer. Directly ahead for display was a huge sunken living room area. A large glass window showed the backyard area, sun shining down, the river floating by gently. Looking around, Kate noticed a decided lack of color in the room. The cool blues and grays were standoffish to her senses.

Sheri laughed at Kate's slightly frowning face.

"It's not me, I swear. This place belongs to one of my brothers. He's a lawyer, just in case you haven't figured that one out." She chuckled as Kate's brow smoothed out. She explained the downstairs was his area. All the furniture, everything was here before she moved in.

"He let me have the upstairs for myself.

Kate followed Sheri through a short hallway which led to a comfortably sized kitchen and dining area. A steep metal staircase rose up to the second floor at the far end of the dining area.

The kitchen showed minimal signs of use, but the coffee pot held cold coffee in it. Kate looked around liking the bright area.

Sheri headed up the staircase and urged Kate to follow.

At the top, Kate entered another living area slightly smaller than the one below. The atmosphere was much more casual. A fireplace hugged the far wall where a couple of Lazyboy's resided. The coffee table sat between them. Thick brown carpet covered the floor. A beanbag chair sat in one corner of the room next to a floor lamp. The mantle and various tables held small knick-knacks and sparkling stones. Burgundy pillows were spread throughout.

"This is great. Who decorated it?" Kate asked wide-eyed with pleasure.

"It's just stuff I picked up here and there. Every time I pass a yard sale I find interesting stuff to buy." Sheri walked over toward a door off to the right.

"This would be your area. Mine is over there." She pointed to another door at the opposite end of the room.

Kate peeked in and found a medium sized bedroom with a double bed in place. A door

off to the right showed a small bathroom with a shower and sink. She checked out the open closet and took a peak through a small window near the bedside. It was spacious enough and would fit a small desk unit if she picked one up.

Sheri stood waiting when Kate walked out. Reaching out, she grasped Kate's hand and tugged her to the sliding glass door that was behind a draped area.

"This is the *piece de resistance*," she exclaimed as she pulled Kate through the opening. They stepped out onto a wooden deck covered in lattice. A bungalow feeling surrounded the pair. Sheri pulled her outside and turned her to a particular view. Kate grinned.

A full sized Jacuzzi sat on the wooden deck bubbling in its merriment. The steam from the heated water was misting upward. Kate turned a full smile toward Sheri and back to the sight of the Jacuzzi.

"Where do I sign?"

Sheri laughed and pulled over a pair of lounge chairs from nearby. The sun was beginning to descend, but the sky was still lit. They could hear the sound of crickets beginning to sing their night song.

"Have a seat. I'll be right back." Sheri disappeared inside and Kate sat down to enjoy the fading evening. The sun was behind some nearby mountains and the array of colors ranged from deep purples to bright oranges. Kate caught her breath at the beauty.

Sheri returned with a service tray holding two cups of coffee and some cookies. A small tablet lay on the tray. Kate tensed slightly.

"Have some coffee. I'm not giving a test here. Give me a minute to tell you some house rules and you can make a decision." Kate nodded OK

Sheri flipped through a few pages and settled into the lounge.

"I can't allow pets. Rent is paid on the 3rd of the month. If you break it, i.e. windows, walls, doors, you pay to get it repaired. We will need to share food expenses so once every two weeks we can go get sustenance together or we give each other a list of necessities if the other goes." She broke off to gauge Kate's reaction. "I spend about 100.00's every two weeks but I eat out a lot. I don't cook much. We can work on this difference if you want. I'm flexible." Kate nodded her understanding. So far nothing out of the ordinary.

"Don't be overloud with the music, unless I tell you to turn it up." Sheri smiled. Kate smiled back.

“I usually study when I’m here so...keep that in mind.” Sheri explained, nicely.

“I don’t allow Rap either. It gets on my nerves.” Kate chuckled. Sheri grinned a lopsided smile.

“Pretty much be clean. We split the utilities and electric, etc. You’ll have to pay for your own long distance. No parties here,” she paused looking up, “unless I’m invited!” She smiled at Kate. Kate gave a half shrug.

“I’ll be to busy this semester actually. ‘No parties’ is fine.”

Sheri nodded.

“Last thing. No boyfriends or girlfriends allowed sleeping over. We both have to live here and I’ve had issues with a previous roommate.” Sheri eyed Kate with a question.

Kate blushed slightly and shrugged.

“None currently!” She managed to find a simple answer. Sheri looked back down at her tablet.

“Any questions or requests from me? I’m reasonable to most.” Kate looked back at Sheri nodding slowly. Sheri’s dark eyebrow rose.

“Can I use the Jacuzzi?” Kate’s nervous voice requested. Sheri laughed so hard she felt tears rising. Nodding her head she grinned widely.

“We’re gonna get along just fine, Kate Sheffield. When do you want to move in?”

They made arrangements and Kate left to return to the hotel she had been staying in. She hit the bed with pleasant thoughts of things on her to do list. Tomorrow couldn’t come fast enough.

CHAP 4

Title: The New Routine

Sheri liked the sound of Kate’s voice on the phone. She was also quite pleased with the entire package that arrived that evening for the roommate interview session. Kate’s short blonde hair, slightly wild and unruly, coupled with those green eyes held a fetching appeal. Her figure was athletically trim. Sheri had approved the combination with a silent mental checkmark. After the roomies had finalized the agreements, Kate left with a promise to return the next day.

The house was once again silent; Sheri unwrapped the sari from her tall length and lay it across the spare lounge chair. Her naked nipples hardened in the cool breeze of the chilly night air. She raised her arms above her head and welcomed the hedonistic stretch of muscles. Reclining into the chair, she thought about her soon-to-be roomie.

She smiled. Drifting off to sleep to the symphony of cicadas and crickets, she envisioned a pair of green eyes with flecks of gold.

Kate moved in the next day with a few possessions. She made arrangements to have more belongings moved over by professionals two days later. Sheri helped where Kate asked or needed and they both felt a tentative bond forming between them. Within a week, Kate felt at home. During the initial days the two women established somewhat of a routine. They set up a schedule for washdays, cleaning, and grocery pickup. Kate spent a few dollars and purchased some houseplants that added to the atmosphere of the downstairs and upstairs decor.

Kate also spent some time organizing her upcoming class work and appointments with college staff, and she started notifying specific people of her new address. Within two weeks of her arrival, she started receiving her mail.

Kate quickly discovered Sheri was not a morning person. At least not until 10 a.m. Kate enjoyed the early morning hours between 7 and 9 as she drank in the view off the back deck while sipping her coffee. Around 9 she started making a light breakfast. Most mornings the smell would wake Sheri and she would stumble down to greet Kate with a 'please pass the coffee'.

School soon started and the routine began a bit earlier but was cemented quickly. They both needed to leave by 9 for morning classes. Kate returned home late in the evening, around seven on most weekdays, because she was spending an enormous amount of time researching information in the library. Sheri commented on the late hours and after hearing the need promptly retrieve a laptop from her room. Plugging it into the house phone line, she explained she wasn't using it much anyway. Kate argued, but Sheri persisted. She left it available for Kate and it stayed on the coffee table. Within a few days, Sheri had the phone company install another line and the laptop was available night or day. Kate began to wonder how she ever got along without one, and Sheri began to see Kate return home much earlier in the day.

Kate began to notice a pattern form with Sheri's schedule too. On Tuesday and Thursday nights, Sheri would disappear. Sheri never offered an explanation to her whereabouts, but Kate noticed her return on both evenings was well after midnight. Kate kept with the 'respecting one's roommate's privacy' pattern and did not ask.

Sheri eventually mentioned that she worked those evenings. All other weeknights the other woman's habits were totally in synch with Kate's. Sheri would spend a few hours studying before heading for a Jacuzzi swim or switching to a good book. Her quiet nature was exactly what Kate needed in a roommate. Once in a while Sheri would receive a phone call from one friend or another. Kate would hear her discuss plans or, if needed, cut them short for her study time. Kate was not as social. She received one call from her parents then nothing until the next call came in a few weeks later. Sheri didn't pry, but she frowned in disappointment at the friendless person her roommate seemed to be.

On Friday nights Sheri would try and cajole Kate into heading to different places. Kate accepted a few times then began to decline. Their blooming friendship did not suffer. Sheri took the declines with good grace and kept asking every time. She let Kate find her own pace and settle into her new environment with ease. Sheri would often return home to find Kate asleep in the Lazyboy recliner, a book spread across her lap. She would softly whisper her awake and guide her, half sleep, to her room.

Broodingly, Sheri found it difficult to get the little fair-haired beauty out of her mind. Often, Sheri found herself reclining naked in the Jacuzzi, her thoughts dwelling in contemplation of her roommate. Sheri wondered if Kate could at all possibly be a lesbian? A small smile curled the edge of her mouth as she realized where her thoughts had roamed.

After a few months of living together, Sheri asked Kate if she would like to go sailing on the upcoming weekend. Sheri had some friends who owned a boat. Letting Kate know she wouldn't have to do anything but enjoy the ride, Sheri practically begged Kate to accept. Kate finally gave in. Sheri, without hesitation, gave Kate a quick hug and a huge grin. Kate stiffened slightly in the embrace, but relaxed when Sheri excitedly and enthusiastically stepped back and went over to get a drink for the two of them to celebrate. She brought two sodas and they toasted to a relaxing weekend.

Saturday dawned with a brilliant sun. The warm coastal waters were reflecting brightly. Wearing dark sunglasses, Sheri surveyed the boat with anticipation. Her T-shirt showed the telltale signs of a bikini underneath, her waist wrapped in a sari. Sheri tapped her foot impatiently, waiting for the ship's goods to be finished loading. She glanced at Kate nearby and smiled again.

Kate's blonde hair was flipping all different directions. Her sunglasses hid the eyes that were trying to look everywhere. The 'little boat' Sheri had described was actually a yacht. It was big enough to have a few crew to pilot and maintain service. Sheri let her eyes roam over Kate's attire and bit her lip at the huge T-shirt that covered a bathing suit and was tucked into the waistband of her khaki shorts. Kate had worn tennis shoes. She held a large beach bag with a towel and sun lotion. If Sheri knew Kate, there were probably a few books in there too!

Sheri heard a call from on board and stepped closer to the small ladder they would use to get onboard.

"Come on Kate. You first. I'll hold the ladder." Kate eyeballed the attached ladder and nodded. She quickly climbed up and was helped on board by one of the crewmen. Sheri followed behind her.

Almost within seconds of standing on the deck they were approached by an older woman who reached out and gave Sheri a long hug.

“Sheri!” The woman exclaimed. “It’s been way too long. I’m so glad to see you.” The woman squeezed her tightly.

“Thanks, Aunt Helen. You know I wouldn’t miss your visits for anything.” Stepping out of the hug, she motioned to Kate.

“This is my friend Kate. She’s new in town and hasn’t seen the sights.” Turning to Kate she introduced her Aunt.

“This is Helen Taylor. She is my favorite Aunt!” A huge sigh came from Aunt Helen.

Kate smiled at the rolling eyes. “She says that to all her aunts. We do compare notes once in a while, child,” She chided Sheri affectionately.

Kate noticed the dark hair color streaked with touches of gray at the temples and the height similarity. Helen’s eyes were also a blue, but much lighter, softer. She quickly smiled a greeting and shyly held out her hand. Helen eyed her hand and shook her head. She quickly grabbed the hand and pulled Kate in to a brief hug.

“We don’t want any misunderstanding. A friend of Sheri’s is a friend of all Taylors.” Kate blushed a becoming pink and the surprise welcome filled her with warmth. Sheri just grinned and nodded.

They followed the aunt toward the front of the yacht. Rounding a corner Kate took in the plush surroundings and artistic lines of the ship. The bow was cushioned around the forward point of the boat with waterproof cushioned seating, large enough for a party of ten or more. Heading aft was a huge cabin area, the entry of which had a enclosed overhang containing a small dining area. Seated at the dining table was another woman.

“Come on, woman. Put the book away and make a new friend!” Helen’s booming voice broke the intent gaze of the silent woman who glanced up and started grinning.

“Sheri? Why didn’t you tell me you were gonna come sail with us?” Her voice was softly pleasant. She laid her book on the table and stood to greet her guests. Kate smiled widely. This woman was not only petite, she was small. Much shorter than Kate, who stood only at 5 foot 2, this woman had to be under 5 feet. Her classical Asian features showed her heritage. Sheri bent way over and picked the woman up in a hug that took her off the ground.

“Put me down, you oaf!” Sheri and Helen laughed so similarly it made Kate look twice.

“Who is this beautiful angel you’ve brought with you?” The small woman held her hand out in greeting to Kate. Kate slipped her hand into the woman’s grasp and shook it.

“Dotty, this is Kate Sheffield. Kate, this is Aunt Dotty.” Sheri grinned at Kate’s quick

glance in her direction. Dotty beamed a smile at her and Kate smiled back without thought.

“Pleased to meet you, Kate. That big oaf over there...” She pointed to Helen “...is my partner. Sheri just graced me with Aunt Dotty because it was easier for her than Ms. Dotty. Warped child,” Dotty stated, chuckling as she lightly swatted Sheri’s stomach passing by to move into Helen’s arms. Helen bent low and kissed her on the top of the head.

Kate nodded her understanding and smiled. Although a little surprised, she wasn’t uncomfortable with it. She did grow up in an all-girls school for goodness sake. There were relationships going on all over the place. Mentally wincing at the slight reminder, she turned to eye the book title off the spine of the paperback Dotty had been reading.

“It’s Radclyffe,” Dotty mentioned as she returned to her seat.

Kate frowned and shook her head. Dotty gestured for her to take a seat.

“She’s my favorite author. Lots of action and lots of romance.” Kate smiled back at the enthusiasm shining in Dotty’s face.

“Would anyone like some coffee or OJ?” Helen offered. Sheri moaned her approval and Helen just chuckled. “I’ll take that as a definite yes, then. You too, Kate?” Kate nodded. Sheri followed Helen into the cabin behind the dining area. As they moved away, Kate heard Helen say she would show them around the boat after coffee.

Dotty and Kate hit it off right away. Recognizing a fellow bookworm in each other, they found tons of interesting topics to discuss. The conversation barely slowed as the other two women returned to sit down and coffee was poured. Kate sipped at the hot drink and paused to enjoy the French vanilla flavor. Before returning to comment on something Dotty remarked about, she quickly eyed Sheri grinning. Sheri sat back and listened to them, enjoying the view. Her Aunt Helen touched her arm discreetly. Sheri met the older woman’s questioning raised eyebrow look. Helen twitched her head in Kate’s direction, asking a lot with the gesture. Sheri thought for a moment and shrugged back. Helen whispered under her breath.

“Ping, ping, ping.” Aunt Helen mouthed, implying her Gay-dar had gone off big time. Sheri covered her grin by sipping coffee.

After coffee they were given a tour of the 60-foot yacht. Fifteen minutes later, they were sitting back down and admiring the water’s view, exclaiming at the fascination of leaving land behind. The boat was puttering away from the dock then gliding across the water, shortly thereafter. One service crewmember, dressed in a nice white shorts and button down uniform, informed Helen they were clear of coastal restrictions, then he returned to the other side of the ship. Helen and Dotty urged Sheri and Kate to relax into the cushioned bow of the boat. The four women spent the morning hours basking in a light

breeze and soft sunshine.

A few hours into the fun, Sheri motioned for Kate to turn and let her put some sunscreen on her shoulders. Kate had eventually removed her t-shirt like the rest of the women and was feeling a slight warmth on her paler skin. Pulling her frisky hair together to ties at her nape, she allowed Sheri to cover her with oil. Sheri took the opportunity not only to protect but also to soothe the obviously tension-filled shoulder and upper back muscles of her roommate. Long strokes of her hands with a little pressure and she felt some of the past weeks work sliding away from her busy friend.

An unusual flutter inside was growing more intense as Sheri watched her own hands slide softly against the skin. She felt the excitement of her libido kick in and just caught herself from leaning forward to kiss the delicate line of Kate's neck. Sheri felt a slight tension in the shoulders she held so she let her strength deepen. Kate practically melted into her hands, a soft moan escaping from her lips. Sheri smiled.

Her thumbs ran down either side of Kate's spine and she splayed her fingers over the rib cage. The oil was almost dry. Sheri eased away and felt Kate lean slightly back. Not wanting to have Kate upset by any circumstance Sheri patted her shoulder lightly.

"That ought to do it!" Kate looked up with slightly confused eyes and smiled. Nodding her head, she turned to ask Dotty a question.

Sheri took the opportunity to think about her own actions.

What was she doing? Kate was straight as far as she knew. Sheri had always considered herself bisexual. What with her upbringing and adventures she had never hindered herself with a label before. Sheri realized the smaller woman before her was getting to her. Living together as friends was great but Sheri had felt an attraction right off the bat. She should have recognized the signs when she was interviewing the girl. Not that Kate couldn't be a lesbian since Sheri had felt a 'ping' or two on her own Gay-dar when it came to her roommate. Kate was just too shy and intense. Sheri had never been involved with someone who unknowingly had control over her from the get-go. She didn't know if she enjoyed the sensation more than she should or if should she be more leery. Watching Kate argue with Dotty and Helen in a debate over some political issue made Sheri realized Kate could be worth the effort to pursue, if Sheri was interested. Sheri knew it would not be for fun. She had a feeling Kate was a one time deal forever. Deciding to push her thoughts aside and enjoy the day, come what may, Sheri jumped into the debate with full enthusiasm.

Kate sat back for a moment to let Sheri carry on the battle. She watched the dark haired woman through her sunglasses and realized she was in like. Deeply, deeply in like with maybe just a little lust thrown in there. This surprised her to no end. Kate hadn't been into any true long-term relationship since 'the incident'. She wasn't unknown to flirt a little or date others, but she just didn't feel strong enough to cross over the internal line between date and romance. Realizing she was missing out on a huge

part of life, the world of sensuality had been heavy on her mind far longer than her friendship with Sheri had been. She knew Sheri was a sexual creature and Kate had not been averse to listening to some of her escapades she insisted on telling her about. A few weeks into living with her had shown Sheri was not a promiscuous person. But sex was important to her. Kate had also realized Sheri was not just into men. The brief thought of seeing Sheri with another woman had thrown Kate into a highly aroused state. She had worried about revealing any thoughts to her roommate and had ended up avoiding her for two whole days. Since that epiphany, Kate had become accustomed to thinking of Sheri not only as her roommate but also as an attractive woman. She thought she was hiding it well. Turning her gaze away from the object of her thoughts, she caught Aunt Dotty giving her a half smile and a knowing look. Kate managed to bite her lip and hold back the grin that wanted to burst out.

The luxurious lotion massage Sheri had rubbed onto her back had once again aroused Kate. Kate was irritated at herself. She was really tired of being sexually frustrated. She was doubly exhausted with being frustrated at her frustrations. Sheri may not be interested in her as she was becoming toward Sheri, but Kate wasn't able to figure out the signals. How could she let Sheri know she might be interested? Thoughts continued to swirl through her head until Dotty mentioned they would be heading back to dock soon.

Kate and Sheri looked around and noticed the sun had moved considerably. It was now high overhead. Mid-day had arrived. Helen went to go round up lunch and the three women refreshed their drinks. Dotty talked about the boat tour she and Helen would be taking. Sheri and Kate listened, enjoying Dotty's excitement.

They arrived back at the docks around 3 o'clock. Helen apologized for the short trip. They were expected to arrive for the boat tour the next day and were only in town until 6 p.m. before heading out.

Sheri and Kate both spoke of the wonderful day they had spent. The girls gathered up their belongings and headed for the dock after receiving huge hugs from both Dotty and Helen. Dotty invited Kate aboard any time they were in town. Helen agreed. Kate blushed a pretty pink and nodded. Her roommate, grinning, teased her as they exited the boat on the drop ladder.

"I think my aunts adore you. Care to tell me how you managed that, Oh special one?" Sheri maneuvered down the slightly shaking ladder and hopped to the floating dock side. Looking up, she watched Kate carefully step over and wiggle her backside down the six steps.

Kate heard the warm affection Sheri was sharing and smiled as she stepped downward blindly. One moment she was searching with her foot; the next she was falling.

A slight gasp escaped, then she felt strong arms wrap around her body and hold her tightly. Sheri stood for a moment, frozen in time, hoping she hadn't missed. Although

she held the smaller woman in her arms, the vision in her head was grizzly. Kate could have broken her neck. As the realization set in, Sheri trembled with reaction.

“I’m OK,” Kate softly murmured as she reached up and wrapped her arms around Sheri’s neck, tucking her head under Sheri’s chin and drawing a deep breath of thanks. Sheri clutched her tighter for a moment, and then gently placed her feet on the dock. Standing up straight, she met Kate’s eyes briefly and glanced away as Kate, deeply grateful of her Amazon hero, uttered a ‘thank you’.

Kate took in the sober expression Sheri had and knew she had better do something quick before Sheri either had a panic attack or fainted. “I’m OK, Sheri. You saved me. I’m fine.” Kate reached out and held Sheri’s arm with her hand. Sheri stared blankly at the still wobbling ladder and nodded her head slowly in agreement. She calmly and determinedly bent down and began to pick up the bag and towel that Kate had dropped. Her body was tense and awkward.

“Hey.” Kate’s gentle voice cut into the multiple scenarios still playing through Sheri’s head. Sheri paused in her motions and looked up at the blonde woman who stood beside her, whole and in one piece.

“It could have been different, but it wasn’t. I’m fine. Everything is all right.” Kate bent down on her knees and helped Sheri gather the items. “I’m kind of a klutz sometimes anyway. Comes from not paying attention all the time, I guess.” Kate grimaced with her understatement, trying to nonchalantly shrug the slightly queasy feeling away when her past memories reared their ugly head.

Sheri stopped picking up the stuff on the ground and stood up pulling Kate with her. Meeting questioning eyes. Sheri shrugged, an echo of Kate’s motion.

“I caught you though. Feel free to fall into my arms any time you’d like.” Sheri smiled a shy smile. Kate raised a single eyebrow at the remark and looked down shyly at her feet. Sheri sighed with resignation. Then Kate looked back up and smiled, and Sheri’s stomach fluttered in reaction. The various meanings of that smile were not important. That Kate had smiled back was the important thing. Her smile was breathtaking and Sheri gazed at her companion amazed. The tension between them eased away from the moment of the ‘almost’ accident. At the same moment, Sheri and Kate broke the look they were sharing as they moved to pick up their belongings and walked back to the car. They shared a comfortable silence between them. Kate relished the memory of feeling of those arms encircling her, holding her tightly. A sense of being treasured and safe and wanted warmed her inside like nothing had ever done. Sheri felt a small wave of hope rush over her.

CHAP 5

The Relaxing Deception

Kate woke up early Sunday and spent a few hours sipping herbal tea out on the patio.

The early morning chill had her wrapped in a light blanket. She had brought out a weekly planner for her class schedule but had only held it unopened in her hand. Her mind twirled and flirted with thoughts of Sheri. Thoughts of the charismatic woman were hard to release. Every time she turned around she was imagining Sheri. Kate saw her in her bikini with that tan skin and beautiful dark hair, along with those broad shoulders and blue eyes. *Good gracious. I bet that wrap was hiding her firm behind too!* Kate felt the heat of a blush rush up her cheeks. She grinned and patted her cheeks, drawing in a deep breath of pleasure at her mental pictures. Glancing at the height of the sun shining down she thought it safe to remove the blanket and get some air for her overheated body. She definitely wasn't chilled anymore.

She gave a look at her watch and thought she might be able to rouse her sleeping roomie if she made a batch of strong coffee. Smiling at her simple devious idea, she gathered up her items and headed for the kitchen.

Sheri woke up to morning sunshine peeking through her mini-blinds. She rolled over onto her back and needed to dislodge a t-shirt that she had tossed onto her bed a few days ago. Her sloppy habits had the queen size bed half covered in clothes and books. She blinked a few times and took a good look around her room. Her eye's widened in alarm. *Lord, this place is a pigsty!*

Tossing back the covers, she snatched a few more pieces of stray clothing from the sheets and tossed them in the general direction of her hamper. The partially open device, which was overflowing already, merely stood in silent condemnation of its owner. Sheri walked into her bathroom and surveyed the somewhat cleanly environment there. *Nobody likes a messy bathroom.*

Making a plan for the day, she decided to clean up her room and stick around the house. She was sure her roommate would be prepping for her own studies and it would be nice to spend some weekend time at home for a change. Sheri rolled her eyes at herself. *Who am I kidding? She's gonna be here so that's where I want to be! Plain and simple!*

The familiar smell of fresh coffee had Sheri smiling as she hurriedly threw on some sweats and headed to get some java and a cute little blonde smiling back.

Later that day Kate had her schoolwork spread out across the coffee table and was frowning as she marked over some information. She sighed for the third time as she leaned back in the Lazyboy and stretched her aching shoulders. The brief massage Sheri had given her yesterday had seemed to relieve the tension at the time only to have it creep back two-fold in strength.

Sheri was moving in and out of her bedroom with various bunches of laundry, trash, and dishes. Every time she passed Kate she would glance her way just for the pleasure of looking. Kate was a pretty woman and Sheri found some new element to admire every time she looked. As she passed by this particular time she noticed the frown and the

pinched expression.

“Something wrong?” Sheri paused as Kate tried to relax and smile. Her hand came up and rubbed on her neck.

“Just a tension headache I guess. My muscles all seem to be cramping today.” Kate twisted her neck slightly and grimaced. She dropped her hand downward and shook her head. “It won’t go away.”

Sheri draped the two shirts she held over the back of a chair and walked around behind Kate’s chair.

“Lean back!” Sheri commanded, smiling at the dominating request. Kate stiffened and turned slightly to look up at Sheri.

“Why?” she questioned, for once not smiling at Sheri’s grinning countenance.

Sheri sighed dramatically raising her hands to the sky.

“Why oh why would I spend four years trying to get my bachelor’s in Sports Medicine and not have ever given a massage?” she implored any God listening above. Looking down at Kate’s blushing face, she winked.

“Lean back and I’ll see if you need morphine!” Kate rolled her eyes and leaned back relaxing as Sheri reached out and began a neck and shoulder massage. Strong hands began to loosen the knots of muscles that surrounded the shoulders and neck. A snicker from above had Kate frowning.

“You feel that?” Sheri put some pressure with her thumbs and slid them over a particularly tight area. “That is too tense. Way too tense. That is probably what is causing your headache. Give me fifteen minutes and I’ll have your purring like a kitten.”

As good as her word, Sheri worked on the muscles and guided the tension from them with professional ease. Her hands were golden to Kate as she tried not to moan and groan at the wonderful sensations. A small moan of utter relief passed through those soft lips causing Sheri to quirk an eyebrow and suppress a cocky grin.

“I guess the pressure of my bachelor’s is probably nothing to the pressures you’re facing with your Master’s. You could probably visit with some friends of mine downtown at a parlor called ‘Sisters’. They could schedule you with a masseuse for a weekly visit and make sure this kind of tension doesn’t interfere with your studies. They have some of the best people in the state working there and it’s not as expensive as you would think.”

Sheri finished up her shoulder massage by gathering up the thick bouncy hair and

letting it fall downward, slipping through her fingers, to rest on Kate's neck. Kate shivered at the extraordinary feeling.

Sheri reached over Kate and closed the book Kate held limply in her hand. Pulling the recliner handle at the base of the chair, she lowered Kate gently into a horizontal position. Kate liked the coddling effect and watched through satisfied eyes as Sheri rounded the chair and again grabbed up the two t-shirts.

"Thank you," Kate murmured, sighing in pleasure.

"Anytime!" Sheri smiled at Kate's hedonistic grin. "Anytime!"

Kate later found a business card from 'Sisters' jammed into the work tablet holding her school notes. The advertisement read 'Visit your Sister's for relaxation' and had a logo of a pair of hands resting on a curve of a body. Flipping the card, Kate read 'no appointment necessary'.

Monday Kate found the day flying fast and furious. Her studies for the week piled high, and that evening she gloried in the fact her roommate had practically given her laptop over for her use. Sheri sat in the other chair and fidgeted over some mathematics while Kate prepared a mock test for her teaching class.

Tuesday she found the card again from her notepad where she had used it to mark her place. Turning it over and over in her hand she reflected on the way she had practically melted under Sheri's touch. The strength of Sheri's fingers kneading her tight muscles and the warmth of her palms rubbing over her neck caused Kate to moan at the recollection. Kate suddenly realized she had enjoyed the scent of Sheri's perfume. *Now why did I think of that?* She turned the card over again as she listened to the distant lunch buzzer buzz over the campus.

Driving home from school she felt a bit bummed. Sheri was never there on Tuesdays and the house always seemed empty. Kate reached up and felt a slight tension in her neck reforming from the grilling her Director had given her during a verbal examination. As she neared the Condo's gated entrance, she slowed, but suddenly, she sped up again and passed the turn off. Heading downtown she decided to search out the massage parlor.

As she pulled into a small parking lot, she saw the hands logo and the cursive scripting of Sisters on a door to a rather large building. The outside seemed a bit run down, but Kate trusted Sheri and walked in.

She had to stand still for a moment to let her eyes adjust to the dark interior. A red glow led her to a small counter where a woman sat reading a romance novel by flashlight.

"Why are the lights off?" Kate blinked.

“Sorry about that, but the boss thinks it’s an ambiance thing to get you in the mood to be rubbed down. What can I do for you?” The young woman set the flashlight on the counter, the battery side down and the light shining upward to brighten the area.

Kate paused at what to say.

“Well, I had a friend of mine recommend this place to me. She says I’m too tense.”

“What’s your friend’s name?” The girl slipped the book out of sight and pulled a ledger closer.

“Sheri.” Kate replied tentatively.

“Oh! Sheri! She’s a doll. Hang on for a minute will ya?” Then the secretary-cum-appointment girl picked up a phone and mumbled a quick conversation.

Kate heard only parts of it as she tried to look beyond the two feet surrounding her to see the lobby area. She heard the one sided conversation and frowned.

“Yeah. Why? Whatever you want doll!” the secretary said, hanging up the phone. Kate’s almost restored vision noticed a hallway leading off into pitch black, further into the building interior.

“You’ve got a one hour appointment with Susan in room three. Sheri arranged it just in case you came in. First hour is on the house. The rest are fifty-five dollars a session. Don’t tip the masseuse and remember to collect all articles of clothing before leaving the premises.” The woman picked up the flashlight and pointed it to the blackened hallway.

“Straight down that hallway, third door on your right is the massage room.” Kate looked back at the woman once to see her retrieving her romance novel. Three steps into the hallway and Kate was enveloped in darkness once again. Taking a deep breath she forced her steps forward and ran her hand down the right side of the wall. Slowly counting doors, she thought she heard a man’s deep voice and a woman’s giggling answer as she passed by door number one. The second door was silent and she managed to find the third door without running into anything. She entered the room.

Inside, there was a small lamp lit to show the interior. Kate noticed the furniture, or lack thereof, as she moved into the small room. A pretty Japanese shoji screen was extended to block one area of the room off from the other. The window ledge held twenty different candles and incense holders. The window itself was boarded up and covered in colorful artistic spray paint. Taking up most of the room was what looked like a hospital gurney. Seemingly solid and flat with no pillows, it had clean white sheets spread across its surface.

As she looked around she noticed an instruction poster on the wall above the bed. One: Take off your clothes and don’t be shy. Two: Lie on the bed and close your eyes.

Three: Someone will come and relieve all your stress. Four: Think of our home as a house of caress.

Kate thought it was a little cutesy and not very poetic, but she had never been to a massage parlor before so she followed the steps. She went behind the screen and disrobed. She found a short silk robe hanging on the backside of the screen and slipped it on. Tying the belt around her waist she walked over to the bed and hopped up. Feeling very vulnerable, she practically jumped out of her skin when the door opened.

In came a woman wearing a very exotic costume. She reminded Kate of 'I dream of Genie'. The woman closed the door behind her and brushed a wild lock of red curly hair out of her face. Her outfit revealed a curvaceous body with an athletic slimness. She was tall. The bikini bra she was wearing for a top left almost nothing to the imagination. It was a white silk that showed dark areolas and hardened nipples underneath. The upper half of her face was covered by a facemask elaborately made of feathers. Kate frowned and opened her mouth to speak.

The woman walked over and stopped Kate from saying anything by reaching up and touching Kate's lips with a finger. Kate's eyes widened, but she didn't speak a word. The woman gestured for Kate to lie down and Kate made slow movements to comply as she watched the tall figure move over to a small CD player that sat on the lamp table. The sudden smell of a sulfur match was floating in the air as Kate saw candles being lit. The candles became the only source of light as the lamp was clicked off. The soothing dance of flames ricocheted off the walls and gave the room a soft ambiance.

Kate heard the smooth tunes of Reba McEntire flow out of the player and the woman turned to take in the now reclined Kate.

Hands reached out to gently tug on the tie at Kate's waist, and a slight hand motion had her flipping onto her stomach. As she rolled over, the robe was moved down to her lower back. The procedure was clearly non-offensive and allowed the masseuse access. Kate noticed the small hole in the gurney and realized it was for her face to rest in. She listened in fascination to hands being rubbed together, then felt warm oil dribbled onto her back. Hands covered the skin on her back and Kate couldn't help but moan with pleasure as the exotic feeling of slippery fingers slid over her skin.

Kate enjoyed the hands that pressed and kneaded her upper, mid, and lower back as she melted like butter under their care. A variety of soft country tunes drifted in the air. Kate had never felt so relaxed and mellow.

The woman lightly ran her thumbs down both sides of the full length of her spine and hesitated slightly over the silk still covering her butt. The silk cloth was caressed over Kate's form but remained in place as the hands roamed lower onto her legs. Warm oil was once again dribbled onto her upper legs. The masseuse worked over the back of her thighs and then attacked the hardened muscles of her calves. After finishing the

legs, hands gently held her feet. Kate felt a tear of relief escape as she felt fingers rotating, massaging, and thoroughly pampering the instep and ball of her feet. When Kate thought it was done she suddenly felt a finger inserted between each toe. Her stomach fluttered in reaction. She breathed deeper. The hands finally left her feet to return up her body just as slowly as they had traversed downward.

The heat from her thoughts began to grow and Kate began to feel a different sort of tension spreading through her body. An image of Sheri reclining on that boat in her bikini and laughing at her Aunts flashed in Kate's mind. She held her breath at the rush of desire she experienced.

The hands moving up her legs didn't hesitate this time and continued upward under the edge of the silk robe. Kate felt her cheeks being massaged and tried not to think of anything sexual being involved. The strong strokes of her flesh were very firm. Without notice the silk robe was removed and placed behind Kate on the bed. Kate attempted to remain relaxed and imagined herself in the Jacuzzi being pulverized by the jet stream of water. She didn't think about lying naked on the bed and was almost too lethargic in relaxation to even care. The hands massaging her body moved upward over her butt and once again began to make a rhythmic path over her back. The heat that had been stirring within began to die down.

Kate felt the woman moving close to her head as she moved to the top of the bed and began to work on her shoulders from another angle. Kate felt her neck worked over and moaned at the pleasure. Moving still higher the hands began to move over her scalp in her hair. The scalp massage was unexpected. Kate shivered in reaction. Fingers lightly rubbed over her head tickling around Kate's outer ear rims and running through the length of her hair.

Kate remembered Sheri's massage that had included the hair falling over her in a caress. She had really liked that. Suddenly she smelled Sheri's perfume. Kate tensed and realized it wasn't just a memory. The woman was wearing Sheri's perfume. Kate felt the hair on her head gathered and released to float down across her neck and shoulders. It was Sheri in disguise. Kate shivered with that knowledge and bit her lip wondering if she should say something. She needed to think. Why was Sheri disguised? What was going on?

The CD finished its last song and shut off. Sheri moved away. Kate lifted her head to confirm her suspicions. The red wig didn't hide a few wisps of dark hair poking out in the back. Kate recognized her roommate's form behind the outfit. She caught eyes with the woman just as the door was opened and she walked out. Sheri's blue eyes were softly twinkling out from behind the feathered mask.

Kate grunted and dropped her head after the door closed behind the retreating figure. What the hell was Sheri pulling here? Why didn't she just tell Kate who she was? What was with all the intrigue and disguise? Kate felt a well of suppressed anger from her childhood rear its ugly head. She hated subterfuge and usually avoided it like the

plague.

Lifting her body, she felt indecisive. She sat on her bed and thought of her options. She could confront Sheri and ask what this was all about? Deep inside she hesitated. Although she hated the pretence, she didn't want the massage to stop. Her body felt wonderful and she trusted Sheri. *Good Lord her hands felt wonderful too.*

Kate argued with herself while she got dressed. Glancing around the room once more she walked to the door to leave. She realized this could have something to do with Sheri's degree. Maybe they didn't want her working here? Maybe it was against some rules. At least now Kate knew where Sheri disappeared to every Tuesday and Thursday. Kate wondered how Sheri could have gotten hooked up with this side job. Feeling the energetic flow of blood throughout her relaxed body, she decided Sheri was quite skilled.

Moving carefully down the dark hallway back into the lobby the secretary gave her a smile and a prepared speech.

"Susan says it was a pleasure and she will see you next Tuesday at 5:00pm. OK?"

Kate thought about it for a minute then nodded. "It was really my pleasure and I'll schedule it in."

The secretary took note of it in her ledger and smiled back at Kate.

"Enjoyed your first visit, huh? We got only the best working here!"

"Yes. Thank you." Kate turned to leave.

"Wait a minute," the counter woman spoke. "Here is a list of our services. Susan asked me to give it to you. It kind of helps the masseuse to know what you'd like to have massaged. All you have to do is fill it out and put it in the pouch on the back of the room's door. The masseuse will get it when they come into the room. There is also a little space at the bottom in case you have something other than what's on the list in mind.

Kate's head lifted quickly. The secretary didn't even blink at her questioning gaze.

"Just check the appropriate information and your masseuse will take care of you."

Kate mumbled thanks as she turned and walked outside. It was just getting dark, but the evening sky was still brighter than the interior of Sisters. Kate blinked and walked over to her car.

Glancing at the handout she saw check boxes next to categories. Legs, arms, chest, back, lower back, buttocks, feet, deep tissue and more were listed. She scanned down

to the bottom and sure enough there was an available remarks section. Kate raised an eyebrow curiously.

Kate drove home feeling wonderful and wishing she could figure out Sheri's game. As she drove through the entrance gate the guard waved. Kate waved back. Next time she went by she would talk to the man. His looks reminded her of her father. She frowned at the thought of her parents.

Later, curling up in her chair with a good novel, Kate couldn't seem to concentrate. Sheri had deceived her. This was about all Kate could recognize. Why? Maybe she didn't want Kate knowing where she worked? But, why would she invite her to visit if there was a chance she might be found out? Kate grew more puzzled over the whole incident and decided to hit the sack before she ruined her relaxed muscles by tensing them up again.

She went to bed to worry about it tomorrow. Around 12 a.m. she awoke to hear the steps of her roommate moving across the living room. Her dreaming thoughts took her back to that massage as Sheri moved her hands up under the silk robe. Kate's body began to tremble as she realized she was no longer on her stomach. Sheri hands rested on each hip as Kate froze waiting. The dream drifted off into the unknown, but the feelings lingered. Kate tossed and turned for a while before being able to sleep once again.

CHAP 6

The Punch Line

The next day Kate woke up and showered. Going to make some coffee, she couldn't help but grin. Her smile widened as she stood sipping her brew. A masseuse, a massage, and you almost become a whole new person. She felt a freedom from some of the internal barriers she had mentally built up over the years. Feeling wonderfully light and more relaxed than ever, she wished she had thought of the idea years ago. She might not have been so apprehensive living her life.

Sheri stumbled into the kitchen around seven and made tracks straight for the coffee pot. Kate let Sheri get settled into her chair and drink at least half of her cup before even attempting to say 'good morning'.

Sheri grumbled a reply and held her hand up to prop up her head in exhaustion.

"Late night?" Kate asked innocently.

"Late!" Sheri mumbled. Kate got up and retrieved the pot to refill both of their mugs. She replaced it and hummed happily as she began to spread out some breakfast. Popping some toast into the toaster, she turned to find Sheri staring at her. Kate realized she was humming and stopped. She fumbled with something to say in the silence as she moved over to the refrigerator.

“Would you like some breakfast?”

“No, just coffee thanks. How can you be so cheerful this early in the morning? Sheri growled as she grabbed at the sports section of the newspaper on the table.

Kate watched amused.

“That’s yesterday’s paper and I decided to take your advice. I went to the massage parlor yesterday.” Kate kept herself busy buttering her toast.

“How did you like it?” The very curious question came from behind the still raised paper.

Kate answered honestly. “It was fantastic.” She carried her toast over to the table. “I feel 100% better. I don’t know why I haven’t ever tried this before. The masseuse was incredible.” Kate looked toward Sheri’s hidden person. The paper stayed upright.

“That’s nice.” The paper came down and Sheri was glancing at her watch. “I’d better get in gear. My class starts in an hour.”

Kate nibbled at her toast frowning in confusion. Whatever the plan was, Sheri was truly playing it cool.

Later that evening Kate made it home and had her books spread out to study before Sheri even walked in the door. As the roommate made her appearance, Kate stopped to stare. Sheri looked completely haggard.

“What happened to you?” Kate asked as Sheri dropped her book satchel onto the floor by the Lazyboy and sank down into its depths to close her eyes.

“What didn’t happen to me today! My instructor was late for my first class so it cancelled and I went over to the library to finish an English assignment. The library didn’t have the book I needed so I had to drive downtown to the public library. The traffic was hell! I had to circle the parking lot four times before getting a slot. I got the book and was late to my next class by 15 minutes. My instructor called me after class to tell me not to make it a habit because seniors should know better. Then he gave me my report back on my anatomy project and said it needed a few major corrections.” Sheri paused to roll her eyes.

“I got through my morning classes and ran over to Taco Bell for lunch, which was my 15th bad decision for the day. I sat behind 13 other cars in the drive-thru and moved as slow as molasses in the wintertime. After getting my food I ate it in the car driving back onto campus. Fast eating gave me indigestion that lasted for the next two classes.

Kate rose to cross to a miniature bar she had installed earlier that month. She poured

Sheri a rum and coke and poured herself a glass of seven-up. Sheri smiled as she took it and thanked her.

“What’s on your agenda tonight?” Kate inquired.

“Oh, nothing special. Maybe a quick review of my lecture notes and an hour in the Jacuzzi. Nothing strenuous. I’m pooped.”

Kate and Sheri studied. Kate must have nodded off as she awoke still sitting in her chair. It was only nine p.m. She looked around; Sheri was absent from the room. The house was quiet except for a tinny sounding radio playing through the back door out on the patio deck. Kate stood and stretched. She crossed to the glass door quietly. Looking out, she saw Sheri smoking a cigarette, reclining in the Jacuzzi.

She must have been humming with the country tunes as she flicked an ash into a tray on the edge. Kate looked at the other woman’s profile and smiled. Sheri reached over and lifted the glass full of a fresh drink. Suddenly the glass slipped and fell into the waters. “Shit!” Sheri said, frustrated. She stood up to catch the glass and set it back on the edge.

Kate’s mouth went dry as she realized Sheri was naked. Sheri stood, her breasts dripping water and her nipples hardening with the outside air. Kate swallowed as her stomach tightened. She slowly backed away from the view. Sheri was reaching for a nearby towel. Returning to the recliner, Kate had just enough time to straighten her books and escape into her room before she heard Sheri slide open the back door. Kate rested her head against the solid wood of her bedroom door and closed her eyes.

Damn that woman is beautiful!

Forty minutes earlier Sheri sank into the warmth of the Jacuzzi and lit a needed cigarette. She watched the cloud of smoke float into the red fluorescent lights hanging near the lattice roof. The evening sky was beginning to twinkle with stars. Sheri sighed and took another long drag. *What am I doing? The way I talked her into going to Sister’s and then hiding behind a mask? What was the point?* Sheri knew the original point had been to allow Kate a means of release and relaxation. Sheri knew Kate wasn’t dating and there was a decided lack of social life there. She thought if she gave Kate a way to relax and feel a bit more free, she might open up to others more easily. She briefly wondered what would cause Kate to become so secluded to begin with. *She is perfectly charming around me!* Maybe her parents are horrible? Or maybe it’s worse?

Sheri began humming with the country station as she thought of the way Kate had responded in her hands. Kate had been so responsive to her touch. Sheri pictured Kate’s curves lying on the bed and revisited that beautiful body in her mind. All Sheri’s life she had been picturing women in her fantasies and here was the real McCoy sleeping behind her in the living room.

Sheri had definitely experimented with other women, but she had never found someone who fulfilled her dreams. She was also attracted to certain types of men; however, she had never exploded with orgasm unless she thought of a fantasy woman.

Sheri thought of Kate and lay her head back to the side of the Jacuzzi. Reaching for her rum and coke, she accidentally dropped the glass. "Shit!" she muttered, jerking forward and standing up.

She grunted at her own stupidity and retrieved the glass that was sinking under the water. *Maybe I just need to get laid?* She frowned again as a vision of Kate, naked, stretched out on a bed, moaning at her floated into her head. She stepped out of the Jacuzzi and grabbed her towel to start drying off. Wrapping the light blue Sari around her body she turned off the Jacuzzi jets and slid open the outer door.

Glancing over at the settee area, she saw that Kate was no longer there. Sheri listened and didn't hear a sound. *She must have gone to bed. At least someone in this household can sleep.* Sheri walked into her bedroom and closed the door behind her.

Kate was gone when Sheri went down to the kitchen the next morning. A note beside the daily paper said she 'had an early class to prepare for' and she 'had to hurry'. Coffee was made and there were donuts in the fridge. Sheri survived with a frown and some grumbles. She smirked slightly at the 'have a nice day' signed by Kate.

When Sheri arrived at her first class she was just settling into her the chair when her instructor walked in with a stack of packets. He made an announcement to the class covering the general information inside the packets and urged everyone to grab one the way out. Sheri's ears caught a statement of Biology instructors would be guest lecturing the next week. *Wasn't Kate worried about her teaching next week?*

When she got her package she opened it and skimmed down the itinerary, finding Kate's name. She was lecturing on 'Cell structure and Cell fusion'. Sheri grinned and thought this was going to be fun. She would get to see Kate teaching and watch her for the entire hour. Sheri waggled an eyebrow at the idea and commanded herself to make sure she stayed awake.

After classes ended that day she drove home. Walking into the front door, she saw suitcases in the entrance. Frowning she rounded the corner into the kitchen and saw her brother cradling his head in a towel full of ice. Kate was busy getting more ice trays broken up near the sink while the man moaned softly.

Sheri tried to picture what had happened, but couldn't figure it out. Sheri began laughing at the confusion and her brother's pitiful expression. Kate's worried face turned to Sheri with some relief.

"It was an accident. I didn't know he was your brother. I swear!" Kate blurted out.

“What did you do to him, Kate?” Sheri chuckled, trying to calm the smaller woman down.

“Hey sis! Didn’t know you had gotten a professional fighter as a roommate!” Thomas looked warily over at Kate’s blushing features. Kate wrapped a new towel up securely and exchanged the one Thomas was holding for the new.

“I’m really sorry, Sheri, but he scared the devil out of me and I just reacted.” Kate looked over at Sheri as Thomas tentatively touched the new ice wrap to his swelling eye and forehead.

“Serves him right for not calling first!” Sheri glanced at the nasty looking black bruise that was forming. “What did you clobber him with? A two by four?” Thomas snickered and rubbed his own temple at the pain he caused in laughing.

“She hit me with her hand, Sheri.” Sheri looked over at Kate wringing her hands together in embarrassment.

“I have a brown belt in Karate!” Kate confessed. Sheri’s eyes widened and a laugh escaped at her brother’s accidental discovery.

“Well, you sure clobbered him. Wish you would have let me see the whole thing though.” Sheri teased her brother who looked up with a frowning dirty look.

Sheri just laughed again and then introduced the two of them to each other. After the commotion all three moved upstairs to visit. Sheri and Thomas sat down and Kate mixed up a few drinks. After serving everyone, she nervously sat down across from Thomas and next to Sheri. Sheri reached out and gently squeezed her knee.

“He may be sneaky, but he is harmless. Relax!”

Kate nodded OK and took a sip of her soda.

“What are you doing here, Tom?” Sheri inquired after a few moments.

“I’m just visiting to see how the place is looking.” His blue eyes wandered around the upstairs area and he began to nod. “I like what you’ve done with it. How’s the Jacuzzi? Are you still bathing nude?”

Sheri glanced quickly over at Kate and noticed she was stirring her drink. Sheri saw a slow flush rise on Kate’s cheeks and wondered.

“I try to keep from flashing to the world since Kate moved in. I wouldn’t want to shock anyone. How bout you? Are you still lecturing to the pretty ladies?”

Thomas gently removed the cold ice pack and walked to the mini bar to dump the ice. A small lump and a darkening bruise were forming around his temple. He turned around carefully and smiled at his sister's sarcasm.

"Yes, I'm lecturing, but found a short break in my schedule. I decided to stop in and say hello. "Hello!"

Sheri watched him finger his new lump and chuckled again.

"I've been meaning to knock some sense into you for quite some time now. All it took was Kate. I'll remember that!" Sheri patted Kate's knee again and smiled at her roommate.

Kate blushed deeper as Thomas gave them both a lopsided grin.

"I'm very sorry I scared you Kate. Believe me! I'll make sure I call if I ever want to stop in again." Kate lost the battle and turned scarlet as she sat quietly sipping her drink.

Sheri laughed and Thomas joined in. Kate chuckled slightly too. For the next hour they chatted about family and friends. Kate was drawn into the discussion when the two siblings brought up Aunt Helen and Dotty.

After a bit Thomas invited both the women to go to dinner. Sheri wouldn't let Kate decline and answered 'yes' for both of them. Thomas left shortly thereafter and promised to pick them up around eight.

Kate and Sheri ran around the upstairs area getting ready to go out. They compared outfits and changed their plans three or four times. Finally Kate was ready wearing a dark blouse with a plunging vee neckline and French cuffs at the end of the long sleeves. She had simply picked out a pair of dark blue jeans since Sheri explained Tom's idea of a good time was a Country bar.

Sheri wore a tight fitting sweater of light pink, which pulled down off her shoulders to leave her neck and shoulders bare. She also ended up wearing jeans. They accessorized their jewelry and both women pulled out boots to wear.

The finished products were both amazed as they looked at each other. Sheri's dark hair fell down around her shoulders accenting her tan skin and highlighting the diamond pendant she was wearing. Her cleavage was well emphasized with the sparkling pendant.

Kate had let her blonde hair curl its wild locks around her head and it now reached mid back. The dark maroon blouse enhanced her paler soft skin and brought out her green eyes with sparkling depths. She wore gold earrings that flickered visibly between strands of hair as she moved. A braided choker of black wrapped around her neck. Sheri's eyes slid downward slightly from the choker and enjoyed the slight cleavage

Kate was showing.

They were giving each other compliments as the doorbell rang. Sheri ran downstairs to answer it and Kate watched the backside of her roommate with pleasure. *Nice! Down girl!*

“Fantastic. You two look great. I’m going to have trouble keeping the guys from stealing you away. Oh, but, I guess Kate will protect us.” The three of them chuckled.

Thomas looked quite handsome in his button down white silk shirt with fringe crawling in a vee down his chest and across his back. He wore blue jeans and boots too. Sheri had been spot on with her brother’s style.

An hour later they had a huge dinner spread across the restaurant table at the Regency Hotel Grand Dining Room. The sparkling fountains and plants and colorful lighting had the large room designed for all different groups of people to enjoy. Sheri and Tom kept Kate in stitches as they bantered back and forth. Kate revealed her status as an only child and Tom began telling stories of Sheri being raised as the only girl with five older brothers. Around ten, they sipped up the last drop of wine as they devoured the last bite of cheesecake.

After they left the restaurant, Tom drove them all to a nearby Honky Tonk. The city was just picking up steam on the Wednesday night ladies night specials. Tom was the wannabe cowboy and showed Sheri and Kate how to blend in. He took them out on the dance floor and they were swept into a line dance. The steps were fairly simple and all three of them laughed and danced for quite some time. Tom moved them over to try out the mechanical bull. The girls declined but Tom attempted and flew off into the cushions to the screaming shout of both Kate and Sheri.

Sheri talked Kate into punching a mechanical punching bag. Kate stared at the bag and drew in a deep breath. She released a shout as she punched forward. The bag machine started dinging its rating of her strength. Sheri laughed and wide-eyed noted the label of ‘dangerous’ to her small roomie. Tom whistled and cheered pointing at his head to the assembled crowd around the machine. Kate blushed and ducked her head into Sheri’s shoulder in embarrassment.

Sheri wrapped her arms around Kate and laughed at her brother. They moved away from the machine and eventually laughed the evening away. Around midnight, Sheri stifled her second yawn and Kate was beginning to blink at the bright lights. Tom drove them home and gave them both a kiss on the cheek. He promised to call them soon and told Kate he was glad they had met, regardless of the circumstances. Kate laughed and Tom winked then groaned as his head reacted with pain.

Sheri followed Kate upstairs and, feeling drained, they both plopped down into the recliners.

“He is very nice, Sheri.” Kate exclaimed through a yawn. She covered her mouth and grinned at her happy exhaustion. Sheri watched Kate snuggle deeper into the chair’s depths. Standing up she walked over and pulled off the boots from Kate’s feet. Kate stretched out in satisfaction and mumbled thanks. Sheri just stood watching. Kate noticed the tall figure watching her and she blushed.

“I had a nice time too.” Sheri stated breaking her stare and picking up the boots to toss over into a corner. She pulled the stretch material of her sweater straight and glanced back at Kate.

“You’d better get to bed before you fall asleep in that chair.”

Kate smiled, yawned and lowered the footrest of the reclining chair to stand up. Her feet weren’t ready to rely on their flat form yet since the boots had given them a two-inch height change and Kate nearly fell over the coffee table out of balance. Sheri stepped forward and grabbed Kate around the waist to stop a serious fall. Kate reached over and caught Sheri’s hand. She balanced herself and felt her shoulder resting against Sheri’s chest. In fact Sheri’s body was pressed tightly against Kate’s side.

“Thanks! I was used to the boots.” She muttered awkwardly, stepping away.

Sheri stepped back too and let Kate pass as she made her way over to her room. Kate said goodnight as she entered her bedroom. Not hearing a reply she looked back out into the living space to see Sheri lighting up a cigarette standing at the patio doorway looking out. Kate noticed the frown on her friend’s face and thought to ask about it. But, she closed her bedroom door instead.

Hearing the click of the door, Sheri drew in a deep drag on the cigarette and frowned more. She turned away from the backdoor and sat back down into the recliner. *This living with Kate is going to be difficult.* Kate was obviously not ready for a direct approach in a relationship and Sheri didn’t really want to get clobbered in the attempt. *Maybe I can loosen her up some at the parlor?*

CHAP 7

Picture The Audience In Their Underwear?

Kate didn’t see much of Sheri for the next four days. After a quick good morning, with quiet sips of the caffeine pushing coffee, the two of them began rushing around getting ready for class still half asleep. Staying out so late Wednesday with Tom, Kate only realized Sheri wasn’t going to be home that night when she arrived home after class. It was Thursday, one of Sheri’s work nights. Kate was so tired she didn’t hear her roommate come home that night.

A brief message scrawled across a notepad left by the coffee machine had Kate frowning. Sheri said she would be gone for the next three days on a sailing trip. Kate was not to expect her back until Sunday. Kate growled throughout the day and ended

up accomplishing very little. If she didn't know any better, she'd say Sheri was hiding from her.

Kate wondered at that thought and didn't know exactly how she felt about it. She only knew she didn't like it when Sheri wasn't around.

Sheri must have arrived back late Sunday evening, long after Kate went to bed. Kate watched the taller dark-haired woman stumble in for coffee the following Monday morning. She hoped whoever Sheri had spent the weekend with was currently without a hot water heater and needing a shower. The jealous emotional streak running through her body made Kate feel horrible and angry at the same time. She fought the reaction of striking out at Sheri.

"Did you have a nice weekend?" Kate managed to sound almost civil.

Sheri sipped her coffee and grimaced. "Yes, the water was beautiful." That was all she said as she reached for the sports section of the paper. Moving the other portions, Sheri saw a familiar looking card resting near Kate's hand.

"What's that?" Sheri motioned toward the card. Kate, still frowning, looked down at her Sister's request card for the masseuse; she had been checking off the items she knew she would like to have massaged. Sheri was eyeing the card and motioned for Kate to let her see. Kate shrugged and handed the card over to her.

"They should stop using these. They are really out of date. Most people just write 'the works' into the remarks and the masseuse will do the rest. It's too complicated to track all the individual wants and needs." Kate shook her head.

"That secretary told me to fill it out. I'm gonna try and keep it controlled until I feel a bit more comfortable." Kate motioned for Sheri to give the card back. Sheri grinned and asked if Kate would mind getting her a refill of the coffee, please? Kate sighed and got up to get the pot. As she returned she saw Sheri placing the card back over near her own coffee cup.

"Thanks!" Sheri rose to go back upstairs for a bit to take a shower and get ready for school.

Kate lifted the card to look it over. The only additional field check marked was BAF. Kate had no idea. She started to erase what Sheri had obviously added, but hesitated. She trusted Sheri and wanted to see where this went. She left it on there and started anticipating her appointment tomorrow. Kate stuffed the card back into her notebook.

Returning upstairs she got ready for classes. She would be starting her lectures this week and wanted to go over her notes once more.

The day flew past and Kate found herself struggling over some last minute changes in

her lecture notes she had spread across the coffee table. Sheri was at home and attempting to catch up on her chores she had neglected over the weekend.

“You know I forgot to mention you’re lecturing to one of my classes this week,” Sheri mentioned as she stooped to pick up a few pieces of clothing she had dropped going to the washer.

Kate looked at her wide-eyed. “Really?” Kate’s nervous voice squeaked upward in multiple octave levels.

“It had better be good, young lady!” Sheri teased, looking down at Kate.

“I had no idea. I thought it would be lectures to the freshman classes to interest them in biology.”

“Well, at least it gets me out of my regular lecture note taking. I was beginning to get mid-term blues. This lecture week will give us a break we really need.”

Kate began to shuffle through her notes and straighten the disorder. “I hope you enjoy it, but I get a little nervous in front of a crowd.”

Sheri watched Kate fidget nervously and didn’t know what to say. Suddenly she remembered Thomas saying something once that might help.

“Tom says if you get nervous speaking before a crowd, you should always picture them in their underwear. It’s something to make them less intimidating.”

Kate looked up at Sheri and stopped fidgeting as she saw the tall raven-haired woman in nothing but that slinky bikini outfit from the parlor, her nipples hard and the candle light flickering softly over her skin. Kate’s tongue came out briefly to wet her suddenly dry lips. Her hands trembled slightly until she clasped them together.

Sheri watched in fascination, as Kate’s eyes seemed to dilate and turn a darkened jade. Kate turned away and quickly wiped her palms across her blue jean covered legs. She began gathering up her papers and stuffing them into her book bag somewhat frantically.

Sheri reached over and touched Kate’s arm, frowning as Kate jerked from her touch, then stilled. She slid her hand down Kate’s arm and covered her hand linking their hands together.

“What’s wrong, Kate?” Sheri half whispered, her voice husky with concern, wanting to know what was going on inside the seemingly frightened woman.

Kate lifted her gaze to Sheri’s caring blue eyes and felt the warmth of her hand inside her own. She glanced down at their entwined fingers.

“Your brother’s theory just doesn’t work for me, Sheri. I think I’ll just stick to my nervous tension instead.” She retrieved her captured hand and stood up with her papers and book bag. Her face flushed as Sheri watched her walking away to her bedroom.

In sudden realization, Sheri grasped Kate had visualized someone in his or her underwear and it wasn’t fright Sheri was seeing in that flushed face. It was actually Kate’s being aroused. Sheri smiled and hoped she would have nine extra lives full of curiosity when it came to Kate Sheffield.

“Who did you think about, Kate?” Sheri teased, beyond interested to hear the answer and not, in the least, expecting one to be given at all.

Just as the door closed, almost muffled from inside, shutting off any further communication, Sheri heard Kate say the word ‘you’. A slow grin of satisfaction grew on Sheri’s face as she leaned back and savored a small feeling of excitement.

Sheri took a deep breath and let it out with a whoosh. *Well I’ve managed to get her interest. How am I going to tell her I’m the masseuse and not have her freak out on me?*

Sheri lit a cigarette and took a long drag, releasing it slowly. Without finishing it she put out the cigarette. *What am I going to do?* She stood up and walked over to Kate’s door. Raising her hand to knock, she tried to think of something to say that wouldn’t make Kate think she was a sick pervert playing games. Slowly, without knocking, she lowered her hand.

“Kate? Are you OK?” Sheri spoke through the door.

A softly muttered ‘Fine, I’m OK!’ came back through the muffled interior.

Sheri placed her hand on the doorknob and instantly pictured Kate pulling away from her in anger or fear. She wanted Kate to have time to adjust to her feelings. God knew what had caused this shy person to evolve, but Sheri wanted to spend the time and show Kate how it should be between two people. She released the doorknob with a swallow of regret. Maybe Kate needed more time and Sheri should just back off.

“You know where I am if you need to talk to someone...or anything else, too. OK Kate?” Sheri said stepping back from the door. Not hearing a response, she crossed the room and softly closed her own bedroom door behind her.

Kate found another scrawled note next to the coffee pot. She had mixed feelings about it. A briefly written note said they would see each other soon. Kate realized Sheri would be in the student audience this morning for her lecture. She wondered if Sheri would also be her masseuse for tonight? As far as she knew, things were beginning to get a little too complicated. *What was making Sheri pretend to be someone else and*

why did I ever tell Sheri she was the one I had pictured in my imagination?

Kate drank some orange juice and deliberated over her lecture notes trying unsuccessfully to keep Sheri out of her thoughts. *How could one person become so ingrained in my life?* She'd managed quite easily to isolate herself from others before. *Why wouldn't Sheri give up?* Sighing deeply, Kate gathered her notes and briefcase full of slides. Dumping the unfinished OJ into the sink, she cursed these events of her professional choice and headed off to class.

Arriving at the campus, she wished suddenly she were just getting her bachelor's degree like Sheri. Being an instructor wasn't her idea of a learning process; it was tension overload and a quick suicide. She hated speaking in front of a crowd. As she entered the half full lecture hall, she realized she was 10 minutes early. She discretely scanned for Sheri but didn't see her yet. Kate almost sighed again. She realized she had been hoping for a quick pep talk from her friend.

As she dropped her notes and briefcase on the front podium she glanced to make sure the slide projector equipment had been set up already and the screen was lowered. After checking the projector, she spread her note cards onto the podium and grabbed the briefcase full of slide cartridges. When she opened her briefcase, a small pink envelope fell out onto the floor. Kate picked it up and saw her name boldly printed on it.

The envelope contained a small card with a bouquet of flowers on the outside cover. Inside, there was a note. "Good Luck. You'll be fine. I would have liked to give you the flowers myself but...they wouldn't be as beautiful as you."

There wasn't any signature, but Kate recognized the handwriting. She blinked back a few heart warming tears that threatened to escape and tucked the card into her blazer pocket.

The class buzzer rang a few minutes later and Kate looked up from her notes to a sea of faces waiting on her every word. She reached down and felt the small card in her pocket, then confidently began her lecture.

After leading the students through a half hour of facts and nomenclature in the study of Biology, she flipped on a cartridge of slides with a tape-recorded audio. Walking over, she turned off the hall lights and let the overhead take her place. She sank down into a nearby chair, exhausted.

Scanning the crowd of students, she looked for Sheri. Suddenly she caught blue eyes staring back at her through the darkness. Sheri was sitting just three rows back from where Kate had dropped into a chair. Her friendly smile and wink had Kate smiling back. Kate silently mouthed 'thank you'. Sheri nodded. She mouthed back 'It's true about the flowers' and Kate blushed in the darkness, turning back to watch the slideshow she had put together.

As she stood and concluded her presentation, a few of the students began leaving early and Kate watched Sheri exit out a side door. Kate gathered her notes and grabbed the slides while answering some of the lingering students' questions. She handed out a few pamphlets from the Biology department and exited the lecture hall with a sigh of relief. Sheri was nowhere to be seen, so Kate headed to her car to drop off all her teaching aides.

As Kate neared her car, she saw Sheri leaning against the hood.

"You're a natural, Kate. Or should I be calling you Professor?" Sheri grinned as Kate smiled. Sheri took the slides and books from Kate's full arms while Kate opened the trunk of her car. Sheri set everything inside. She shut the trunk and smiled at Kate.

Kate said 'thank you' and shrugged as she started to analyze her performance.

"Thanks, but I sort of cheated a bit with the slide show thing," she said, self derisively.

"Don't kid yourself. You did fine. I know half a dozen people running to transfer majors right now!" Sheri teased. They both chuckled as Kate got into the car. Sheri leaned over the window and smiled down at Kate.

"You really deserve a medal for putting up with most of the students here. Maybe I could persuade you to accept a dinner invitation instead? We could celebrate your success over the first hill?"

Kate eyed the tall woman and wondered if this were an official date invitation? She sure hoped it would be.

"When is this dinner gonna take place and where?" Kate hesitated knowing Sheri had to work tonight.

"I'll meet you at our house around nine. Is that OK?" Sheri asked gently as she reached over and pushed a stray wild lock of blonde hair back behind Kate's ear. Kate closed her eyes at the soft touch and swallowed.

"I can't wait. I'll be there," Kate stated with a husky voice. She looked up to see blue eyes twinkling and a satisfied cocky smile.

She started the engine and backed out of the slot. Glancing back she saw Sheri wave, and she waved in return before heading across the campus to get to another class. *Dinner date at nine and a massage at five...tonight is going to be quite interesting.*

CHAP 8

The Lie Revealed.

As Kate pulled into the parking lot of the massage parlor, she took her time to look around for Sheri's car. Not seeing it, she shrugged and left her own to enter the

building. The idea that Sheri would hide her car fueled a little bit of anger in Kate. She was apprehensive about this whole setup to begin with and here Sheri was playing some twisted game. Kate was beginning to feel used and that was one place she promised she would never again put herself.

The same secretary was behind the counter and only looked up from a new romance book to say 'room 3 and put your card in the slot behind the door'. Kate had completely forgotten to change the checked contents back to her own choices. Regardless she boldly put the card into the slot and thought if she wants to play, I'll play.

Changing out of her clothes and into the silk robe Kate left the tie open and walked over to hop onto the bed. She lay on her stomach and sheltered her head in the cradle of her arms as she watched the door.

Sheri came in with the same elaborate getup. She paused to grab the card from the back of the door and glance at both sides. Walking over to the candle area she pressed the play button on the CD player as she quickly and quietly lit some candles and turned off the harsher lamplight. The soothing reflective lights did their work as Kate turned her head to press it into the hole on the bed. She put her arms back down by her sides and felt warm hands carefully guide the robe lower. Again the silk was left only to cover her buttocks. Kate shivered as anticipation swept through her. The light strains of music grew as Sheri began to hum along while spreading warm oil over Kate's back.

Kate relaxed as Sheri smoothed the aches and caressed her muscles. Thoroughly enjoying her ministrations, Kate smiled with pleasure. The hands roamed down and began a massage over Kate's legs. Bending each knee upward she stretched and pulled to eradicate the tension as she slid her oiled palms across Kate's flesh. Finishing all too quickly Sheri proceeded to massage Kate's feet with her thumbs and palms. Kate arched her toes appreciatively.

Sheri's hands slid upward over ankles, calves, and thighs to pause and then remove the robe. Kate felt her stomach tense as the air brushed her naked cheeks.

Sheri rubbed her hands with oil and caressed each buttock with strength and firmness. Kate tried hard to suppress the excitement growing inside. She drew in a sharp breath and held it as she felt Sheri trace a single line down her back following her spine to follow over the curve of her right cheek.

Without realizing it Kate felt a pulling sensation on her arm as Sheri gently guided the reclined woman to roll onto her back. With the clarity of lightning striking, Kate realized BAF meant back and front. *How naive can I be?* Trying to remain calm and not panic, she slowly rolled over and kept her eyes closed from any incidental contact with that of her masseuse.

Her body went on high alert, a sensual arousal fluttered inside her at the freedom of being naked and on view for another's gaze. She battled the power of the attraction she

knew was growing by leaps and bounds for Sheri. Sometimes her battle was 'for', other times 'against'. Right now she was battling for control and her nipples betrayed her by hardening in excitement.

Silence entered the room as the CD took that moment to search for its next song. Kate refused to look up at Sheri as nervousness engulfed her.

Sheri stood looking down at Kate and forgot to breathe. Her eyes swept over the beautiful body laid out before her as she began to tremble with desire. Her gaze swept the entire length of Kate's body noticing the full breasts, slender waist, full hips, gentle curves, blonde curling pubic hair at the apex of her legs, and the strong leg muscles that flexed as Kate tensed in the silence. Sheri's lungs screamed for air as she realized she was holding her breath.

Sheri's eyes found the path she would eventually cover with her hands. She started at the slender neckline. She paid homage to the body she had uncovered. Her oiled hands slid over soft skin as she massaged and stroked the sleek muscles of Kate's shoulders and arms. Fingers traced the collarbones as Sheri moved down to rub over the pectoral muscles above the breasts. Kate's breathing increased slightly. Her chest rose and fell. Sheri added more oil to Kate's stomach and spread the oil upward as she covered her breasts. She felt Kate still as her hands cupped each breast. A gasp escaped Kate's lips as she felt Sheri graze her thumbs over each nipple. The hands receded as Sheri smoothed the oil off to the sides and massaged the ribcage and side muscles too. She eyed the full breasts and lighter aureoles and noted their hardness. She wanted to lean down and suck one into her mouth. She glanced at Kate's face and saw a tiny frown and clenched jaw. Her eyes were closed. Her breathing was rapid. Sheri felt her own arousal grow as her hands caressed Kate's skin. She couldn't resist as she swept upward one more time and cupped their bounty back into her hands, her thumbs once again flicking over the tips. Kate arched and both women began to sweat. With light touches but a firm pressure, she massaged back down the rib cage as she continued downward toward the blonde patch of pubic hair. Sheri's hands ran inward to the juncture of Kate's legs and lightly rubbed the inner region of her upper thighs. Kate swallowed rapidly as she experienced the same touch over and over. Her legs widened in invitation as she reveled in the sensations shooting through her body. Sheri could smell the heated excitement. She wanted to take Kate over that point and allow her to feel the release.

In that one moment, Sheri realized just what she was doing. She gasped. Her hands stopped touching Kate's skin and she stepped back from the bed. *How could I be so stupid? She doesn't know who I am. Oh God!*

Sheri lifted her hand to cover her mouth before she started apologizing. *I was making love to her and she doesn't even know it's me. I'm so sorry Kate.*

Sheri backed away from the bed and bumped into the door behind her. Blue eyes met green as Kate looked over at her. The glazed look of arousal in Kate's eyes triggered a

feeling of self-incrimination in Sheri. *I know better than to go this far. What the hell would Kate think about this if she knew it was me touching her? Oh God, I wish she knew it was me!*

Sheri scrambled out of the room the door behind her flying wide. She rushed down the hall to a changing room.

“Sheri?” Kate yelled at the retreating figure. She didn’t stop. The door swung shut once more. Kate fell back onto the bed with a slight whimper. She mentally went through her repertoire of curse words then rejected the idea of bringing herself through to climax. Hating the way her frustration level had risen, Kate admitted to herself she had loved every minute getting there. She truly didn’t want the feelings to disappear. It had been forever since she had shared such intimacy with another. Her body trembled on the edge as she rode out the sensations.

After ten minutes of deep breathing and calm thoughts of snow and ice, Kate raised herself into a sitting position. She dressed slowly and left the building to sit in her car. *What the hell was going on? Sheri had gotten her into this and created this huge pretense, but why? Was this a game? Kate felt herself blush with embarrassment. Wow! She really got to me in there! How could I have let her under my defenses so easily? Why do people insist on playing games with me?*

Kate looked up from her daze and realized she had been sitting there for quite some time. It was almost seven p.m. Kate remember Sheri had made plans to meet for dinner at nine. Kate clenched her jaw and wondered if she could have her stuff packed and be gone before Sheri got home. She blinked back the tears she wanted to release and wondered if it would have been any different if Sheri had just asked her out on a date? Kate tried to think of a motel she could stay at for the night as she turned on the ignition and started the drive back home. A lone tear did escape as Kate realized it wasn’t really her home anyway. She was just a renter.

Sheri sat near her locker trembling with the after effects of arousal. She remembered rubbing her thumbs across Kate’s hard nipples. Her jaw clenched as she heard Kate’s gasp. Sheri realized she had lost control the moment she had committed to making Kate have an orgasm. Sheri had wanted to see it. She had wanted to be the one Kate cried out to.

As her hands had shaped down the slender waistline and over the rounded hips she had visualized Kate’s arching reaction to her hands as she brought the woman higher and higher.

The minute Sheri realized what she was doing she froze. She realized Kate wasn’t seeing her. Kate didn’t even know it was her. Kate thought it was someone named Susan. *I don’t want Kate that way. I want to hear Kate cry out my name when she comes.* Sheri held her head in her hands as she tried to calm down.

As she was leaving the room, she thought she had heard her name called. She passed it off as a yearning. Taking deep breaths she tried to regain some control over her nerves. Her skin was flushed and rivulets of sweat ran between her breasts. Ripping off the mask she threw it across the room. It hit the wall and slid to the floor. Sheri ran her fingers over her head to pull the wig off. It followed the mask.

Moving to the locker she opened it in a daze. Seeing her own reflection in the mirror inside the door she noticed the paleness of her skin and the dampness of her hair. She brushed her hair back as she thought of Kate.

What did Kate think of as she was lying there? She was so responsive and almost eager. She acted like a teenager about to be devirginized. She was excited and vulnerable. Sheri remembered Thomas and the lump Kate had given him. She certainly wasn't very vulnerable then. Did she have thoughts of me? Did she want me there? The brush stopped as Sheri's face grew frightened with a stray thought. She remembered the call of her name as she left. Was it real? Did Kate know it was me? Oh My God!

Things fell into perspective as Sheri realized Kate had known it was she all along. *My God. What have I just done? What does Kate think of me? What did Kate think I was doing? What is Kate doing right now?*

With this thought Sheri dropped the brush and grabbed a jumpsuit. Dressing quickly she rushed back down the hall to find the room empty.

"Shit!" She ran to the front reception area.

"Carla? Did you see that blonde leave?" She asked the romance book reader.

"Yea! She didn't look too happy. Anything wrong, Sheri?" But she spoke to Sheri's retreating back going down the hallway.

Sheri exited the building and jumped into her car. Peeling out of the lot from behind the building, she drove back to the condo and barely noticed the guard's wave as she pulled through the entrance. She pulled up to the house, parked the car on the street and jumped out to run inside. She yelled Kate's name as she entered the front door. Silence greeted her voice. Sheri looked at the kitchen clock as she bounded up the stairs two at a time. *Six-thirty. That was plenty of time for her to get here. Where was she?*

"Shit!" Sheri exclaimed in total helplessness.

Sheri burst into Kate's room causing the curtains to flutter wildly over the far window. She wasn't there. Sheri checked the dresser drawers to make sure her clothes were still there. Nothing was out of place. Kate's bed was neatly made and the dresser was carefully covered with decorative perfume bottles and a silver handled comb and brush set.

Sheri glanced out of the bedroom to the living area. Switching lights on as she crossed the room, she opened her own bedroom door. Nothing was different from when she had left this morning. The rumpled sheets grazed her bed lightly covered with clothes at the foot.

Sheri went back into the living room and quickly crossed to the back door of the deck. The romantic bottle lights strung around the roof flickered softly with the breeze as Sheri crossed to look down at the French champagne decanter resting on the table she had prepared. Two place settings were arranged with China and crystal glasses, separated only by the bouquet of roses Sheri had purchased. *Where the hell is she?* Sheri looked down at her watch and cursed again. It was now seven p.m. Her stomach clenched in fear.

Just then she heard a car pull into the drive from around the side of the house. The garage door opened and closed behind it. Sheri sighed with relief. Entering the house, she practically jumped the flight of stairs and almost knocked Kate over coming into the kitchen. Kate let out a short yelp of fear and punched forward trying to stop when she realized who it was. Sheri saw the punch coming and tried to avoid it at the last moment. Turning sideways she took the brunt of the punch in her left side near her rib cage. Groaning to a sudden pain she attempted to grab the shelf to keep standing. She fell to one knee as her breath was stolen from her lungs.

“Oh crap, Sheri! What the hell are you trying to do. Scare the hell out of me? I’m sorry!” Kate said quickly as she bent to help Sheri get into a nearby chair.

Sheri swallowed quickly trying to regain her breath as she clutched her side in agony. Kate quickly applied a wet cloth to her forehead and rubbed her back to relax her. Sheri watched as the bright spots dancing before her eyes slowly receded. The heavy beating sound of her heartbeat slowed to a small throbbing drum beat in her ears. Sheri felt the room come back to a horizontal plane as she slowly turned to look for Kate.

Kate sat in the chair beside her waiting with a frown on her face.

“I...” Sheri tried to speak, drawing in air and gasping as she clutched her side tightly at the pain. She tried to take shallow breaths as she attempted to speak.

“I know I deserve this. But, why are you frowning over it?” Her breath released in a hiss as she felt the drums in her head begin to pick up a faster tempo.

Kate sat looking at Sheri, unblinking, and then she turned away. Sheri reached out to grab her hand resting on the table and almost gagged at the sharp pain rising from her chest.

Kate turned at the touch and watched Sheri’s face pale. Sheri struggled with her thoughts.

"I...didn't...mean...to...hurt...you...Kate." Sheri gritted out through her clenched jaw. If nothing else she was going to say what she needed to say. "I wanted...to share...with you. I wanted you...to...love...me." Kate jerked her hand out of Sheri's and stood. Brushing her bangs off her face, she looked out of the small kitchen window and crossed her arms defensively.

Sheri grabbed the table edge and started to stand. Gasping, she sat back down and blinked the sudden tears of pain and rejection away. Clutching her ribs tightly she coughed. As she regained her breath she looked back at Kate's tense figure and frowned.

"Don't tense up now. I just got you relaxed." Sheri managed to say before her own pain registered at a higher degree than before. She bit her lip to hold in a low moan.

Kate spun around at her words her lips trembling.

"Why did you walk out on me, Sheri? Why did you pretend to be someone else? Why did you seduce me and then leave? Kate said on a broken sob. Her tears dangling from wet eyelashes.

"Shit!" Sheri gritted her teeth and, gathering her strength, she pulled on the table to struggle into a standing position. Clutching her ribs with a death grip, she held herself up leaning on the table edge.

"Look at me Kate!" Kate lifted her bowed head and met Sheri's bold gaze.

"I was trying to give you an opportunity to release your demons. I know you have some. And I wanted you to give them to me. I can take them away from you, Kate. It wasn't supposed to be this mixed up. I didn't think you would recognize me and I wasn't expecting to fall in love."

Sheri said this last statement with a small step forward. Losing her grasp on the table, she began to fall forward. Kate quickly saw her stumbling and stepped over to catch her. Sheri found herself clutching Kate's shoulders with a weak grip and no breath. She struggled to draw in each molecule of air, and the spots were back dancing in her vision.

"Sheri? Are you OK?" Kate asked softly as she tried to guide the taller woman back to a chair. Sheri slid downward and lay on the kitchen floor, her blue eyes looking up blankly as she panted for breath. She coughed and gagged until Kate helped her sit up, cradling Sheri in her arms. Kate retrieved the damp towel and put it on the back of Sheri's neck.

"Sheri?" Kate questioned frantically.

Sheri felt a moment of relief as her lung filled with air again. She drew in a precious breath and reached up to still the towel hand.

“Sorry. I’m not used to losing a lung before dinner!” Her comedic attempt was stated with a pitiful expression of pain.

“I’m sorry for hitting you.” Kate brushed away a teardrop from her eyes.

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you who I was at the parlor. We could have saved ourselves a lot of grief.”

Kate looked down at Sheri and frowned nodding her agreement.

“Kate? Please tell me you have some sort of feelings for me. I don’t want to make any more mistakes or have any pretense. I’m crazy about you. I’ve never been so desperately...” Sheri paused to find the perfect word, “in need, want, desire, craving another human being than I have for you. You make me feel...”

She was cut off by the touch of Kate’s fingertips against her lips. Kate had a smile on her face and bent down to kiss Sheri’s eyes, nose, and finally to hover over her lips.

“I think I’m in love with a lady who can’t take a punch,” Kate whispered before grazing her lips across Sheri’s. Sheri reached up to wind her fingers into Kate’s hair and attempt to press closer to deepen the kiss. Kate returned the kiss, but when she slid her hands across Sheri’s ribs, Sheri jerked and broke the kiss with a sharp inhalation and profuse coughing.

They both groaned as Sheri lifted her shirt to reveal a new and swelling bruise over her ribs.

CHAP 9 The Conclusion

Four hours and three x-rays later Kate turned the car into the driveway of the condo. She hopped out and ran around to the passenger side to help Sheri get out.

“Your lucky your ribs are not broken. I didn’t feel like checking my punch very much,” Kate teased Sheri, weakly.

“I sure can’t stand this tape though. It itches something fierce.” Sheri tried to change the subject quickly as Kate helped her into the house. She had finally gotten Kate to quit apologizing every time their gaze met. They crossed the kitchen and Kate helped Sheri carefully move up the stairs. Sitting down into a recliner she let out a grateful sigh. She felt like a person in a body cast, her upper body unable to bend normally. Kate made sure Sheri was OK and turned to go make a couple of drinks. She looked around and didn’t see the bar.

“What happened to the bar?” she asked confused.

“It’s on the patio.” Sheri gestured absently as she slowly reclined the chair backward.

As Kate crossed to the backdoor Sheri remembered her surprise. She gently put the chair upright and struggled to stand. Walking to the back door she saw Kate standing over the table fingering the stem of a champagne glass.

Sheri cleared her throat as she neared Kate. Forewarning was her motto from here out. Kate’s fingers stilled. Coming up directly behind her Sheri wrapped her arms around the smaller woman.

“Congratulation’s on your first day as an instructor.” Sheri leaned forward and kissed Kate’s neck. Kate suddenly turned and faced Sheri in her arms.

Sheri saw the glistening of tears and reached over to wipe them dry with her thumb.

“How can you like me? I’m weak and gullable and…” Kate stammered through her outburst.

“Hey now, what’s all this? You’re the best in my book,” Sheri pulled Kate forward so that they were leaning on each other. Kate tried to step away but Sheri squeezed her tighter, ignoring the twinge of pain that stabbed through her ribs.

“Tell me what’s wrong, Kate?” Sheri coaxed with her blue eyes capturing green. Kate shook her head. Sheri nodded her head and urged the one she loved to share her demons.

“Please Kate. Tell me!”

Kate looked back up to those loving eyes and fell into bottomless depths of compassion shining at her. She bowed her head and rested it on Sheri’s collarbone. Sheri held her and waited.

“I’m not so innocent as you might believe, Sheri. I’ve had experiences before, when I was younger. I just didn’t know exactly how things were supposed to be back then.” Kate shivered at her memories and Sheri tightened her hug.

The story came out in spurts. The always-vacant parents, the first boyfriend, and very slowly the rape were revealed to her friend. Sheri clenched her jaw tighter and tighter trying to remain in control during the entire story. Her anger at the man who had taken a gift and twisted it into something black and ugly was only slightly more bitter than the anger she felt toward the parents. Kate’s lonely life was unforgivable in her eyes. No child should have had to go through the trails Kate had survived. But, to think of her surviving them alone was unbearable. Sheri felt tears well up and blinked them back.

Kate's dry and scratchy voice slowly wound down. Sheri moved them over to the chairs and lowered Kate into one. Sitting down carefully and ignoring another twinge of pain she reached over to retrieve Kate's hand.

"Kate? Can you forgive me for being so stupid?" Sheri asked. Kate looked up to see Sheri's eyes filled with tears. Kate instantly moved to kneel before the other woman's chair and hug her gently. Sheri held Kate back but couldn't stop the tears from rolling down.

"What are you talking about? What are you sorry for?" Kate asked in a choked voice.

"I'm a stupid woman trying to control things beyond me." Sheri whispered. "I must have seemed exactly like the same bastard who had played games with you before?" Kate looked up from Sheri's lap and didn't know what to say. Sheri lifted Kate up from her kneeling position and pulled her down to sit in her lap. She buried her face in Kate's chest as she hugged her tightly.

"I'm so sorry. How I must have hurt you? I'll make it up to you Kate. I promise. I love you so much."

Kate caught her breath at those words and reached up to stroke the thick dark hair. "You already have." She whispered, as she lifted up the hiding face and bent down to kiss soft lips.

They both felt a tingle ignite as their soft kiss became more solid. Pressure between them tightened and lips parted to allow taste, texture, sweet exotic sensations. Sheri ran her hands up the sides of Kate's waist and slid her palm around to cup Kate's breast.

Kate felt her gasp swallowed into Sheri's mouth. She took a moment to move back and reposition her legs onto either side of Sheri's hips. They both saw the hunger in each other's eyes as Kate lowered her body back down. Sheri let her hands rest back on hips and then slide down to cup Kate's full bottom. She pulled her tighter and moaned. Kate hesitated and pulled back slightly. She saw the pain of Sheri's ribs flaring in her eyes.

"God Damn Ribs!" Sheri grumbled as her hands cupped Kate's beautiful butt. Kate stood up and stepped away, holding out her hand to Sheri to help her stand.

"Come inside before I forget you're a lady." Kate watched Sheri chuckle as she struggled upward. Sheri finally stood and hugged Kate, feeling the smaller woman tremble.

They moved into the house and once inside the silence thickened.

“I’ve never been with a woman, Sheri. Well to tell the truth...I haven’t really been that close to anyone since...” Kate paused to look over at Sheri. Sheri had thought something like that might be the case and she had thought of a plan.

“I have an idea you might agree with?”

Fifteen minutes later they were pulling into the massage parlor parking lot. The empty lot allowed them to pull right up to the door. Sheri took Kate’s hand as they entered the darkened building. Walking slowly they progressed in pitch black to what Kate realized was the third room.

Moving inside Sheri guided Kate over to the bed and pressed her hand into the side to hold onto. Sheri moved away and suddenly there was a match being struck across the space. The brilliant flare showed Sheri frowning in concentration right before it burned out. A second later another match and this one caught. A few candles and then more brightened the room with the warm flickering candle glow.

Sheri turned to look over at Kate who stood unmoving by the bed. She gave Kate an ardent look full of desire. Kate felt a flush rising up over her body as her skin tingled anticipating Sheri’s touch.

“All you have to do, sweetheart...” Sheri stepped closer to Kate’s trembling body. “...is follow the house rules.” Her voice lowered with her growing desire. “One...take off your clothes.”

Kate felt Sheri’s gaze caress her face and neck as her eyes lowered to her blouse. Looking down Kate reached up and began to unbutton one of six obstructions. Sheri reached over and stopped Kate’s hands. Their eyes met as Sheri unbuttoned the first then the second.

“Tell me what you want me to do, Kate?” Sheri voiced huskily as she looked down to watch her hands. Kate took a shaky breath as Sheri ran her fingertip along each side of her breasts.

Kate looked at Sheri’s half lowered eyelids and managed to whisper her desire. “Give me the works!” Sheri looked up from her mission and caught the stirring excitement in Kate’s darkening green eyes. Sheri smiled and released the last button from its prison.

She slowly slipped the blouse from Kate’s shoulders and let it fall to the floor. Looking at Kate’s breasts encased in a lacy white Sheri quickly grazed her thumbs across the hardened nipples poking outward from the soft silk material. Kate trembled and grasped Sheri’s upper arms to help her support Kate’s weakening legs.

Sheri reached down and unbuttoned and unzipped the pants Kate wore. Then she turned Kate toward the bed and unclipped the bra. Kate let the material slide down her upper body even as she felt Sheri lowered her pants and panties downward to let them

fall to her ankles. Kate moaned as Sheri stepped close behind her. Her heated breath ruffling Kate's hair on her neck. Sheri let her hands slide down from Kate's shoulders over the beautiful back, down to her waist and then down further to cover and cup her butt in both hands. A heat began to rise between her legs as Sheri lifted and spread her cheeks. The erotic movement was repeated two more times before a single finger slid between her cheeks and traced from the deep cleft upward over her spine and into her hair. She shivered at the sensation. Kate gripped the sheets before her tightly in response.

I've wanted to do this, forever." Sheri murmured as her hands slid around Kate's hips and over her stomach to slide upward and cup her breasts. Kate gasped.

"Two...lie down on the bed, sweetheart." Sheri urged Kate up onto the sheets. Kate was guided to lie on her back. Sheri's blue eyes sweep over her naked form. Kate watched her lover looking at her; she licked her dry lips and saw Sheri smile.

Sheri began pulling on the bed. Kate felt it roll away from the wall as Sheri maneuvered it out into the center of the room and re-positioned herself at Kate's head. She began to massage Kate's temples. As Kate closed her eyes with pleasure Sheri stroked Kate's bangs back off her forehead.

Leaning slightly forward, Sheri moved her massage to Kate's upper arms and then slid her hands back to Kate's temple. Kate relaxed deeper as Sheri worked. Sheri suddenly leaned down and pressed her lips to kiss Kate's forehead. She lifted her face slightly away to see surprised green eyes looking up at her. She leaned back down and lowered her mouth again to give a trail of kisses from forehead to lips. Kate let her eyes close once more and enjoyed the kissing and sweet nibbles on her lips and face. Sheri's hands never stopped touching her.

Their lips met and parted as Sheri deepened the kiss to As Kate began to respond to the kisses Sheri raised her head and went back to the massage. Moving behind the bed she lightly ran her fingers down from Kate's forehead to her chin and let her hand flow down to Kate's chest. Resting her palm between Kate's breasts she watched Kate's breathing begin to speed up.

Kate felt the sweep of Sheri's hand and reveled in the sensations. Her body tingled with excitement.

Sheri gently spread her fingers outward and cupped both breasts. Leaning down Sheri kissed the protruding tip of the left nipple. Kate arched her back, pressing upward in appreciation. As she kissed the other nipple she slowed to graze her teeth across the point of Kate's heaving breast. Then she suckled it into her mouth and ran her tongue over the sensitive tip. A small cry sounded from above.

Sheri moved to the other breast and repeated her ministrations. Her hands surrounded the warm skin, her fingers lightly stroking, pressing, sliding over Kate's chest.

Kate reached up to grasp Sheri's head holding it in place. Her fingers entangled in dark hair, clenched from each brush made from the touch of a wet tongue. A fire raged inside Kate. She felt the flames of an inferno rising within.

Sheri released the rigid nipples and rose higher to find Kate's mouth with her own. The deep kiss they shared swallowed the moan of desire and the moan of surrender. Kate's body trembled as Sheri slid her hand down over the flat stomach into the blonde curls. A finger dipped in to run through the juices gathered there. Kate threw her head back as she experienced the rapture from the contact.

Sheri skimmed her lips down the exposed neck and sucked on the rapid beating pulse point. Her finger slowly rubbed over the pleasuring spot again and again. Kate cried out to Sheri as she rocked her hips upward into the pressure.

Sheri paused her touch to whisper to Kate.

"What do you want, Kate. Tell me what you need."

Kate writhed on the bed. Her closed eyes opened. Emerald green stared at Sheri and willed her to continue.

"I need you, Sheri." Sheri kissed Kate and then kissed down her neck to the space between her breasts. She kissed over the trembling flat stomach as she kissed the blonde mound of hair. Hearing Kate's ragged breath from above Sheri continued as she lowered her tongue into the cleft and stroked over the essence between. Kate's thighs clenched tight.

Sheri maneuvered her body around the table to see Kate as she began to flick her tongue. Sheri heard her name called as she flickered her tongue over the rigid nub. She spread Kate's legs wider as she drank of her juices and pleased her. Kate's knuckles were white with strain and urgency. The hardened button swelled as Sheri sucked it in her mouth.

A roaring filled her ears. Kate felt the pending orgasm near as she climbed to an impossible height of arousal. Sheri held on to the rocking hips as Kate crested the mountain and found the final release. Her body clenched and forcefully pressed upward into Sheri's mouth as she cried out. Sheri felt the rush of Kate's excitement course through her own body as Kate tightened every muscle. They both rode waves of pleasure as Sheri softly ran her tongue around the inner folds of Kate's apex. Lowering her back down onto the bed Sheri kissed the inner leg before standing to look down over Kate.

Kate lay with her eyes closed and a smile on her lips. She had never felt so relaxed and complete. She opened her eyes to see Sheri's beautiful blue eyes looking down at her. Sheri's eyes held a look inside that made Kate's smile widen and her body shiver

with reaction. The residue of heat simmered brightly from those gorgeous blue orbs. Kate felt a warmth caress her skin where their gaze touched.

Sheri moved to Kate's side and gently reached up to trace her fingers over Kate's lips. The connection sent electricity to Sheri's body like a lightening bolt. Kate's lips parted suddenly and sucked a finger inside. Sheri locked gazes with Kate as arousal surged inside her. Her breathing increased as Kate's tongue flicked repeatedly across the fingertip inside the wet heat.

"Your driving me insane...you realize?" Sheri spoke, a slight crack in her voice. Kate reached up and withdrew the digits from her mouth and led them down to rest upon her breast.

"I love the way you make me feel!" Kate whispered back as she urged Sheri to cup her breast in her palm. Kate's eyes fell heavy lidded as Sheri obliged, her fingers lightly pinching the tip.

"Is this how you like to be touched?" Kate asked with a throaty moan escaping. Sheri looked back at Kate and swallowed the extra saliva she suddenly had in abundance. She licked her lips and started to answer. Kate raised up on one elbow and answered her own question.

"No! I bet you like the feel of a tongue on your nipples, swirling around." Kate's voice was hypnotic as Sheri felt a rush of desire. "Do you like the feeling of teeth against your skin, grazing your nipple's hardness?"

Sheri listened as Kate drew a clear portrait of the act with her words. A sudden excitement surged into high gear as she heard Kate tell her to 'take off her shirt'. Sheri removed her shirt and drew in an unsteady breath. She looked at her lover waiting.

Kate continued the litany of graphic scenes as she stared at Sheri's full breasts and tight nipples, their large brown areolas jutting outward. "I think you like the brush of hair across your breasts and you love the feel of our heartbeats throbbing together as our skin touches." Kate leaved forward and kissed just above Sheri's nipple. She licked around the breast peak, managing to allow her hair to slide lightly across the tightened bud at the tip.

Sheri let her head fall backward as a low moan escaped her throat. Kate reached out and held Sheri's breast as she flicked over the nipples repeatedly. She sucked the tips inward to a warm haven filled with raspy texture. Sheri felt weak at the knees as Kate continued. A swift lick then a cold blowing of her breath Kate enjoyed the tightening flesh. Exquisite torture made Sheri gasp.

"I think you like the feel of hands on your body and the scent of sex in the air. I bet you enjoy the way my hand can cup your sex and slide through your juices." The words took on exponential meaning as Kate followed them with the action. She released the

button and zipper of Sheri's jeans and shoved her smaller hand into the material. She sought the source of Sheri's essence and dove in without hesitation. Sheri felt fingers slide between her legs and run over her still swollen sex. She thrust her hips forward wanting more. Kate moved to stand beside Sheri as she caressed her. Kate's other hand pushed the jeans lower.

"I bet you like for me to touch you and rub over your wetness. My fingers are covered in your juices. My tongue can't wait to taste you. What if I kissed you right there?" Kate asked as she pressed the spot that had Sheri cry out. "What if my tongue covered that spot and my lips sucked your clit into my mouth?" Kate's fingers rubbed the rigid button and Sheri thrust her hips to the rhythm as she held onto the edge of the bed.

Sheri was beyond caring about anything except for what Kate was doing. Kate pushed Sheri to lean over the bed slightly as she took her other hand and from behind she entered Sheri with two fingers. Sheri moaned in ecstasy. Sheri barely noticed the tape binding her ribs had tightened. She was riding the climbing wave and shuddered as Kate thrust into her over and over while still rubbing her clit.

"How does it feel to have my hands on your body? I love touching you. I can feel your body making love to me. Tell me how it feels to have my fingers inside you? I want to taste you, Sheri. I want to taste your body, your juices, in my mouth." Kate removed her hands from behind and pulled Sheri up to stand. She had her step out of the jeans at her ankles and pressed her to take a few steps back and lean against the wall.

Kate knelt down and pressed her tongue into Sheri's dark hair covered juncture. The strong thrust of her tongue had Sheri reaching down to guide the blonde hair covered head exactly where she needed that ravishing tongue to be. Kate's tongue found Sheri's button and flicked rapidly across, over and down. Her hot mouth spurred the heat in Sheri's body to a frenzied pitch.

Sheri felt the insanity build and Kate push Sheri's legs wider, inserting her fingers back into the inner depths. Sheri felt the climax near and clenched her jaw with anticipation. The burst of her orgasm burned through her body like an explosion. She cried out weakly as the pressure released again and again. The pulsing of her blood roared in her ears. The penetrating fingers and tongue continued causing wave after wave to follow. Kate slowed as she felt Sheri sliding down the wall. She stood up to hold her and made sure she didn't fall.

Kate rested her head in the crook of Sheri's neck as they both breathed in each others air and scent. Kate nuzzled her lover softly as they shared the ride down from the crest. Sheri's hands wrapped around Kate's hips and held her close.

"Your amazing!" Sheri whispered, when she was able. Kate kissed the nearby jaw and sighed.

"You have got to be..." Kate's voice purred with satisfaction "...the best masseuse in the

world.”

They both released a chuckle as they held each other.

“I love you Kate!” Sheri said with her heart on her sleeve.

Kate looked up to meet her gaze. Sheri looked back her eyes full of warmth, honesty, and a promise. Kate smiled her eyes suddenly filled with unshed tears.

Sheri reached up to catch a single tear that fell from an eyelash, concern and confusion in her expression.

Kate just tucked her head into the warmth of Sheri’s neckline.

“Now I finally know what that means, my love.” Kate whispered.

The END