

*Happily Ever After...*

*By Any Means Necessary*

*Dana Littlejohn*



*The Right Choice*



***The Right Choice***

***Book II***

***Happily Ever After... By Any***

***Means Necessary Series***

***By Dana Littlejohn***

## ***Dear Readers,***

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**Happily Ever After...**  
**By Any Means Necessary**

By Dana Littlejohn

Marriage is about compromise. All marriages are not the same. What works for one won't necessarily work for another. Sometimes changes have to be made for you to achieve that happily ever after.

Follow these 3 couples and see how they keep their happily ever after going!

Book I: Seven Year Switch- Kyle and Sonja Winters

Book II: The Right Choice- Christian and Andrea Cooper

Book III: Seducing Mr. Jefferson- Daniel and Kamiah Jefferson

**Happily Ever After:**  
**By Any Means Necessary**

Book II

**The Right Choice**

Andrea Cooper, a stay at home mom, was out of a job when her sons went off to college. She turned to her husband Christian for companionship, but he had his hands full with an expanding company. Andrea is alone for the first time in years with nothing to do and no one to care for. In search of a new life she ran into her first love, Raymond Reyes. Christian spends more time away from home as she renews her friendship with Ray. After a while Andrea can't help but wonder if she made the right choice in marrying Christian after all.

## **Reviews**

### **For HEA Book 1: Seven Year Switch**

"What an amazing story!!! I had no clue you could grab ahold of me and hold me hostage so well!! I can't wait to read more!!" – **Lori France, Beta Reader**

"Seven Year Switch is a tasteful yet stimulating 21st Century example of how to compromise and spice up a marriage. Marriage can be difficult and both husbands and wives have many different needs that need to be satisfied. No two marriages are the same, everyone has different spices and techniques to keep their marriage healthy. Read about how Sonja and Kyle added some spice into their relationship." - **Gabrielle Linton, Senior Editor Goldstar Magazine** <http://GoldStarMagazine.com>

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## **Dedication**

I thank God for the imagination and the gift and love of writing that he put into me.

This book is dedicated to my husband who pushed me to write down the “other people’s conversations” I heard in my head instead of committing me to an asylum. I love you.

And...

To all the married couples who do what they have to do be happy in their marriages because “until death do you part” is a long time to be unhappy.

## **Table Of Content**

**[Chapter One](#)**

**[Chapter Two](#)**

**[Chapter Three](#)**

**[Chapter Four](#)**

**[Chapter Five](#)**

**[Coming Soon](#)**

**[Learn More About Dana Littlejohn](#)**



## Chapter One

Andrea Cooper stared out the window of the car. The small church came into view at the end of the road. The sun beamed down on the building and the brown grass and scorched bushes around it. Just before turning down the veering path leading to the building the car stopped. Andrea slid her shades onto her face, opened the door and leaned against the hood with a scoff.

“So this is what it’s been all about?”

The car moved beneath her as another door slammed shut. She looked over her shoulder to watch her husband approach and extended a hand toward the building.

“*This* is the reason why I never see you anymore, Christian? The reason you’re too tired to spend any time with me?” she added, an irritated edge marring her usual dulcet tones.

He chuckled. "Yes, sweetheart."

"Hmmpf," Andrea said wrapping her arms around her chest.

"Don't be like that. This is my hometown church; these people are family. I had to take the job."

"I don't see anything wrong with this church. Why do they want you to build another one?"

Christian lifted her effortlessly onto the car then positioned himself between her legs. She smiled slipping her arms around his neck.

"I didn't say anything was wrong with the building, honey. They just need a *bigger* church. With the growth of the town the congregation has grown a great deal. They need more space."

"*Grown?*"

Andrea leaned to the side to look past Christian's broad shoulders. The church sat alone in the hollowed out grove. Nothing led off the rock and dirt covered path leading to the church but bushes and trees. She shifted her gaze to look down the main road

ahead of them then turned to look the way they'd come from. A small group of house tops rose over the treetops in the hilly distances. Andrea turned lifted brows back to her husband.

“You mean this one horse town was even *smaller*? I can't even imagine that,” she stated shaking her head.

His laugh was hearty and jovial. “That's because you've always lived in the city. Felixville has always been like this. Just a little dot town, just outside Indianapolis. Close enough to get back to the city to get what you need and far enough to enjoy country living. A place where everybody knows everyone.”

Andrea rolled her eyes. “You sound like a real-estate commercial.”

Christian laughed.

“Honey, for real, I'm going to go crazy here. I only saw houses when we came into this Felixville of yours. What do *Felixvillians* do when they're not at work?”

“There's a lot to do here. I took you in the back way so we

didn't pass anything but homes. In the center of town there's a bowling alley, a pool hall, a skating rink and I hear Walmart is coming so they don't have to go over to Avon to go food shopping anymore," he said triumphantly.

She gaped at him wide eyed then palmed her forehead. "I *am* going to go crazy here."

"No you won't. You're going to love it. The air is cleaner, there's no traffic noise and wait until you see the sky at night. With no street lights to block their brilliance, the stars will be brighter than you've ever seen them," Christian said turning her face upward.

Andrea sighed and turned back to him. "Why does it have to be you? I mean, I want you to have the work, but way out *here*?" She frowned at the whinny tone in her own voice.

His head tilted. "How could I say no? My brother is the pastor."

She nodded, her shoulders slumping in defeat. "You're right. I'm sorry. You couldn't."

“This is the big break my company needs to get on the map, babe.”

Andrea moved closer to the edge of the car. “What are you talking about? You get lots of work.”

“Yes, but *this* job is *huge!*” he said shaking his hands to emphasize his words. “My brother is giving me this chance because he knows I won’t cheat him on a price. We’ve done lots of small projects, but this is something outside of our comfort zone. I had to create the entire building from the basement to the rafters.”

“But isn’t that what you do?”

“Well, yes, but usually the people we build for have an idea in mind and mocked up plans that they want us to follow. We take those and build by their specifications, doing what they’ve asked. Brian didn’t have anything, but the idea. He had no clue how to put it on paper to draw up the plans or anything. He left that to me I had to do it all!” he said grabbing her hands.

Christian almost bounced with enthusiasm. His eyes flashed

with such excitement as he spoke, Andrea couldn't help but smile.

“Because of this job, I've already met with so many influential people in my field. I'm telling you, Andrea, Cooper Construction is about to do some great things.”

She stifled a giggle and leaned forward to kiss him.

“All right. I'm sold. I can stay in your little town for a while to help make that happen.”

“You are the best wife ever!” He pulled her into a hug then lifted her from the car. “Come on, it's getting hot out here. We'll come back tomorrow to see everyone.” Christian helped her into the car before getting in beside her. “Sweetheart, I know I haven't been around a lot with getting everything ready and all the meetings, but I promise I'll make it up to you,” he said touching her leg.

“I know. I'm being patient. All this is temporary right?”

“Yes. The planning, blueprints and model scale are all completed. The physical stage is only days away, but I do need to stay here for the beginning of all that. Once I get that started

completion won't take long at all. Maybe a few months," he said with that boyish grin that she loved.

She returned his smile, but was unable to shake the lonely feeling that crept up inside her at the thought of the project going on for more months. "It's your dream sweetheart. I understand and will support it." She turned to look out the window.

Christian started the car and they drove quietly for a few feet.

"Sweetheart, if being out here in the country will be too hard for you I'm okay with you staying in our place while I'm here," he suggested.

Andrea whipped her head around and landed a hard glare on him. Christian looked between her and the street wide eyed.

"*What?* And let all those little country heifers you left behind get their hands on you? I don't think so, Mr. Cooper. I'm staying right here with you. A little country air will do me good."

Christian burst into laughter and continued down the street.

\* \* \* \*

Andrea and Christian squeezed onto the crowded bench on the back row of the church just after the pastor finished his service. Christian gave a small wave toward the pulpit before sitting beside her. The pastor smiled and moved behind his podium.

“I know I haven’t been here much these last few months. I want to take this time to thank the congregation for their patience during this time. You were on your best behavior and treated the visiting pastors very well. I also want to thank my wife publically,” he paused to blow a kiss toward the front row.

Andrea crooned her head in that direction. Recognizing the woman, she smiled.

“And my kids for their ongoing patience with me,” the pastor continued. “I couldn't hardly rest at with walking the floors at night, the late night phone calls and ideas keeping me up all night. I’ve been a mess, y’all! If you think it’s hard on me just imagine how hard it is on them.”



Laughter rose among the parishioners.

“Well, I can assure you that there has been good reason for my missing in action status,” the pastor continued. “As you all know we have been asking for donations to a building fund for a while now. We have also had a slew of fundraising events, bake sales, fish fry’s, clothing drives, carnivals and all kinds of other things to help raise money for this said fund. People from neighboring towns have come by to enjoy and participate in the fun, fellowship and the giving.”

Andrea turned to the murmurs of agreement rising around the room.

“I hear a lot of positive noises, but I know where there are positive people there are also nay-sayers sitting right beside them.”

A woman turned to look directly into Andrea’s face. She jumped back stunned and ready to defend herself until she realized everyone around her was doing the same thing to their neighbors.”

“Now stop that,” the Pastor Cooper chastised. “I was speaking in general,” he added with a chuckle. “What I meant was, I know

that there are some people that think every time their pastor gets a new hat or a pair of shoes he must be dipping into the *building fund*,” he said waving his hands dramatically in the air.

Laughter filled the room again. Andrea smiled turning to Christian. He stared at his brother with a laughing grin.

“I just wanted to let you know this is not the case. I am pleased to announce that your money has gone to a construction company for a brand new building that will be built just for us!”

The congregation erupted in cheers. People stood up with a wave effect spreading throughout the room. Andrea and Christian clapped and rose with them. Pastor Cooper raised his hands for quiet.

“Our patience has been rewarded, my people, and our prayers have been answered. Of course we must remain diligent in adding the fund until the building is paid off, but I have no fear of that. We are God’s people and we trust him in all things.”

The pastor paused and made a face. “Y'all act like you don't

believe that. I said, we are God's people and *trust* him in all things!”

The congregation burst into applause. As he works on us to make us better, we will continue to do our part. The construction on the building will began in just a few days. Oh, and speaking of...” he extended his arm in invitation. “Christian, will you please come forth?”

When Christian rose to answer his brother’s call the congregation exploded in murmurs, clapping and shocked gasps. Everyone’s eyes were on him as he walked down the center isle of the church to the podium. Andrea’s smile widened. When she first met Brian she thought Christian looked very much like his older brother. Both stood over six feet with the same smooth, bronze coloring, strong square jaw and pretty brown eyes, but there was one major difference in them. Christian’s profession made his build wider and muscular over the years while his older brother’s physique remained slender.

Andrea gazed at the faces of the women around the church.

Young and old seemed enthralled by Christian and his brother. The pastor hugged her husband then turned him toward the people.

“Some of you old time church goers of this congregation know that Christian is my brother. He left Felixville many years ago for college then stayed out in the city to live and work. He now has his own construction company. It will be Cooper Construction that will be building our next worship place. I don’t know any other person I would trust with God’s money in this matter.”

The clapping and cheering that followed the pastor’s words were booming.

“Let us adjourn down stairs in the main room where we can celebrate this new venture properly.”

As the pastor ushered the people toward the door, Christian came for her. Together they followed everyone else to the small banquet room in the basement of the church. Music played as the parishioners ate, laughed and fellowshiped. After a while the crowd separated the pastor and his brother from their family

members and Andrea found herself alone. With a sigh she turned to a nearby table filled with hors d'oeuvres.

“So, you’re the woman that Christian married?” a female voice asked near her left ear.

Andrea turned shifting the plate to her left hand. “Yes, I am Andrea Cooper.”

The woman looked down at Andrea’s extended hand and rolled her eyes.

“Uh-huh, well, I’m Stephanie Anderson and this is Michaela Peters.”

The glare Stephanie landed on her made the hairs on the back of her neck stand on end. Andrea looked away to find the other woman standing uncomfortably beside her. She took a step back to walk around Michaela moving away from both of them.

“Nice to meet you both,” Andrea said continuing to the other end of the table.

“Yes, I’m sure. So, tell us about yourself, Andrea. What do you

do?” Stephanie asked.

“Well, right now I stay at home.”

Stephanie scoffed and made a face. “You stay at home? Doing what?”

“Until recently I was raising our children.”

Michaela gasped. “You didn’t work to help your husband with all the bills? You put the entire burden on *him*?”

The snappy edge in Michaela’s voice made Andrea frown. She turned to defend herself, but Stephanie cut her off.

“What do you mean you stayed at home to raise the kids? What kind of a woman are you?”

Andrea’s snapped around to address Stephanie. “Excuse me? What is that supposed to mean?”

Stephanie rolled her eyes at Andrea. “See, Michaela, this is what Chris gets for leaving home to find a wife. He ended up with a selfish, lazy woman from the city,” she said with a dismissive hand

flip in Andrea's direction. "He should have just stayed here and married someone better," she added wrapping her arms around her chest.

Andrea's anger skyrocketed at their audacity. Michaela stood beside her friend and stared at her defiantly. Andrea put her plate down and steeled herself for combat.

"Hi, honey."

Andrea gasped and spun. Christian smiled down at her dropping a kiss to her cheek.

"I didn't mean to startle you," he chuckled. "I see you've met Stephanie and Michaela. I used to go to high school with them. How are you ladies doing?"

The malicious looks disappeared instantly from Michaela and Stephanie's features as they smiled brightly. Andrea's jaw almost dropped.

*What the h—*

They took turns hugging him.

“We’re just fine, Chris,” Stephanie said sweetly. “We were just having a little chat with your wife trying to get to know her better.”

The heat rose under Andrea’s collar when Stephanie turned a grin to her.

“That’s great, but I have to take her away from you now. My brother is asking for her. Come on honey. Brian and Monica want to see you. See you ladies later,” Christian said pulling Andrea away.

The celebration went on for a little while longer before the people dispersed and went their separate ways. Andrea let herself forget about the strange encounter with Christian’s old friends as she laughed and enjoyed her time with her sister-in-law.

\* \* \* \*

Andrea rolled over to tap her husband’s shoulder.

“Christian?”



“Hmm...”

She scooted closer to whisper near his ear. “Honey, are you awake?”

“Hmm, yeah, baby. What’s wrong?” he asked on a yawn.

“Christian, what do I do now?”

“Hmm, about what, honey?”

“I mean, now that the children are gone. What do I do now?”

He rolled onto his back and stretched. “Well, honey, you can do whatever you want. What do you want to do?”

“That’s just it. *I don’t know*. We got married while we were still in college. Once I was pregnant we decided I should stay at home with the twins.”

“And you were a wonderful mother. I hope you’re not regretting that decision now.”

“No, Chris, of course not. I wouldn’t change what we’ve done for anything. I cherish every moment I spent with them as they were

growing up, but they're grown now. James and Jeremiah have gone off to college," she emphasized pointing to the door. "That part of my life is done and I have no idea what to do next," she concluded letting her hand drop to her side.

Christian nodded as he tried to stifle another yawn. "Well you have free time to do anything. Have you thought about going back to school?"

"I guess I could do that. I never did finish with my degree."

"You have the time and we have the money. You could finish your degree or go for something else."

She thought for a moment then waved away his words. "Oh, Christian, I'm too old to go back to school."

"Sweetheart, that's nonsense. One is never too old to learn."

Andrea tapped her chin. "Well, maybe, but who would hire me? Companies are hiring young people out of school so they can get as many years out of their employees so they can. I'm coming on fifty very fast. That puts me behind the eight ball in the job market,"

she concluded sadly.

Christian's expression said he was unable to dispute her words.

"All right, how about this, if you decide to return to school, we will figure out the path you take from there. Depending on what you go for maybe you can start your own business."

"My own business?"

"Sure why not?"

"Well, we used to plan to do things together once the children were out of the house" She leaned over to hug his shoulder. "We talked about traveling all over since we'd have more time together as a couple, Christian."

"Yes, honey, and we're still going to do all that. As soon as this building is up and running we'll start making hard plans to more things together, okay?" He yawned again then kissed her forehead. "I promise."

Andrea smiled. "Alright, sweetheart. I'll think about the school

thing and continue to be patient.” She thought for a moment then smiled. “Christian, since we’re up could we—”

He turned over and moved away from her. “No, honey, not tonight. I have to be up early and my sleep pattern is already broken. Good night, honey. I love you.”

Andrea let out an exasperated breath as Christian’s snores quickly filled the room.

“Love you, too, Christian,” she murmured.

Andrea beat her pillow in frustration to fluff it then added another mark to the negative side of her mental intimacy chart before sinking into her pillow and closing her eyes.

## Chapter Two

When Andrea woke she was alone. She went about her day as normally as she could. Cooking breakfast, cleaning the house, rearranging furniture, washing her car. After all, that she was still showered and dressed for the day all before noon. Andrea stared at the clock trying to think of something else to do before finally picking up the phone.

“This is Christian Cooper.”

“Hi, sweetheart, are you busy?”

“Hey, honey. I’m on my way to a lunch meeting, but I have a few minutes. How’s your day going?”

“I don’t think my retirement is going well. I’m bored to death already. Do you have any suggestions?”

Christian chuckled. “Well, you could go into the city and do some shopping or maybe take in a movie.”

“Yeah, I guess I could do that.”

“I’m pulling up to the restaurant now, sweetie, so I have to go. I love you,” he added quickly before disconnecting the call.

Andrea slid the phone onto the coffee table. She drummed her fingers on the arm of the chair trying to think of something to do. After a few moments, she jumped to her feet.

“All right, movie it is. There must be something playing that I might like.”

She drove away from the little town nestled on the outskirts of Indianapolis back into the city to the downtown mall. Entering, she smiled moving directly towards Salina’s Sexy Tidbits. Andrea walked along the rows of lingerie pushing hangers as she went.

“Yes, girl. Best sex ever!” a woman on the other side of the clothes said.

Andrea’s ears perked up. She lifted her gaze over the rack to

two women. They laughed as they walked pass her down the next aisle. Andrea picked up her pace across from them to remain within ear shot.

“Really? Which one did you get?” one woman asked.

“The red one in the window,” her friend replied.

“And he liked it like that?”

“Liked it? Girl, he *loved* it! He kept sliding over my body telling me how good it felt on his balls.” The woman burst into another fit of laughter. “He almost tore it up trying to get it off me,” she added when she regained her composure. “Okay, enough about me, how are things with you and Mark?”

Her friend sighed. “I don’t know, Cassie. Mark has been working a lot lately. He’s asleep before I can even get in the bed some nights.”

Andrea’s hand went to her mouth. She felt bad for eavesdropping on the young women’s conversation, but pretended to flip through some pajamas on a nearby rack anyway.

“Dang, girl. That sucks.”

“Last week I cooked us a romantic dinner and put on something sexy hoping to spark some interest in him. He was grinning and touching me the whole time. Inside I was like *yes, finally*. After dinner I cleaned up and when I made it to the bedroom he was in bed passed out. He’s been so exhausted; I hate to wake him.”

“Yeah, I can see that, but surely it’s not like that all the time, Monica.”

“Well no, but more often than not. I mean, even when Mark stays up he’s all like, *not tonight, baby girl. I’ll hook you up tomorrow*. I don’t know what to do because ‘tomorrow’ is far and few between,” Monica said with a frustrated grunt. “Maybe I just don’t turn him on anymore.”

Andrea managed to swallow her shocked gasp as she hid behind a mannequin.

“Uh-uh, don’t you even start thinking like that, Monica,”



Cassie told her friend in a sharp tone.

“What else am I supposed to think? He hardly ever touches me and we never do anything together anymore. It’s either that or he’s spending all his time and energy with someone else.”

Andrea nodded in agreement.

“Hey! We’ll have no more of that kind of talk,” Monica chastised her friend again. “You hear me? Mark adores you. That gleam in his eyes when he looks at you has not gone out. It’s only for you.”

“I know, but I don’t know what to do, Cassie.”

Andrea’s hand went to her chest. She didn’t have to see Monica to know she was crying.

“Well, you can do what I did. Grab one of these sexy little numbers and give him a jolt to remind him how fabulous you are. Oh! The one I got is still in the window. Get something like that and he’ll get his second wind faster than you know it.”

Andrea heard sniffing before the women walked away and the

rest of their conversation left her ear shot.

“Excuse me, ma’am, can I help you find something?”

Andrea jumped when the saleswoman appeared at her side.

“Yes, umm, actually, yes. I was wondering if you had that in my size.”

The woman followed the direction of Andrea’s finger. “The one in the window? Of course! What color would you like it in?”

“Red, please,” she said with a wide grin.

“That’s a good choice. I think that color would look fantastic on you.”

As Andrea waited in line to pay for the gown she heard the familiar female voices behind her.

“No, I don’t like the book store in the mall. I want to go to the one down the street. They have a café and music store. They hold book clubs and everything over there,” Monica said.

“Okay, we’ll go to that one instead. Where is it?” Cassie asked.

“Just down the street. We can leave the car in the garage and walk.”

“Ma’am, are you ready?” the sales woman asked Andrea.

“Huh? Oh, yes, just this.”

Andrea left the mall swinging her sparkling pink bag. She looked to her left then to her right. Smiling she headed for the bookstore on the corner. Andrea looked around the store and realized the woman was right. She gazed up at both levels in awe. Inside she looked around wide eyed. Hanging signs clearly marked the different areas for genres, arrows pointed upstairs for children’s sections and the café the woman spoke of sat back against the wall. Small table and chairs sets as well as lounge chairs were scattered near the eating area for the reader’s convenience. Andrea walked along the wall in search of a book. Finding one, she stopped at the café for something to drink and to purchase the book then took a seat to read.

“Excuse me.”

She looked up from her book into the face of a lovely young woman.

“I don’t mean to interrupt. If you’d rather be alone, I understand.”

“No, no, it’s fine. What can I do for you?”

“My name is LaTonya. I was just wondering if you would be interested in joining our book club. We have room for two more people and I noticed that you were already reading the book.”

“A book club? I’ve never been in one before. What do you do?”

“They’re very fun and really simple. We all read the same book and discuss what we liked and disliked when we meet up. We meet twice a month, once at the café and once at a different member’s house. We try to keep it on the weekends to accommodate most work schedules. So, how about it, want to join?”

“Yes, I think I will,” she said excitedly.

“Great! Come on, I’ll introduce you to the girls.”

Andrea grabbed her things and followed LaTonya to a table at the other end of the room.

“Hey, guys, I found us a new member. Go ahead and introduce yourself” She pulled another chair to the table and they sat down.

“I’ll make with the introductions so it can be quicker. This is Danielle.” LaTonya pointed to the woman on her left. “Danielle’s a teacher. She joined the book club because God knows she needs some *adult* time,” LaTonya said on a laugh.

Danielle wiggled her fingers toward Andrea. “Hi, Andrea, good to have you onboard.”

“Thanks.”

“Next to her is Max. She works at Walmart and has twin ten-year-old boys at home.”

“Twins! Oh, what a blessing. I raised twins as well,” Andrea said, shaking her hand.

Max sputtered and rolled her eyes. “Yeah, they’re a blessing all right.”

“Oh, umm... Well James and Jeremiah have just gone off to college two weeks ago.”

“Well you still look sane so I guess it won’t be so bad in a few years.”

LaTonya chuckled then leaned on the table. “And on the other side of you, Andrea, is Regina. She’s a nurse at the children’s hospital.”

“Hi, Andrea, nice to have you.”

“Thanks, nice meeting you.”

“That’s everyone.”

“Did you introduce yourself, LaTonya?” Max said.

“Oh, well, you already know my name. I have two teenage daughters and a stressed out husband at the house because of it.”

Everyone at the table laughed. LaTonya touched Andrea’s hand.

“Okay, Andrea, now that you know everyone, tell us a little

about you and then we'll pick up on our first book."

"Well, I'm Andrea Cooper. My husband and I only have the two sons I mentioned. I was a stay at home mother until recently when my boys graduated from high school this past May. I came out today to find something to occupy all the free time I have now."

Everyone at the table sighed dreamily in unison.

"You mean you have to *look* for stuff to do with all your free time? It sure is nice to know that there is life on the other side of child raising," Danielle said.

"Boy! And I can't wait to get to where you are," Max said.

"That's great, Andrea. Welcome to the club," Regina said.

"You must have lots of time to travel now," LaTonya said."

"And have a lot of sex," Regina added, laughing.

Andrea laughed with everyone, but didn't comment. She had thought the same things, but it wasn't working out that way.

"So where do you live, Andrea?" LaTonya asked.

“I live right here downtown, in a condo on the canal, but my husband is working out in Felixville, so I’m out there with him until the project is over. It’s a small town out west near Avon.”

“*Felixville?* Girl, that’s way out west, in the sticks even. We’ll go to your house last,” LaTonya said writing down her name on a calendar.

“Okay, ladies, now that the introductions are done let’s talk about why we picked this book.”

Andrea had lunch with her new friends and then they went their separate ways until their next scheduled meeting. She refilled her cappuccino and returned to the table where LaTonya found her.

“Andrea?”

Andrea recognized the voice immediately. Her heart skipped a beat and her limbs stiffened. Slowly she turned. Her pulsed raced as her eyes confirmed what her spirit already knew. The cup faltered in her hand as she placed it on the table beside the seat.

“Ray? Is it really you?” she asked on a whisper anyway.



“Yeah. Wow, look at you,” he said as he pulled her from the chair.

She stepped into his open arms. A rush of emotions bombarded her mind. Her body reacted instantly to be held by him again. Raymond Reyes, was the first man to introduce her body to the pleasures of the flesh while filling her heart with a type of love that didn't come from family members. He was absolutely perfect beautiful. Just her height, an amazing body and the most dazzling brown eyes she had ever seen. She used to run her fingers through the loose dark curls on his muscular chest listening to his heartbeat after the made love. He body tingled at the memory.

*He hasn't aged a bit. How long has it been?* The answer popped into her mind just as the question did. She almost gasped. *Has it really twenty-five years since Ray left for the Army?*

He had given her the most enjoyable night of her life and then she never saw him again. The tear filled nights returned to her memory as well and her heart wrenched. She took a step back. He

held her hands up to look her up and down.

“You look great, Andrea!”

“Me? Look at you. You still look just like I remember you. Well, except for this.” She ran her fingers over his silver sprinkled mustache and goatee. “This is definitely new.”

He flashed the same grin that used to melt her heart.

“Ahh, you like that? This is my man look, girl. I’ve had this for a while now.”

She chuckled. “Your man look, huh? Well it’s new to me.”

“Do you like it?”

“Yes, it looks very good on you.”

His smile grew. “Thanks! So what are you up to? Do you have time to talk?”

“Sure, I’m in no hurry. Have a seat.”

Ray tapped her book. “Look! We’re reading the same book.” He reached inside his briefcase pulling free his copy.

“Have you started it yet?”

“No, just picked it up yesterday. A friend said it was good.”

“I just joined this book club and we’re just starting it.”

“Really, just today?”

“Yes, I decided to stay around a while longer to read a little.”

He nodded. “Maybe I should join the club.”

“Oh you don’t want to do that. It’s just a bunch of women hanging out.”

Ray laughed. “Was that supposed to deter me? That sounds like a perk to me. No competition.”

She giggled. “Yeah, I see your point. Are you sure, Ray?”

“Sure I’m sure. I already have the book. I’m going to be reading it anyway. Oh, I get it. You don’t think you can control yourself around me. I completely understand, Andrea. I am irresistible,” he said, with dramatic flair.

Andrea twisted her lips watching him lose the battle to laugh

out loud. "I don't think that is going to be a problem."

"Great! So you can get me in, right?"

"Well, she did say we had one more opening," she said thoughtfully.

"Fantastic!"

"I didn't say I could," she said quickly. "How about you give me your number and I'll pass it along to LaTonya. She can call you and you can ask her yourself."

"Okay, I can do that. How often do you meet?"

"We meet twice a month, once here and once at a member's house. You can do that, can't you?"

"I sure can." He pulled a business card from his inside pocket.

"So, are you here for lunch?"

"Yes, I work right down the street," he explained jotting something on the back of the card. "Here you go. My cell is on the back."

Andrea looked at the card then back to him. “Dialysis?”

He nodded. “Uh huh.”

“Director of operations,” she read. “How did that happen?”

Ray shrugged. “After twenty years being an Army medic, I had to do something with that skill.”

Andrea chuckled. “Well, can’t dispute that.”

“Can I sit and read with you until I have to go back?”

“Sure, I’d like that.” She put the card in her purse. “Don’t you think you should talk to your wife before you commit yourself to the club?”

“I would if I had a wife. I had a lady friend for a little while, but we’re not together anymore.”

“Oh, sorry.”

“Don’t be, I’m not. It wasn’t meant to be. Who I was meant to be with was the one that got away.”

Instantly she knew he meant her. Andrea looked across the

small table. Those eyes still had the power to hold her in place mesmerizing her and heat up her core. The familiar twinkle she saw in them reminded her of the love they used to share. She turned away pushing the memories out of her mind and the rising warmth from her loins.

“Let’s just read the book, okay.”

Ray nodded. “All right. We’ll leave that conversation for another day.”

After a while Ray slammed his book shut making her jump.

“Wow, the time has just flown by. I have to go.”

“Okay, here, let me give you LaTonya’s phone number so you can reach her, too.”

He readied himself to go then turned to take the number from her. “Hey, I’m off early on Thursday. Would you like to meet at Delvechio’s for lunch? We could just reminisce and talk about the book.”

“Oh, I don’t know, Ray. I’m—”

He held up a hand to stop her. “I’m sorry. You don’t have to explain. You probably have things to do. Work, family, stuff like that. I understand. It’s all right.”

Andrea sighed. “Well, no, I don’t have any of those things to do actually. Not anymore.”

“Great! So let’s meet at Delvechio’s at about twelve thirty. The one down the street from here is really nice. We can meet there, okay? I have to get back, so I’ll see you there. Bye, it was great seeing you again, Andrea.”

Ray bent over to kiss her cheek before rushing off.

\* \* \* \*

“Hey, honey. I haven’t heard you sing while cooking in a while,” Christian said kissing her cheek. “Is retirement starting to agree with you after all?” he asked sitting at the table.

“After I spoke to you it got a little better. I took your advice and went back into the city today. I did a little shopping and then went

to the bookstore. I met some very interesting people and even joined a book club.” She took the plate from the microwave.

“That’s terrific honey. I knew it would all work out for you.”

“I also met up with Ray. He wants to be in the book club, too,” she said sliding the food in front of him.

Christian put his napkin in his lap and raised his fork. “Ray? Why does that name sound familiar?”

“Raymond Reyes. He was the guy I dated before we got together.”

“Oh yes, the wrestler. Didn't he go off to the Army or something?”

“Yes he did. He said he stayed for twenty years, but he’s out now.”

“Hmm, and how was that? Meeting up with him, I mean?” he asked taking his first bite.

She shrugged taking the seat opposite him. “It was fine, I



guess. We didn't have that long to talk. He had to rush off because he was on lunch. He's a bail bondsman now."

"Well, that's great, honey. I'm glad you got to meet up with old friends and make some new ones. What did you buy when you went shopping?"

"Well, if you load the dishwasher when we're done eating I can go in the room and show you," she said with a sly smile.

"Well, how can I say no to that? You can just consider it loaded. I'll even run it," he said with a chuckle.

Andrea kissed his cheek and went upstairs. She rushed a shower then slid into her new nightgown. Smiling at her reflection she turned to and fro. The silky material fell over her slender figure perfectly.

"Honey! I'm done with the dishes!"

Christian's voice sailed through the door as he announced his progress. Andrea hurried to her dresser and ran her fingers through her hair to fluff the loose curls.

“I’m coming up the stairs!”

Andrea rifled through her make-up bag. Quickly applying powder to her forehead and chin then gloss to her lips before she tossed everything in the bag. Christian’s footfalls were louder. She knocked over the vanity chair in her haste to get across the room.

“I’m opening the—”

When the door opened she flung her arms out in invitation. Spinning slowly, she gave him an optimal view of the low cut V on her back that pointed to the well-rounded back side he liked so much. He stood at the door wide eyed for long moments. Her heart beat double time.

“Well, do you like it?” she pushed out

“Lord, have mercy,” he whispered.

She smiled. “Can I take that as a yes?”

Christian nodded. “Oh yes. That’s a very big and whole hearted *yes*. You look incredible.”

Her smile widened. Andrea grabbed his hands and pulled him across the room to the bed. He reached out touching her...first on her shoulders, then across her breasts, down the front of the gown and across her waist, bringing her closer to him. He touched her in all the usual spots.

“Andrea baby, I must be blind to have forgotten how beautiful and sexy you are.” He leaned down to kiss her then chuckled. “I’ll have to send you shopping in the city more often.” He backed her up lie her on the bed.

Andrea beamed. “Wow! Those ladies at the store said this gown would make you react like this,” she said with a giggle.

“Did they? Well, you just go back to that store and take some more of their clothing advice,” he said with a laugh. Christian kissed all the exposed skin he could reach. “Tell them they were absolutely right. It’s making me crazy.” He continued, moving his kisses downward.

Andrea relaxed leaning on his shoulder, enjoying every minute

of his attentions. She missed his touch so much. He'd been so busy and so tired lately they hardly been intimate at all. His hands slid across her breasts and she closed her eyes. Christian played with her nipples through the silky material. They stiffened beneath the fabric. He moaned his approval then slid the gown down to her waist. With each breast exposed he took his time touching, teasing, licking and suckling them. Angela moaned loudly in obvious pleasure.

He kneeled before her dropping kisses on her belly, replacing his lips with his fingers on her breasts. The scruffiness of his goatee scraped at her panties making her shiver.

“I think it’s time to come out of these. Don’t you?”

Andrea smiled looking down at him, but not replying to his rhetorical question as her panties were pushed to the floor. She giggled as he twirled her panties around his finger before slinging them across the room.

*I have miss this Christian so much, the playful attentive lover.*

*Yes, my playful Christian is back. This is the husband I know and love. I don't know where he went, but I'm so glad he's back!*

“I think we can take this off, too. It has done its job well. I don't want to be accused of tearing it up later,” he added, with a playful grin.

Christian stood lifting the gown over her head, throwing it with the panties. He quickly undressed himself. Andrea smiled as his chiseled abs and muscular chest were exposed when his shirt was removed. His well-made legs could be seen when he lowered his pants and finally his impressive erection appeared when his underwear hit the floor. He was as sexy as he was the day they married.

Christian kissed her again urging her back to sit on the bed. She scooted to the head and waited for him. He wasted no time crawling up her body. Lying on top of her, he kissed her repeatedly easing her legs open with his own.

*Yes! Finally, a notch on the positive side of the sex chart!*

Andrea's body shivered joyfully. He entered her with one smooth movement. It was wonderful! Just as it always was. He knew just where to touch her, where to move, when to go fast and when to slow down. She let herself be engulfed in the feeling over taking her. Just as she started to climb that golden staircase to bliss, it stopped. Her eyes popped open.

“Christian? What’s wrong? What happened?”

“I’m sorry, Andrea. I guess I got a little too excited,” he confessed, and rolled off her.

She blinked rapidly staring at the ceiling. “What? You got—”

“I know, baby. I’m sorry. I promise I’ll make it up to you tomorrow.”

Andrea continued to stare at the ceiling as he moved around next to her.

“Yeah, but—”

Soft snores filled the room. Her head snapped to the left.

“Chris?” She pushed his shoulder. “Christian!”

“Tomorrow, Andrea, I promise. I love you,” he mumbled, before dozing off again.

Andrea muffled a frustrated outburst. She pulled the sheet over them both then turned over and punched her pillow.

Mentally she switched the last mark to the other side of her sex chart before then forced her body to go to sleep.





## Chapter Three

Andrea rolled over to reach for her husband, but instead found the bed empty save a note on his pillow.

*I didn't want to wake you, sweetheart. I had to leave earlier than usual for a meeting.*

*I'll call you later. I love you.*

*Christian.*

*PS. I haven't forgotten about my promise.*

Andrea threw the note away with a hopeful smile as she went downstairs. She called LaTonya to tell her about Ray then exchanged email addresses. Andrea disconnect the call then turned

on her computer. Though she hadn't been on since her sons left for school, Andrea hoped everything James showed her would come back to her mind. After a few tries her email opened and she went directly to her inbox. A smile touched her lips when she spotted the invite to the book club.

“Great.”

Andrea went about her usual cleaning before she dressed and headed out for the city.

“Just one, ma'am?” the hostess said meeting her at the door to the restaurant.

“No, I'm actually meeting someone.” Looking past the woman she saw Ray waving at her. “Thank you, but I see him now.” The woman stepped to the side and Andrea walked to the table. “Hi, Ray. Am I late?”

“No, no, I was early. You look lovely, Andrea. That color really suits you.”

She couldn't help but smile. His compliments always warmed

her.

“Thank you. Have you ordered yet?”

He shook his head and called for a waitress. “So, how are you?”

“I’m great. I’ve recently retired from being a full time stay at home mom and now I’m looking to do things with this next chapter of my life.”

“Sounds like that could be fun.”

“I’m hoping it will be. How about you?”

“Well, I’m retired too. After twenty years in the Army it took me a while to figure out what I wanted to do next. I was still kind of a young man, not old enough to retire from the work world completely so I found something else to do.”

“What made you go into dialysis?” Andrea asked as the waitress brought their food.

“I’m a nurse. The army trained me as medic so while I was in I

went to school to make it official.”

“That was smart. I have been thinking of going back to school, but I haven’t really decided yet.”

“Oh yeah? I think that’s a great idea. I’ll have a crush on a sexy college student all over again,” he said with a laughing grin giving her a nudge.

Andrea laughed between bites of chicken. She and Ray slipped into an easy conversation reminding her how easy it was to talk to him.

“Oh, by the way, I talked to LaTonya and she said it was okay. I can be in your book club,” he said pushing his empty plate to the side.

“That’s good. It should be fun. I’m looking forward to it.”

“I agree, and I get to spend more time with you.”

Andrea looked up from her dessert. “This is not about me and you, Ray. I’m married.”

“I know that.” He paused for a moment to sip his drink. “I heard you married right after I left.”

“It wasn’t *right after*. I while had passed.”

“Did you miss me while I was gone?”

“Miss you? You’re not serious, right?”

“Yes, I’m serious. I heard that I wasn’t even gone a year before you and that guy from the track team got together.”

Andrea shook her head. “It wasn’t like that.”

Ray put his drink down. “Well, what was it like?”

She heard the change in his voice and knew he would continue to push the conversation. Her anger rose.

“You want to talk about this now? Twenty-five years later?”

He shrugged. “We’ve always been able to talk about anything that was on our minds. I think that conversation is unfinished business between us.”

She wiped her mouth and threw the napkin into her

unfinished bowl of ice cream. “Okay, fine. Let’s get it out in the open.”

Ray sat back and gestured for her to continue.

“When you left you broke my heart, Ray. You dropped me like a hot potato without a word. I cried for over a year wondering what I did that was so wrong that you would just leave me and never come back.”

Ray’s eyes gaped and his jaw dropped. “Andrea, I—”

“No, you want me to talk about it so hush up and listen,” she told him in angry hushed tones. Her heart raced as she attempted to control her breathing.

Ray nodded. “You’re right. I’m sorry, please continue.”

She took a slow deep breath. “Ray, when you left I was devastated. I was young and in love and you flat out broke my heart. You were my first real boyfriend. We dated all high school, my first year in college and you were my first lover. You knew that, but you left with so much as a goodbye anyway. How could you

think you leaving wouldn't affect me? That it wouldn't hurt me to my core?" she asked palming her chest. "Of course I missed you."

Ray lowered his head. "Andrea I swear none of that was my intention," he said with a soft voice.

Andrea folded her hands on the table. "You told me you loved me and then you went to the Army and I never saw you again," she told him staring at her thumbs.

"I wrote, Andrea. Didn't you get my letter?"

She shifted her gaze to him. "The letter that said you wanted to see the world so you could grow?"

"Well yes, but it also said that I loved you. Not coming back to you was the biggest mistake I ever made."

Andrea scoffed and rolled her eyes. "Well, apparently it was a mistake you had no intention on rectifying either."

"It wasn't like that, Annie."

The sound of the nickname he gave her so long ago made her

gasp and her pulse race. His voice filled with emotion sent shivers down her spine. He took her hand and she looked up at him.

“I had every intention on coming back to you, I swear, but I couldn’t come back a boy. You deserved more than that. I wanted to give you the world and so much more.”

“So why didn’t you?”

Ray’s shoulders slumped as he dropped her hand and leaned against the booth. With a heavy sigh his head falls back.

“The years went by so fast, Annie. Just as I thought I was ready something else held me back. I tried to write you again, but I felt like a failure and I couldn’t bring myself to pick up the pen. Believe me, I have been kicking myself ever since.”

Andrea wrapped her arms around her chest. “I gave Christian all the grief and anger you left behind in me, Ray. He didn’t deserve it, but you know what? Christian stayed with me. He comforted me and waited for the pain to pass while showing me every day how much he wanted to be with me,” she told him leaning on the table.



“I often wondered about you, even after a married. If you met someone and just forgot about me. If you were okay or even alive. How my life could have been different if I had been with you rather than him. I even wondered if I still loved you.”

“Do you?”

Andrea look at him. There was a hopeful tone in his question and undeniable love shining in his eyes. She couldn't help but smile.

“You seem like the same guy I loved back then, but I sense something has changed in you, too. I don't think I'm in love with you anymore, but it would seem that even after all these years my emotions still go haywire when you're near.”

Ray beamed at her.

“But, not having answers left a lot of pain in me, Ray. I need of some type of closure.”

His smile faded as he leaned on the table resting his arms beside hers. “I thought joining the Army would help me see the

world and grow up and it did. I saw the most wonderful things, but I also saw some stuff that I still have nightmares over.” He let out a sad laugh. “Even the world’s most beautiful sights can’t erase some horrible things that lock themselves into your mind.”

Ray fell silent for a moment. Andrea saw the pain he tried to hide from her in those beautiful brown eyes of his and fought the urge to comfort him.

“All those years went by and no matter what I saw, or what I did, it never filled the void in my heart of not having you in my life,” he continued. “I tried to fill it with adventure, food, drink, even other women, but nothing could hold a candle to the way you made me feel.”

“If you felt like that why didn’t you come back to me?”

He paused to sip from his glass and continued staring at the table as he spoke. “I don’t know what to say. Time flew by. When I did think I was ready and could do all the things I wanted to do for you it was too late. You were married and had children.”

“You knew about me and Christian?”

He nodded.

“When?”

“Years ago. Your boys were just youngsters. My parents still see your mother from time to time. I didn’t want to mess with that. So I stayed where I was.”

“You never married or had children?”

Ray shook his head. “There was no one I never wanted to have children with except you.”

She sighed. “It was so hard not knowing what happened to you.”

“I know. Please accept the apology I should have given you so many years ago.” He took her hand. “Can you forgive the man for the biggest mistake he ever made as a boy?” he asked, giving her fingers a squeeze.

Andrea gave him a small smile. “Yes, you are forgiven. I

probably forgave you a long time ago, Ray. I just needed to know.”

“Excellent, so where do we go from here?”

“Well, how about we just leave the past in the *past*. We started as friends and we can be friends now.”

“Agreed! Can we still meet on Thursdays?”

“Sure. It will give me something to do during the week.”

“Great. Well, I heard you had two good looking boys. Do you have any pictures?”

\* \* \* \*

“Girl, I’m glad your friend Raymond joined part of the group. He’s nice and now we have some eye candy,” Regina whispered to her with a giggle as she packed her book away.

Andrea chuckled. “Yes, he is very handsome.”

“I think he likes you, too,” she added giving her a nudge.

She followed Regina from the café. “We’re just friends. I’m

married, remember?”

“Being married doesn’t make you invisible, Andrea,” Regina said in a teasing voice. “Have you told *him* that you’re married?”

“Raymond and I have history, Regina. He knows I’m married. We knew each other back in high school.”

“*Knew each other?* You mean, like, in the biblical sense?”

Andrea’s face heated. “Yes. He was my first love actually. But that was a long time ago. We haven’t seen each other in over twenty years.”

“Really? Are you sure that won’t cause any problems for you, Andrea?”

Andrea held the door open and shook her head. “Of course not, how could it? We’re both adults and we have *chosen* to be friends.”

“Okay, Andrea,” Regina said not sounding convinced. “If you say so. I’ll call you. Night.” With a quick hug and a wave, she disappeared around the corner.

“Andrea!”

She turned to the sound and smiled. “Hi Ray.”

“Hey. I’d like to walk you to your car, if that’s all right?”

“Sure, that’s fine.”

“Your friends are very nice. I really liked them. I’m going to enjoy being in this book club.”

“They’re your friends, too, now.”

He smiled. “Yes, I suppose they are.”

“Ray, Regina said she could tell that you were attracted to me.”

He sighed. “I’m sorry, Andrea, the last thing I tried to do was make you uncomfortable. The fact of the matter is *I am* attracted to you. Of course I’m not trying to be obvious about, but how can I deny the attraction? You are beautiful, intelligent and truly a nice person, you always have been.”

“Ray...”

He grabbed her arm and stopped walking. “What would you have me do, Andrea? Do you want me to treat you badly just to hide how I really feel?”

“No, Ray, of course not.”

“Good because I wasn’t going to.”

Her eyes widened as she looked at him.

“Look Andrea, I can’t help the way I feel about you. The moment I held you in my arms again it was like all the years that we were apart just melted away. I know you have a different life now and I will respect the fact that you are married. I just want to be a part of your life...even as just a friend,” he added dropping his grip to her hand.

Her heart tightened at the pained look in his eyes. “There will always be a place for you in my life...but only as a friend.”

He nodded and smiled. “I’m good with that.”

\* \* \* \*

“Sweetheart are you asleep?” Christian whispered leaving a kiss on her shoulder.

Andrea woke fully. “What time is it?” she asked rolling over.

“It’s after one. I’m sorry for coming in so late. I know I should have called.”

“It’s all right. How were your meetings?”

“I found a way to move up the groundbreaking,” he said excitedly. “Everything is moving right along. These are exciting times for our company sweetheart. It’s like watching a flower bloom right before your eyes. Go back to sleep. I just wanted to let you know I was home.” He kissed her cheek and turned away from her.



## Chapter Four

“Christian, would you like to read my book club book with me while dinner is cooking?” she entering the living room. “It’s very interesting and we’ll be doing something together.”

“That’s you and your new friends’ thing, honey. I don’t want to take that from you. We’ll have plenty of time to do things together. I’m going to take a nap before dinner. Will you wake me up when it’s done?”

Andrea sighed. “Sure.”

She put the book down as Christian left the room and went to the computer. Andrea surprised herself by finding the book club blog so easily. She smiled finding it user friendly and informative. After browsing the different pages, she left a question in the comment field of an ongoing discussion.

I think that part makes the book very realistic. Men don't ever want to talk, that's in and out of fiction novels. Andrea

Andrea logged out of the site then checked her email.

Hi Annie. I don't think all men are like that at all. The book shows the extreme of how some men can be. Ray.

"Good Lord, I wasn't expecting him to comment."

Another email came in. She opened it.

Do you have KIK? Download it and add me. My ID is RayRey10. Ray

Andrea giggled. *That's the nickname I gave him and his lucky number.* Her smile faded. "Is that kick? What the hell is that?" she wondered aloud.

Pulling up a Google search page she put the word in just the way he spelled it and a messenger service popped up.

"Oh!"

She downloaded the program to her computer and added the

name to the conversation list. Moments later a small window popped onto her screen.

Thanks for adding me.

No problem. I've never heard of KIK before. I had to download it to my computer.

Your computer? Annie, join the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most everyone uses the KIK app. It's free. Download it to your phone and then take it off your computer. It's so much easier that way.

“Oh.”

Andrea retrieved her phone from the coffee table and sat on the sofa to follow Ray's instructions.

You were right. That was easy.

Now I'm just a text away. So what's going on? I got the impression that you were feeling a little frustrated.

Andrea frowned. “How did he— Hmm...”

How could you get that from my post?

LOL We've met, Annie. I know you.

Andrea twisted her lips. He did always seem to know what she was thinking.

Okay, well yes. I guess I am...a little.

Anything I can do to help?

Well, do you mind if I ask you a question?

Once she sent the message she didn't know what to say. The last thing she wanted to do was give Ray the wrong impression about her and Christian's marriage.

Your husband doesn't talk to you?

No it's not like that. I mean, we used to talk all the time, but he's so busy with his company and well

Andrea stopped typing and sighed. After a few moments Ray responded.

He's been busy with work and you miss him, huh?

She nodded. That was it in a nutshell.

Yes, we hardly ever see each other let alone talk.

Well, now that I'm on your buddy list whenever you feel lonely or just want to chit-chat we can talk here anytime you want. I have messenger on my phone, so I will get an alert if you message me.

Thanks Ray. By the time lunch comes around I've run out of things to do around here. Talking to me won't get you in trouble at work, will it?

No. I keep my phone on vibrate but it's in my pocket all day. When I get a message I will feel it. So you can reach me whenever you want.

"Honey! Is dinner done yet?"

Christian's voice sailed through the air clearly.

"Just about!"

"All right. I'm going to go wash up."

Ray, I have to go. I'm making dinner.

Okay. Are we still on for lunch at Delvechio's on Thursday?

Of course, I'm looking forward to it. It's our Thursday thing.

LOL I like that. I'll see you there.

Bye...

\* \* \* \*

Andrea kissed Christian goodbye at the door then went to her computer. A messenger screen popped up over her screen when she opened her email account.

Hi, Andrea! What's up?

Hi, Regina. I'm all right. Christian just left for another meeting.

Oh yeah? Where to this time?

Ohio. He'll just be gone over night this time so he doesn't have to drive back late.

Well what are your plans?

I was just going to read some and then watch a movie.

Huh? You're just going to sit at home on a Friday night?

Andrea chuckled. Yes. What are you doing?

I'm going out with a few friends for drinks with some friends.  
You should come with me.

Andrea shook her head. I can't go out tonight, Regina. It's my turn to host the book club tomorrow. I have to be up early to clean up.

Clean up?! Andrea, no one lives there but you and Christian. There can't be that much to clean. The ones that made all the mess are gone! LOL

Andrea laughed. Well, I still have some stuff to do.

All right, if you say so.

Another message box popped onto her screen just behind the one she typed on. With furrowed brows she clicked onto it.

Hey, Andrea! How are you?

She smiled and replied quickly.

Hi, Ray! I was wondering if you were going to be online tonight.

I'm all by myself again. Christian just left for Ohio.

Another meeting?

Yes.

He has lots of meetings and they always seem to be out of town.

Andrea frowned. What's that supposed to mean?

The other screen chimed and blinked behind the one she spoke to Ray on. She moved her cursor over to the screen.

It's still early, Andrea. What are you doing after your movie?

I'll probably just go to bed.

Andrea let out a breath at the sound of the doorbell chime. She clicked the other box.

I was just making an observation, Andrea. I didn't mean anything by it.

Andrea's bow rose. She didn't really believe him, but she didn't want to get into an argument.



Fine.

If you don't mind me asking, why don't you ever go with him when he goes out of town?

I don't know.

Don't you want to go?

Andrea thought about that for a moment. Why *didn't* she go with him? She wouldn't feel so estranged from him if she were with him on his trips, but she really didn't want to impede on his work either. The other screen came to life again. She moved to it automatically.

Okay, well if you change your mind give me a call. Okay?

I haven't thought about it until now, but I guess the real answer is he hasn't asked me.

She hit send and immediately gasped. "Damn it!"

Huh? Andrea, what are you talking about? Are you messaging someone else, too?

She sighed and typed a reply. Yes, Regina. I'm talking to Ray on another screen.

Ray? You mean Raymond? When did he start being Ray?

We've known each other for years, Regina, remember? He has always been Ray to me.

That's right. We'll be careful that it doesn't go any further than an old friendship. It's clear that the man still has feelings for you although it's not in an 'in your face' kind of way.

The other screen flashed as she typed.

That's not going to happen, Regina. We're just friends.

Uh-huh.

No, really. We talk of course, but we do not discuss the relationship we once had.

Talk, huh? Do you talk about stuff you and Christian don't talk about?

Well, sometimes. Christian is hardly around right now to talk

to and Ray is.

That sounds like you've given Ray part of Christian's job.

Andrea took in a shocked breath. I have not! Ray and I are just friends. How many times do I have to say that?

All right, Andrea. I'm not trying to upset you. I'm your friend too and I'm just looking out for your best interest. Call me if you change your mind about that drink. Bye.

I will. Bye.

She clicked onto the other screen.

Sorry it took me so long to get back. I was messaging Regina, too.

Oh, are you still on with her? I'll let you go.

No need. She's gone.

Okay. I thought you may have been mad at me for what I said earlier.

No, I'm not mad.

Good. I just think he should make more of an effort to spend some time with you. I mean I would if you were my wife...especially if our children were all grown up and gone.

“Yeah, I thought that, too,” she said out loud.

Christian is just busy right now. As soon as this project is over, we will be spending much more time together.

But don't you get lonely when he's away all the time?

Andrea laughed as she typed her answer.

I'm lonely when he's here.

As soon as she hit the send button she regretted it and immediately typed a retraction.

“Shit!”

I didn't mean that. I have friends to occupy my time and things to do so I'm not in the house twiddling my thumbs.

Do you still consider me one of those friends?

Of course, Ray.

Good. I have to go. What time are we supposed to be at your house tomorrow?

One o'clock.

Can I come over earlier to help you set up or something?

That would be nice of you. Thank you.

Great! See you around twelve.

Andrea backed out of the app then slid her phone across the and stared at the blank screen a little longer before setting up a spot at the end of the sofa to watch her movie.

She munched her popcorn uninterested in the TV for a while then grabbed her phone.

“Hi Regina. I’ve changed my mind. Where are you?”

\* \* \* \*

“Andrea! Over here!”

Andrea turned. Regina waved wildly at her. She smiled and changed direction.

“Everybody this is Andrea. She's in the book club I was telling y'all about,” Regina said when Andrea arrived at the table. “Quick intro, Jordyn, Nikki, Bobbie,” she said pointing to the women around the table.

“Hi, everyone. So what’s going on?”

“Nothing really. We just hang out here sometimes because the appetizers are half price after nine o'clock,” Regina explained.

“Oh, well that’s good.”

“It sure is! That means more money for drinks!” Bobbie added.

Andrea laughed along with everyone else.

“Besides our Nikki is getting married in two months,” Regina told her then paused to clap. “So every time we get together it’s like a mini bridal shower party. We won’t have the real one for a few more weeks.”

“That’s wonderful, Nikki. Congratulations.”

“Thank you,” Nikki said with a bright smile.

Abruptly Nikki threw her hand into the air as if she were in school trying to ask a question. Andrea jumped at the sudden movement.

“We’ve been here for a little while, Andrea so you need to catch up if you’re going to hang out with us,” Nikki said giving her a playful nudge.

Andrea eyed the empty drinks and shot glasses on the table and turned a raised brow to the girl.

“Could you bring another round of birthday cake martinis please and bring an extra one and a shot for our late arrival? Thanks,” Nikki ordered when the waitress arrived then turned a smile to Andrea. “Those things are amazing. You’ll love it.”

“Thank you, but I’m not really a drinker.”

“You mean you don’t drink at all?” Jordyn asked wide eyed from across the table.

“Well, I may have a glass or two of wine from time to time.”

“Dry or sweet?” Bobbie chimed in.

Andrea spun to face her. “I like the sweeter wines, actually. “I think they’re good room temp and chilled. Dessert wine are very good, too.”

“Oh then you’re good. These drinks taste just like a dessert wine,” Bobbie told her with a laugh.

“Relax Andrea. Live a little. We’ll get you home safe and sound if you’re too buzzed to drive,” Regina promised.

The waitress returned with the drinks. Andrea scrutinized the one placed in front of her. She dabbed her finger in the tiny dollop of whip cream in the center taking a few sprinkles with it.

“Mmm.” She turned a smile to Nikki. “You’re right. It’s is good.”

“See, I told you,” Nikki giggled.

Andrea lifted her drink, but Regina touched her hand to stop it from reaching her mouth. Andrea turned a confused look to her.

“You have to do the shot first,” Regina explained. “We’ve already done ours.”



Andrea put the martini glass down and lifted the shot glass. It had been so long since she had taken a shot of alcohol she couldn't even pinpoint the exact date. She brought the tiny glass to her face and gave it a sniff. A stunned gasp escaped her. She turned wide eyes to Regina.

Regina chuckled. "Smells just like real cake, don't it?"

"Yes! It really does."

"Well drink up so we can do our next toast," Regina instructed.

Andrea's gaze shifted to Nikki, who nodded then to Bobbie who smiled and tilted an invisible glass back to demonstrate what she wanted her to do. Finally, she shrugged and swallowed the liquid in one gulp.

"Good, right?" Regina asked.

"Delicious!"

"Yup. Wait until you taste the cake-ini," Nikki said pulling hers closer.

“Cake-ini?”

That’s what I call it,” she explained with a shrug.

“Okay, so who’s going to toast next?” Regina asked lifting her glass.

“I will. To Nikki, the first of us to marry. May your drinks be chilled and your nights be hot!” Jordyn said on a laugh as she thrust her glass forward.

“Cheers!”

Andrea raised her glass and her voice along with everyone else.

“Oh my gosh! This is amazing! I could drink these all night. It’s like drinking your dessert,” Andrea exclaimed and took two more long gulps.

“Hey Mikey, I think she likes it,” Nikki said as she beat the table.

Andrea ignored the jokes poked at her and continued to drink

down her drink.

Nikki pushed another her way. “That’s the first now here’s the one we’re on.”

“Okay, my turn,” Bobbie said.

Without complaint Andrea accepted to new drink and lifted it to meet the others.

“To Nikki, may your good times out last your bad times and your orgasms be outstanding!”

The woman burst into laughter as they tried to sip their drinks. Andrea finished the drink just as quick as her new friends licking her lips afterwards.

“So Andrea, what do I have to look forward to with this marriage thing?’ Will Byron lose his mind in five years and I’ll have to come to you guys for an alibi?”

“Not five years, Nikki, it’s seven years when they start tripping,” Regina corrected on a laugh.

Andrea chuckle. “My goodness, I hope not.”

“How long have you been married, Andrea?” Bobbie asked.

“Twenty-three years,” she said running her finger inside the glass.

“Dang, that’s almost my whole life!” Jordyn said laughing.

“That’s reassuring, Andrea,” Nikki said ignoring Jordyn’s outburst. “Not many marriages last that long anymore. How’d you do it?”

Andrea shrugged and turned the glass upside down to shake the last drops into her mouth.

“We love each other. Christian and I promised each other long ago that to death do us part actually means *until death do us part*. So we would do whatever it took to make it work. Nothing would be out of bounds.”

“Wow. I like that. That’s what I want with Byron,” Nikki paused to flag the waitress down. “Total commitment.”

“So has it been good the whole time or you’ve had to stop yourself from strangling him once or twice?”

Andrea laughed. “Of course there were a few times when we were younger, but they were few and far between. Christian is a very good man. He was romantic, loving and very hands on with me and the children. Christian always made sure I had whatever I needed for the house, the boys and even my own personal needs. My sisters used to say he treated me like we were still dating long after we were married.”

“Aww. How sweet is that?” Bobbie said resting on the table.

“Here you go,” the waitress announced replacing empty glasses with filled ones.

“This time I’m going to toast to myself. May I have a loving and totally committed marriage similar to yours, Andrea!”

Andrea lifted her glasses with the other four women and cheered as they made a loud clink.

\* \* \* \*

A gentle kiss on the shoulder roused Andrea from her sleep.

“Christian?” she asked sleepily.

“No,” a male voice replied softly.

She turned and gasped as a hand caressed her face.

“Ray? Is that you?” she asked on a breath.

“Yes. The thought of you being here alone again was killing me. I couldn’t wait a moment longer to be with you. I love you so much. I always have.”

She sat up into the moonlight that came through the window.

“Ray, you shouldn’t be here. Christian—”

“Christian is not here,” he said finishing her sentence. “He is out of town and has left you alone and horny once more.”

She pulled the sheet up against her chest. “Don’t talk like that.”

“Do you deny it?”

“I— I—”

“You blush, but I remember you used to like it when I talked nasty to you. You still like it, don’t you?”

Shivers ran over skin. Andrea bit her lip and turned away from him finding the pulse between her legs hard to ignore.

Ray touched her chin to bring her face to his. “Say it.”

The intense look in his eye held her in place heating her core even more. She swallowed to wet her suddenly dry mouth.

“I— I like it.”

“And I bet Christian doesn’t talk like that at all, does he?”

She shook her head. “No.”

His nose brushed gently over her shoulder as he spoke. “I remember all the things you like. Everything about you is engraved in my heart, Annie. Your eyes, the softness of your skin, your smell, especially your taste. All of you is a part of my very soul,” he breathed into the crook of her neck.

“Ray.” His name was a gasp on her lips as her body shivered.

“I’m just being honest.”

“Ray, you shouldn’t be here.”

“*Someone* should be here with you, Annie. Aren’t you tired of being the one doing without? If your husband doesn’t want to be that person let it be me. I want to be here with you.” Ray lifted her face to his. “He doesn’t deserve you anyway.”

Andrea shrunk back from the anger flashing in his eyes.

“That’s not true. Christian is a good man and a good husband to me.”

“Is he? What kind of man leaves his beautiful wife alone and needy on numerous occasions?”

Andrea shook her head. “No, it’s not like that. Chris—” His hand went up and her talking ceased.

“All I know is had I not been a young fool and left you *we’d* be married right now. The only reason he even asked you out was because I left an opening for him to slip into. We are supposed to be



together not you and him.”

Andrea’s mind raced. His hand cuddled her cheek.

“All I’m asking for is one night. Let me love you the way you should be loved and you are free to return to your mundane existence with him if you so desire.”

One night to be loved the way she wanted. Was it so wrong to want that? It’s been so long since she’d been made love to. Was there harm in wanting to be loved?

Ray moved closer silencing her inner thoughts. He pulled the sheet away. His eyes slid over her body.

“What a lovely red night gown. Did Christian buy you this lingerie?”

It took a while for the question to make its way through the sensual haze clouding her mind.

“No,” she murmured. “I brought it to.... Well...”

He slid his hand over the shimmering, satin material

appreciatively. “To entice him?” he finished for her. “I don’t need props to be aroused by someone as lovely as you are, Annie.” He pushed a strap from her shoulder. “Just being in your presence is all I need.”

Ray moved the covers from around her then pulled the gown over her head throwing it over his shoulder. The quick action sent a light wind over Andrea’s skin. Her nipples puckered from it and Andrea’s cheeks heated. Ray reached out to caress her breast.

“Yes, look at them,” Ray said more to himself than her. “Just as beautiful as I remember them.”

“Ray—”

He touched her lips with his finger. “Shh, don’t speak. I know you are having all kinds of thoughts, guilt probably the most paramount. I have not come to bring you pain in mind nor body. I just want to make you feel good. It’s all about you tonight, my sweet Annie. Let me answer the call of your body and do whatever it needs me to do.”

“But, Ray—”

He touched her lips again. “I said no more speaking.” His words were soft, but firm.

She pressed her mouth shut and nodded. With a wave of his hand he gestured for her to lay back. Her chest rose and fell beneath faster as his eyes fell over her. He shook his head.

“How could Christian not want to make love to such a beautiful woman?”

His question was rhetorical, but the words sent shivers up her spine.

“You still have that fantastic runner’s body I loved when we were in school,” he said caressing her breasts and shoulders. “You have aged magnificently, Annie, like a delicious fine wine.”

Ray’s strong hands gripped her aching flesh. She trembled in his grasp. Her eyes closed as her breath caught. A kiss on each nipple made goose bumps rise on her skin. Hot breath preceded the undeniable feel of his tongue as he sucked a nipple into his mouth.

Her moans of pleasure seemed to spur him onward. Ray moved back and forth giving each breast a tiny nip before licking the pain away. The sensation sent erotic pulses straight to her throbbing pussy. Her mouth opened but only heavy pants escaped. Then it was over.

“Hmm, it’s a shame Christian doesn’t buy you lingerie. I would put this sexy body of yours in silk and lace every chance I got.” He kissed her belly and then chuckled. “But you would only wear them around the house to look sexy in, never to bed. In bed I don’t want anything covering your natural beauty.” He slid her panties off in one quick swipe.

Andrea’s eyes popped open. “Ray, wait, maybe we should—”

“No,” he said abruptly. “You want this. You *need* this. I know you do and if he won’t do it for you, I will. Tell me you don’t and I will stop, but if you’re stopping me because it’s the right thing to do...”

Tears stung her eyes. Her body cried out begging her to let Ray

continue. Her heart hammered in indecisiveness, but God help her she could not form the words to make him stop.

Ray smiled and threw her panties across the room with the rest of her garments then pushed his face between her legs.

“Ray!” she whispered urgently.

Ray’s goatee brushed against her inner thighs. The anticipation of what he was about to do was maddening. It was like he moved in slow motion. She could hardly stand it. Christian hadn’t kissed her lower lips in weeks. Ray’s breath on her already heated mound made her cream even more. Andrea shuddered and lifted her hips wanting more. He obliged her, but there were no teasing licks to taste her or tease her to want more. Ray attacked her pussy like a starving man, licking and sucking with gusto. Incredible sensations slammed her with the force of a wind storm. Unprepared for such an assault of bliss, Andrea shouted her joy aloud unable to stop the outburst. The feeling consumed her quickly. She came with hard quakes that rocked her body almost

violently.

Andrea gripped the silky strands on Ray's head holding him in place as she continued to tremble. After a few moments, Ray released his hold on her clit and returned to slow languishing licks to the wet folds surrounding it. The sea of euphoria began to ease, but the next wave of sensations rose quickly. Andrea moved her hands through his hair tugging on the dark strands. Ray's moans reached her ears and she smiled. His hands slipped beneath her to grasp each butt cheek. He kneaded her ass and continued to suck and drink from her. The feelings intensified. Her breath caught. She gasped for air. Her heart pounded so hard she thought it would burst from her chest and then her body exploded again.

Her soul soared with elation. Every pore tingled with bliss as her body waited for her spirit to return. Andrea pressed Ray's head into her holding him in place and holding herself upright. She wanted to scream her pleasure to the four walls to match what her soul felt, but her voice was gone. Only a long high pitch squeal

came forth to express the extraordinary emotion running through her.

After a few moments she collapsed against the pillow. Ray stayed where he was even when her hands dropped away. Her throat felt raw as she pulled ragged breaths into it in an attempt to replace the air that rushed from her lungs. She was exhausted and drained, but never felt better.

“Now that’s how you’re supposed to feel even before you make love.”

Ray’s words preceded a kiss on her belly and the force of one smooth movement as he slid his erection into her.

“And now I’ll show you how you’re supposed to feel after you have been made love to.”

Slowly at first, he stroked her, taking his time. Andrea wrapped her legs around him as her body welcomed what he had to offer. He sank deeper into her.

“Feels just like old times, doesn’t it, Annie? My sliding back

and forth inside of you, making you feel each and every inch of me. Our bodies are perfectly matched, in sync like we used to be. We were made for each other; wouldn't you agree?"

She nodded.

"Don't nod. I want to hear you. Let me hear your voice laced with the lust and yearning I have built up in you."

"Yes, it feels wonderful," Andrea said breathlessly.

"Mmm, your voice is music to my ears, baby. Making love to you was always wonderful, but sometimes it feels even better when I stroke faster." He lifted her legs to his shoulders and fell into her more.

Andrea groaned her approval.

"Remember this, Annie?" Ray asked grinding into her. "Yeah, I remember how much you liked this position."

Her shameless moans filled the room. She knew she should feel bad that it was Ray making her feel so good, but his love making was always incredible. At the moment she just didn't care.



Someone was making her feel good. Someone *wanted* to make her feel good. Someone cared for her and about her. Someone was showing her *body* love. After giving her time, effort and love to so many people for so long, was that so much to ask that someone did those things for *her*?

A whirlwind of pleasure swept away her inner dialog. All other thoughts died against the incredible feeling Ray ushered over her senses.

“Scream your pleasure out loud, Annie,” Ray panted. “I want to hear how good it feels to you. How good *I* make you feel.”

Andrea pressed her lips together as her head thrashed back and forth.

“Don’t be ashamed to scream if your body feels like screaming, baby. Let your cries of passion out so we can come together.”

Encouraged by his words, a cry of pure rapture burst from deep inside her taking her breath away. Bliss traveled the length of her body tightening her nipples and raising goose bumps on her

skin. She reached up and pulled Ray against her as tears streamed down her face.

Abruptly Andrea sat straight up in bed. Her forehead dripped with sweat and her pussy throbbed furiously with need. Breathing hard she looked around frantically not knowing where she was at first. As recognition dawned she gripped the pink cotton night gown and looked over to the empty spot on the other side of the bed. With a heavy sigh she laid back to drift off to sleep again pulling Christian's pillow closer to her.

## Chapter Five

“Hey, Ray. You’re early. It’s about fifteen minutes until people start showing up,” Andrea said swinging the door open.

Ray greeted her with a wide smile. “That’s that Army training. If you’re not five minutes early, you’re late. I haven’t quite adjusted it real world application.”

Andrea chuckled. “A guess a twenty-year habit would be difficult to break.”

“You look fantastic, Annie.”

He pulled her into a hug before she could protest. Her body immediately tingled all over. Andrea shook off images from her dream and made a mental note not to be too close to him today.

“Thank you,” she said hoping her voice didn’t sound as shaky

as she felt. “Did you find the house easily? I hoped my directions were detailed enough. Since everyone lives in the city and probably haven’t ventured out this far I was trying to draw them a clear picture of where I was.”

Andrea stumbled back out of Ray’s embrace. She turned down the hall and he followed her.

“No, your directions were perfect. I had no trouble at all.”

“Oh, well, that’s good.”

She busied herself uncovering the snack trays on the table.

“Are you hungry? Would you like something to nibble on now?”

“No, I’m fine. I’ll wait for everyone else. I would like to see the house if that’s okay.”

“A tour? Okay, sure, but this isn’t our house, you know. We’re just renting while Christian builds the church.”

“I remember. I just have never been in a little country house before,” he told her with a grin.

Andrea chuckled returning the fruit tray to the refrigerator. She led him back into the living room. Ray stopped in front of the coffee table and picked up one of the two framed pictures there.

“These are some good looking boys you got here, Andrea. Are they as smart as their mother?” he asked in a teasing tone.

Andrea smiled. “Smarter. Both received academic scholarships to collage.”

“That’s fantastic.” He eyed the picture again turning his head to and fro. “Their skin may have been a little lighter and their eyes a different hue if they were ours, but still very handsome young men. You did a good job,” he said returning the picture.

“Thank you, but I didn’t do it alone you know.”

He nodded and picked up the other picture. “Oh yes, I remember this guy now. I guess he didn’t age that bad. He still looks the same. Huh, I always thought he was a little too pretty for a man,” Ray mumbled sliding the portrait across the table.

She twisted her lips. “Well, you know, Ray, I always attracted

to pretty men.”

Ray turned a raised brow to her then burst into a hearty laugh that made giggle.

“Touché,” he said pointing at her.

As his laughter eased, Ray stared at her. Memories of her dream floated to the surface of Andrea’s mind. She could feel those sensual full lips on her neck and those hands caressing her breast like they used to do so long ago. She took in a breath and forced herself to break eye contact.

“Let’s continue the tour before the others arrive, shall we?”

She walked him from room to room answering the random questions he threw out to her. The last room was the one she and Christian used as their bedroom. As she approached it the memories of the dream returned again to torture her. His touch, his kisses, his smell as he was nearing climax on top of her: she remembered it all. Over twenty-five years had passed since they made love, but she could remember it like it was really last night.

Andre's eyes closed as the dream formed in her mind's eyes pulling from reality. Her nipples responded to the memory and her unmet desires. The aching, longing feeling returned to her core. Her mouth was dry and she licked her lips.

“Andrea.”

Ray called her name. He was here! It wasn't a dream. He really could touch her, the way he used to so long ago.

“Andrea? Are you okay?”

She opened her eyes and reality surged forward again. Ray was right in front of her, so near she could smell his cologne.

“Andrea? Maybe you should sit down.” He held her steady against the wall.

“Yes, yes, I mean, no. I don't need to sit. I'm fine.” She righted herself and walked to the stairs. “Let's just go downstairs before the others show up. I need to make sure everything is ready.”

He nodded and followed her down the stairs.

\* \* \* \*

“You remember the deacon at my brother’s church, Deacon Lester?”

“Yes, wife’s name is Marsha and their kids younger than ours.”

Christian chuckled. “Yes, him. Well he thinks this project is going to grow the church’s numbers immensely,” Christian mentioned putting his dinner plate in the dish washer.

“Grow more? I thought everyone in the neighboring town were already members.”

“Yes, but only a few. He’s sure that a larger facility will bring in the rest. The towns on both sides of Felixville share the same fire house, supermarket and schools everyone will treat the new church the same way. Most don’t go anywhere now.”

“That would be great, honey.”

“So, what did you do while I was gone, Andrea?”



“Well, today was my turn to host the book club. So everyone came over here today.”

“That’s nice, sweetheart. So you guys had a good time?”

“Yes, it was great. We’re almost finished with—”

“That’s good. Well, I’m really tired from the last few days. I think I’ll turn in early tonight.”

With a kiss on the forehead Christian left her sitting at the table. When she heard the shower running, Andrea ran up the stairs removing her clothes. In their room she continued to strip. She slipped into her red gown, added a little gloss to her lips and relaxed across their bed. Christian walked into the room moments later wrapping his towel around his waist.

“Wow. What’s all this?”

“Well, I know you’ve been busy lately, but you did promise to take care of me, so...”

“Yes I did. I’m still a little tired, baby, so I’m going to have to put a disclaimer out there. I may not be at one hundred percent,

but I'll give you what I've got."

"Well, I can see one part of you that's not *too* tired." She gestured toward his tented towel.

Christian looked down and laughed. "Well, maybe I can get my second wind and give it the old college try." He snatched off his towel and slid across the bed to her. "Honey, I'm sorry I've been so busy. It's all starting to wind down now. I promise it'll get better from here. I'm going to take you away for a while where we can watch television, relax and have sex all day...well, maybe not *all* day, but at least a *few* times in a day," he corrected with a mischievous grin.

She chuckled. "That would be wonderful, Christian."

Andrea opened her arms and he moved into them. His kisses were soft and tender. Christian kissed her neck and moved quickly to her breasts, removing each one to caress and kiss. He sat up and slid his hands over the silkiness of her body inside the satin gown. She swallowed hard and forced the words from her mouth.

“Christian?”

“Yeah, baby.”

“Can, can we try something new tonight?”

“Something new?” His eyes met hers and his hand stopped momentarily. “What’d you have in mind?”

“Well, not really a new position, but a slight change to an old one. Something we haven’t done for a long time.”

“Hmm, sounds interesting. Let’s get into it and you tell me when to change, okay?”

She nodded and let her husband mount her as usual. He kissed the same places he always kissed and touched her like he always did. Christian found his rhythm quickly and her body started to warm. Just as that good feeling started to creep into her senses, she tapped his shoulder.

“Christian, lift my legs,” she panted.

“Yeah, baby.”

“Now, Christian, lift my legs. Put them on your shoulders.”

He stroked her faster. “Yeah, now. Now baby.”

“Wait, Christian, lift my legs up.” She brought her knees up tapping him again.

He fell deeper inside her and moaned his approval. “Oh, yes, Andrea,” he said moving faster.

She tried resting her legs on his shoulders, but his movements made it impossible to keep them there. “Wait, Christian, wait.”

“Yes!” he growled pushing against her.

*No!*

Her body and mind shouted their disappointment together as the tell-tale pulse of his penis told her it was too late. Christian fell off her moments later trying to catch his breath.

“Oh wow, Andrea, you were right.”

“Right? Right about what?” she said in a monotone voice.

“Right about trying something new. That was incredible.” He

rolled off her and promptly fell asleep.

She stared at the ceiling. Christian's snores filled the room.

"Yes, I'm glad you liked it," she mumbled with a sigh.



## Chapter Six

Andrea scanned the room. Ray stood and waved her over. She approached and walked into his embrace.

“Sorry I’m late. There was some kind of traffic jam backing everything up for miles.”

“No apology necessary. I haven’t been here that long. You look lovely, as usual.”

“Oh, stop it, Ray,” said with a giggle. “You always say that.”

“I always mean it.”

A warm feeling covered her body. She picked the drink menu to hide the smile that wouldn’t go away.

“I’m starved. Can we order first this time instead of waiting until after we’ve talked?”

“Of course.” He flagged down a waitress.

“Here’s my happy little couple. Let me just say that I think it’s so cool that you guys take time to still have a date day. All couples your age should do it. It’s so romantic,” their waitress said dreamily when she answered his call.

“Oh, no, Ray and I—” Andrea began, but Ray cut her off.

“Thanks. Everyone has to work to have a good relationship nowadays. Today, we’d like to order our food first instead of later, if you don’t mind.”

“Of course. Let me grab you some menus. Same drinks? Arnold Palmer for the lady, water no ice for you, right?”

“You got it!”

“Be right back.”

“Ray—”

He held his hand up to stop her. “I know what you’re going to say, Andrea. I didn’t correct her because I don’t think random people really have to know all of our business. We know the truth, that’s all that matters, isn’t it?”



“Well, I guess you’re right.”

The waitress returned shortly with their drinks and they made their food orders. When she completed her meal, Andrea brought her book up from the seat beside her.

“Okay, the first thing I wanted to bring to your attention was on page one hundred seventy-eight. I don’t understand something about this situation.”

Ray pushed the last bit of his sandwich into his mouth and held up a finger. Moving the dishes further out their way he rummaged around in his bag.

Andrea looked over to him. He was so cute looking like a chipmunk with a mouth full of nuts as he chewed. She was hard pressed not to laugh.

“You all right?”

He nodded and gestured for her to continue.

“Okay. This is the set up. Chelsea’s at work. Her day is going on normally and then she looks at the clock and boom. Instantly

she becomes aroused. The author set the scene making a big deal with the clock and the time making sure that we understood that the reason she got all hot and bothered is because of the time.

Why?”

Ray chuckled. “The author is making it a big deal because *it is*. It shows how much control Blake actually has over Chelsea’s body. He could bring her arousal to full tilt just by the mere thought of him. Her body is reacting to the *memory* of all he has done to her even though he is there. He has trained her body to react to him whether he is with her or not.”

Ray finished his explanation with his lips brushing her ear. Her heartbeat accelerated as her body responded to his hot breath on her ear. He continued whispering to her.

“You’ve read all the wonderful things Blake did to her. Most of them were never done to her before. He awakened her to pleasures she never thought possible and she loved them.”

Andrea licked her suddenly dry lips. “So, so what does that

have to do with the clock?”

“Remember earlier in the chapter how Blake would constantly ask her what time it every time they met? He did all those things at the same time *every* time and made a point to make her aware of the time. Eventually not only did she equate the incredible feelings with him, but also to the time.” He held up the book. “That’s why the author is pointing out the clock in this passage. Even at work, in a totally different environment and atmosphere, Chelsea saw time and her body began to prepare itself for the pleasure Blake had trained it to react to.”

Andrea could almost see the picture Ray drew for her mind eye’s eye. Her nipples hardened and her chest rose and fell faster responding to his descriptive words. She was suddenly aware of his closeness, his smell and even the scent of her own arousal.

“Oh, Andrea, by the way,” Ray mentioned moving back to his original spot in the booth. “I know it’s my turn to host the book club this week, but I can’t do it on Saturday. I’m going to send out a

bulletin to everyone's email to ask if everyone can come tomorrow night instead. Is that good for you?"

With space between them her breathing quickly returned to normal and the throbbing between her legs eased.

"Actually, tomorrow is even better for me. Christian is out of town now and it will give me something to do," she finally responded. "He'll be back on Saturday and I'll be able to spend time with him."

"Great! I'll send out the email tonight. Don't look for one in your inbox since I've already mentioned it to you, but here." He grabbed one of the napkins and scribbled on it. "These are the directions to my house. I don't live far from downtown. Do you mind if we end early tonight? If I'm going to host tomorrow instead of Saturday, I need to pick up some stuff tonight."

"No, no, that's fine. What time were you thinking?"

"Around seven o'clock, okay? That will give people a chance to get home from work and change if they want."

She nodded. "All right. I'll see you tomorrow night."

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"Hi, Andrea!" he said swinging the door open, pulling her into a hug. "You're early so no one is here yet."

"I figured since you came to help me, I would help you."

"Thanks. I'm just about done, but I'd appreciate the help. I'm not really in the habit of doing this kind of thing."

Andrea helped him arrange the food to accommodate the group setting then sat in the living room to wait.

"I wonder where everyone is," Andrea questioned looking at her watch. "It's getting late."

"I guess no one could come after all," Ray said with a shrug.

"Do you want me to call Regina? It's unusual that she wouldn't even called."

"No, no, that's fine. Maybe it was just too short notice for them. Well, we might as well eat something. We've been waiting for

a while and I'm starved," he said with a chuckle. "We're here. We can talk about the book over dinner."

Ray rearranged the buffet style dinner they had put together into a candle light dinner for two, bringing out a bottle of wine.

"Andrea, I have a confession to make," he said after dinner.

"A confession?"

Ray refilled her glass and escorted her to the living room. "Yes, I'm afraid so."

When he ran his fingers through his hair and blew his breath out, Andrea knew it was bad. That was his signature *I'm guilty, I did it, move.*

"First I want to apologize for lying to you and even having this confession to make."

Andrea's brow rose as she took a sip from her glass. Her pulse raced as she waited.

"Okay."

“I never emailed the group to tell them about the change of meeting. They still think it’s tomorrow,” Ray forced out.

Andrea’s eyes widened over the glass. Her gasp made the wine slosh around the rim.

“What? Why would you do all that?”

He took her glass away putting it on the coffee table. “Because, Andrea, I love you. I wanted you here with me tonight...alone. I just want one night to show you how much I love you. Just one night.” He cupped her face, bringing her to him.

She pulled away and stood up. “Ray, I can’t do this. I’m— I’m married. You know that.”

He stood, taking her hands pulling her close again. “I know, Andrea, but your body cries out to me. I see it every time we’re together. I feel it whenever you’re near me. I can smell your desire—even now—and know that you want me too. How long will you deny what we still feel for each other?”

She tried to swallow the lump forming in her throat. Her

hands shook in his within his.

“When I left I know I broke your heart. Christian was there to pick up the pieces and then you guys formed a bond. But the love you have for him wouldn’t even have occurred if I hadn’t left. Don’t you see? We’re the ones that belong together. Not you and Christian.”

Andrea bit her lip.

*Was he right? Was it just rebound love between her and Christian all those years ago?*

Ray slipped his hand onto the back of her neck to massage the base of her head. Her eyes fluttered close.

“Does he touch you the way I do? Make you shudder like I can? Take you to the brink of ecstasy and back several times before finally pushing you over to shatter into a million pieces of bliss?”

A shiver raced along her spine at the thought. Christian was not a bad lover, just conservative. After twenty-five years he knew how to make love to her. Ray took her virginity introducing her to



the wonderful world of love making with wild, passionate, experimental love making. His low and sensual voice broke into her thoughts.

“I know what you need. Let me make love to you...just this once. Give me this one night to make you feel good like I used to. Let me give you just a glimpse of what it could have been—could *still* be— between us. We’re not youngsters anymore. We have the means to do all the things you want to do. See the world, sample food and wine from everywhere, make love on the most beautiful coasts, whatever you want.”

A moan slipped from Andrea’s throat that she couldn’t stop. Stunned by the sound of it she gasped and turned away from him squeezing her eyes shut. His body pressed against hers and her breath caught.

“Don’t be embarrassed about how I make you feel. You have nothing to be ashamed of. Is it so wrong to share your body with the man you love? One that loves *you*?”

The question—soft and husky near her ear—caused goosebumps to rise on her skin. He paused to spin her. She turned, but averted her gaze. The sting of tears made her close her eyes.

“The biggest mistake of my life was not coming back to you.”

He palmed her cheek turning her to face him. The tears fell when their eyes met.

“Please, don’t punish the man for the mistake he made as a boy.”

His plea tore at her heart. How could she continue to deny the feelings that rushed through her whenever he was around?

“I promise, when this night is over you can go back to your husband and your mundane life, if that’s what you really want. I will accept and be content with the friendship that you have offered me.”

Ray’s lips brushed against hers as he spoke the sinful words that promised so much. The yearning in her loins wanted the fulfillment that Christian had denied her for so long.

*No! No! her mind screamed. What are you doing? You're a married woman. This is so wrong. I said no! Don't you dare!*

Her brain tried forcing her mouth to form the words she knew she desperately should say, but to no avail. Her body had taken control. It refused to let her respond to any other commands save its own.

Ray was so close she could feel his body's heat through her clothes. His throbbing erection tapped against the junction between her legs, poking against her sensitive clitoris as if asking for permission to enter into her. She tried to find her voice to answer its unasked question negatively, but couldn't. No words came to her. She tried to calm her heavy breathing and force her heart rate to slow down. Too many long, unsatisfied and lonely nights spoke to her instead.

Tears fell freely as Andrea threw her arms around Ray's neck capturing his lips. Andrea surrendered to the pleasure of his groin pressing against her secret spot. Ray rubbed his body against hers

for a while letting her feel the hardness she had caused, but then quickly scooped her into his arms and carried her to his bedroom.

Sweet smelling candles burned in a row along his dresser. The flames were low in the little glass jars lighting the room in dim light. Ray lowered her to the floor and undressed her quickly. When she was naked, Andrea lowered her eyes. The last time he saw her body it was lush with the glow of youthfulness. Her body had seen twenty years and two children since then. Ray wiped the moisture from her cheeks with his thumb and turned her face up toward his.

“You are still the most beautiful woman I have ever seen,” he said seemingly reading her emotions.

Quickly he discarded his clothes. She gasped as he travelled the length of his body. He looked as wonderful as she remembered hardly changing at all. Gingerly she brought her hand to his chest, her fingers pushing through the dark curls to reach the muscular pectorals beneath. Boldly she moved through the thinner hair on the taut skin of his stomach. The contrast of the dark hair against

his lighter skin was always sexy to her. She drank in his masculine beauty like a thirsty man after water. She stared down at his blatant erection and swallowed.

“It’s like that because you made it like that.” He laid her back onto his bed and crawled over her. “Let me bring out your innermost desires,” he whispered against her neck.

Andrea slid across the cool satin on his bed as he pushed her up to the top. Her mind was quiet no longer tormenting her with what was right. Her body had won the fight for control and opened itself to what Ray offered. She closed her eyes. Only her own moans filled her the room as her body responded to Ray’s touch. His hands were all over her at once, touching, caressing and stroking her lovingly, awakening her senses.

“I remember your face glowing just like that when I used to make you come. It was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen,” he mused. “Nothing has ever come close.”

Ray slid his fingers between her nether lips. Their eyes met.

Rubbing his finger gently across her pleasure button he watched her intently. His delighted gaze locked her place as she climbed the ladder to climax quickly, daring her to look away. Moments later, Andrea combusted in ecstasy.

“Yesssss. I’m pleased to see it still has the same glow and beauty.”

As her shudders eased, he slowed his movements until she began to breath normally again. He dropped a kiss on her mouth.

“That, sweetheart, was just to take the edge off. I know your body cries out for more. So now, my sweet Andrea, I’ll give us both a night we will never forget.”

Ray’s words set her loins on fire anew. He moved down her body, his lips leaving a fiery trail along her torso. Resting between her legs, he lay for a while still as stone. She couldn’t tell what he was doing. She just knew he wasn’t moving and just when she thought she would die if he didn’t say something or touch her, she felt the sizzling touch of his tongue against her most carnal spot.

She could almost feel the steam on the inside of her legs as his actions drenched her core.

Andrea pulled and tugged on the sheets, crushing his head with her legs. Just as she came again she grabbed his head holding him in place as her body wracked with waves of pleasure.

Ray returned to her ear leaving two fingers pressed deep. “Did you enjoy that, sweetheart?”

“Oh yes! It was wonderful,” she answered quickly.

“The taste of you ... the smell you... I have never forgotten. Thank you for letting me have it again. Now, I’m sure you have one more of those incredible orgasms in you and I’m going bring it out.”

“Oh no, Ray. I can’t do it again. I’m exhausted,” she protested breathlessly.

He chuckled and kissed her neck. “Oh, Annie, I know this pussy better than you think. I’m almost positive you have another two maybe even three inside you.”

“Oh Ray!”

“I’m going to make you feel so good that you won’t have the words to describe it.”

A shudder went through her body as his words fell over her. He kissed her to quiet any further protests. His fingers continued to move back and forth inside her reigniting the flames of her desire. Low waves of pleasure rolled through her body. Reading her correctly, he knew she was ready for him. Ray grasped her by the hips and lifted her onto him. Andrea let out an abrupt yelp stunned by his strength and her new position.

“Ray! What are you doing?”

“Don’t you remember how much I love this position?”

Oh yes, she remembered. She liked this position as well. It had been with him that she had discovered it. The sensation of his rock hard erection entering soaked core silenced her thoughts. Her whole body tingled with excitement.

“Oh!” she exclaimed as he then lowered her onto his erection.

Andrea was dizzy with delight. He filled her completely,



stretching her. It was exquisite. She put her hands on his chest to steady herself and started to move on her own and the pleasure increased.

“Oh, yes! Yeah Annie! Just like that! Bounce that ass, baby, yeah!”

His words excited her more. Andrea loved hearing her name mingled with his passionate screams. It made her feel sexy and wanted. Alternating from fast to slow, she enjoyed each sensation the shifting gave her. Ray moaned her name louder. He professed his never ending love for her, telling her how good she made him feel and how perfect they were together. She smiled taking it in, loving it all. His erection pushed impossibly deep inside her.

Ray screamed his joyous release to the walls just as she burst into a million pieces of ecstasy just as he promised she would. She collapsed on top of him exhausted from her efforts and drifted to sleep instantly.

\* \* \* \*

Andrea's eyes fluttered open. A small smile came to her face as the memory of her dream came flooding back. Her body was tired and a little sore, the kind that came from being thoroughly loved. Confusion settled into her mind making her smile fade. Abruptly she bolted to an upright with a horrified gasp as she took in her surroundings. The sound of water running in the adjoining bathroom confirmed her suspicions.

Frantically, she gathered her clothes, dressed herself quickly and ran from the room straight out the front door. It seemed like she drove the dark streets at top speed all the way back to Felixville holding her breath. She pulled into her garage, stripped off her clothes dropping them directly into the washer. Hurrying to the bathroom she ran the water as hot as she could take it and stood beneath it. As the water beat on her head and shoulders, she slid down the shower wall, sat in the tub and cried.

## Chapter Seven

Angela woke with the weight of despair crushing her soul. Christian would be back at the church for a meeting. Even though she was supposed to be there to help with lunch, she couldn't get herself to move. She laid on her back staring at the ceiling as tears ran into her ears and onto the pillow.

Her body had betrayed her. She had betrayed herself...and Christian. How could she have let her past, loneliness and frustration control her enough to walk her into adultery? How could she forgive herself? How could Christian? The tears rolled faster as she rolled over to bury her face into the pillow.

Low banging startled her awake. Sliding to the edge of her bed, she listened then wrapped herself in her robe and headed

downstairs.

“Ray! Have you lost your mind? What are doing here?” she shrieked when she opened the door.

“I had to come, Andrea. You left without saying anything. I got out the shower and you were gone.”

“Of course I was gone. I had no business being there. Surely you didn’t think I would linger.”

“I honestly didn’t know what to expect, but I thought we would at least discuss it. May I come in?”

She looked out the door both ways then gripped his collar snatching him inside. “You can’t be here.”

“I had to come. We need to talk, Andrea.”

“I think we did enough talking. You need to go.”

“Please don’t do this. We need to talk about this, about us.”

“There is no *us*, Ray. I am married to Christian. Last night should have never happened between us.”

“Please, Andrea, don’t tell me you regret what happened.”

She leaned against the door shaking her head. A jumble of emotions ran rampant within her. Regret, shame, guilt, but panic reached the surface most of all.

“Ray, you have to go.”

He held out his hand. “Please sit down. We have to talk about this.”

The unshed tears in his eyes were apparent as he pleaded with her. Tentatively she took his hand letting him lead her to the couch. Andrea stared at her fingers as she wrung her hands in her lap. Ray reached out to stop the movement. Their eyes met and instant tears flowed. He pulled her into a hug and they held each other and cried. For a long time, the only sounds in the room were their sobs. Slowly they parted and sat back with a sigh.

“You know we can’t continue this, Ray.”

He nodded. “I know.”

“I will always have love for you, but what we had is over. I fell

in love Christian long ago and I love him now. I will not leave him. Even if Christian and I can't recover from my infidelity, I will not come to you."

Ray nodded and sniffed. "The only regret I have in my life, Annie, is not coming back for you. I can't begin to tell you how many times I've kicked myself for it."

She caressed her cheek. "You can't continue to beat yourself up over—"

"No, Andrea, please." He took her hand from his face and held it kissing her knuckles. "This is one hundred percent my fault. I tricked you, manipulated you and used your feelings for me to get what I wanted. I gambled that you would feel the same way, but I should've known better. I deserve this pain."

"Ray—"

"No, please, you don't have to say anything. I love you enough to want you happy, even if it's not with me. I thought our one night would maybe rekindle that spark in your heart." He offered her a

sad smile. “I was wrong. I will abide by my word and accept the friendship you offer. If you still want that with me”

“Of course I do.”

Wiping his face, Ray walked to the door wordlessly. He pulled it opened and turned to her.

“Thank you for last night, Annie. I will never forget our time together and I will always love you.”

Andrea hugged him close for a moment then let him go forever. Ray leaned forward and she allowed him to kiss her softly on the lips. She watched him pull away from the house and then closed the door with a sigh.

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“Hello, Andrea, you’re just who I wanted to see. I wondered if you’d make it here today.”

Instant anger rushed through her body as the voice beside

brought a picture of who it was to her mind. She swallowed it and made an effort to sound pleasant.

“Hello, Stephanie, how are you?”

“Oh, I’m just fine. The question of the day is, how are *you?*”

Andrea could not hide her confusion. She turned a raised brow to her. “Me? I’m fine. Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Uh-huh. Andrea says she’s fine, Michaela.”

Andrea turned to see Stephanie’s friend approaching.

“Hmm, did she now?” Michaela said

“Hello, Michaela,” Angela said nicely, ignoring her disbelieving tone.

“Andrea,” Michaela replied in monotone.

“Well ladies, the pastor’s wife has asked me to set up the tables for lunch later so if you don’t mind...” she said rearranging paper plates and napkins along the table.

“So, Andrea, how have you been spending your free time since



Christian has been doing all the work?” Stephanie asked, not taking heed to Andrea’s dismissive tone.

“Yeah, we know you’re not that crazy about being in this poor little dirt town, so have you been going back to the city at all?”

Michaela added.

“Actually, I have. I’m in a book club out there so I go a few times a week.”

She walked over to the buffet table and they followed.

“A book club, huh? Well, that must have been who that was, Stephanie. A book club member.”

“Yes, Michaela, that must have been.”

Andrea swallowed her gasp. Her heart rate increased. She concentrated on keeping her voice calm as she rearranged the plastic silverware.

“Who must have been what?” she asked hoping her words weren’t as shaky as it felt.

“Come on, Andrea, don’t play games. We know your secret. We saw it with our own eyes,” Stephanie said moving back to her right.

Her hands shook as she placed cups on the table. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Andrea said.

“Oh no, Andrea. I think you do,” Michaela said on her other side.

“I have no—”

“Let me break it down for you then,” Stephanie said blocking her retreat. “Make no mistake, Andrea. We *do* know your secret.”

Andrea could almost hear the pounding of her heart, so hard she thought she was having a heart attack. She turned to get away from Stephanie only to bump into Michaela.

“Our first lady asked us to go by your house this morning to pick up a table cloth. Can you guess what we saw as we turned up the road to your house?”

“We saw your car and another car in your driveway,” Stephanie answered for her. “We knew it wasn’t our Christian’s car

because he wasn't back yet. Naturally we wondered who could possibly be at Christian's house at such an early hour with his wife when he wasn't there. So parked down the road and waited to see it could be."

Andrea moved around the table, but they stayed with her.

"Imagine our surprise when we saw a *man* leave the house a little while later. Not only were you in your robe, but you kissed him in the mouth d when he left!" Michaela chimed in.

Andrea stopped and tried to get a hold of her breathing before she turned to confront them. Their judgmental stares pressed down on her making her guilt rise to the surface. They folded their arms and waited prepared not to believe whatever she was about to say. Andrea took a deep breath and hoped her voice would be even, but could do nothing about the unrelenting pounding of her heart.

"It wasn't what you think. He was a friend that came over to drop something off to me. The kiss was merely a goodbye and thank you."

The accusing women looked at each other then back to her and laughed.

“Andrea, do we really look that stupid to you?” Michaela asked.

Stephanie put her hand on her friend’s shoulder. “I think under the circumstances Christian must be told that he has this type of woman in his midst. He’s such a good man. He deserves a much better woman.”

“I agree, besides, what are friend’s for?” Michaela added

“I’m an adult. I can have friends, male or female, come over at whatever time I please. I don’t have to answer to you or anyone else,” Angela protested, hoping her outburst sounded more convincing than it felt.

“How dare you play innocent with us, you tramp! I know a friendly kiss when I see one. You were in your bathroom, naked no doubt and that kiss was *way* too passionate for a married woman to give to a man other than her husband,” Stephanie scolded poking

Andrea in the chest.

“Are you still going to claim your innocence in the face of eye witness proof?” Michaela asked moving closer.

“I don’t owe you any explanations. You have no right to judge me.”

Andrea pushed pass them and quickly left the room in hopes that they wouldn’t continue to pursue her. A quick look over her shoulder told her otherwise. Picking up her pace, she ran up the stairs two at a time trying to put some distance between them.

“Have you seen my husband?” she asked the first person she saw walking around the church.

“Yes ma’am. He’s with the pastor. I believe they were on the way to his office a few minutes ago.”

“Thank you.”

Andrea hurried down the hall towards the pastor’s office.

“Hi, Stephanie. Hi, Michaela,” she heard the woman say as she

turned the corner to his office.

Andrea pushed open the office door and slammed it shut locking it behind her, but she was alone.

“Shit,” she said, leaning against the door.

Andrea looked around the room frantically and caught a glimpse of Christian and his brother out the window. She moved across the room, but not fast enough. The pastor slammed the car door shut and Christian pulled away.

“Christian!” she yelled, but he continued to drive. “Damn it!”

Banging on the door turned her head. She leaned out the window. The pastor moved toward the front of the church. The knocking continued and the door knob shook violently. Tears filled her eyes and her pulse sky rocketed. She bit her lip looking out the window then back at the door. Abruptly Andrea shoved the window up as high as it could go and threw her leg over the sill and jumped out. Pushing through the bushes and brambles scratching her unprotected legs, she peeked around the corner to the back of the

church and rushed to her car.

\* \* \* \*

“Hey, sweetheart,” Christian said, greeting her when she came through the door. He scooped her from the floor in his arms and kissed her firmly. “I missed you. I just left the church from my meeting.” He returned her to the floor and his smile disappeared. “Honey, what happened to your dress? And your legs all scratched up. What happened?”

“Oh. Well, I, umm, I had to pull something from a bushes beneath the window earlier.”

“Oh, okay. Well, I have good news to share with you,” he told her pulling her to the couch.

“Before that honey, we need to talk.”

“All right, you go first. What’s up?”

Still trying to catch her breath Andrea spoke in quick huffs.

“Christian, this isn’t easy for me. I’ve done something terrible and I’m so very sorry.”

“Baby, calm down. Nothing could be that bad.”

“But it is, Christian.”

“Relax, Andrea, everything will be all right.” His head snapped around to look over his shoulder. “Let me get that and we’ll talk in a minute, okay?”

“Wait, Christian, I—” Andrea protested but before she could reach him he was at the door. She quickly slipped into the kitchen to peek through the swinging doors.

“Hi, Stephanie. Hey, Michaela. Would you like to come in?”

“Sure. Thanks Christian. So, where’s your wife?” Stephanie asked looking around.

Christian chuckled. “I don’t know where she went. She was just here a minute ago.”

Stephanie and Michaela exchange a smug look.



“What can I do for you, ladies?” Christian asked with his hand extended.

Stephanie and Michaela took his invitation and sat on the sofa. Christian sat in the chair. Michaela smiled and nodded at her friend. They turned to face him.

“Christian, you know we go way back. We’ve been friends since we were children and we would never do anything to hurt you—” Stephanie started.

“Not on purpose, anyway,” Michaela supplied.

“Right! We wouldn’t hurt you on purpose, Christian.”

Christian leaned forward to rest on his knees. “What are you talking about?”

Andrea cringed at the words that would come next. Tears rolled down her face. She covered her mouth to stifle her sobs.

“Okay, Christian, I’ll just be blunt. It’s about your wife.”

Michaela smiled nodding in agreement. “Yes, Chris. We saw

her do something she had no business doing. And we feel you have a right to know what kind of woman she really is.”

Christian held up a hand and jumped to his feet. “Stop right there. I don’t want to hear another word.”

“We came over here this morning and saw your wife—”

“I said stop! This conversation is over. I’m going to have to ask you to leave.”

He walked to the door and opened it.

“Chris, we have to tell you what we saw. It’s for your own good,” Stephanie said.

“No you don’t. I said leave.”

“You have to know what we saw, Christian,” Michaela insisted.

“No!”

His tone so sharp the women jumped back with wide eyes.

“Listen to me. We are not having this conversation. Whatever happens between me and my wife is none of your business.

Whatever you think you saw if my wife feels it necessary to let me know, she will tell me.” He pulled the door open a little wider.

“Please leave.”

Michaela shrugged and followed Stephanie out the door. Christian closed the door with a loud slam and let his head fall against it. Andrea came from the kitchen and stood behind him. He turned around.

“We have been married too long for drama like that,” he murmured.

“Christian, I’ve been so foolish. I’ve made a terrible mistake,” Andrea confessed between sobs.

Christian shook his head. “I don’t want to hear it.”

“Christian, please, let me speak. I’m so sorry.”

“No, Andrea. I think I have a pretty good idea of what they were going to tell me. I don’t need to hear the details. I didn’t want to hear it from them and I don’t want to hear them from you.”

He walked to the couch and sat heavily. Andrea followed

sitting beside him.

“I know you’re angry with me, Christian. I’m so very sorry.”

Christian sighed and sat back against the cushion. “I can’t deny that I’m angry, Andrea, but if I’m honest I have to wonder if I’m just as much to blame for this *terrible* mistake of yours.”

Andrea wiped her eyes. “What?”

He turned to face her. “I have been neglecting you, haven’t I?”

Andrea sniffed and pressed her lips together.

He nodded. “Yes, I have. You have to know that it wasn’t intentional.”

“Of course I know.”

“I guess I got so caught up in making the business the best it could be *for* us that I almost forgot *about* us,” he confessed.

“What— What do you mean?”

Christian took her hands in his and kissed her knuckles.

“Whatever happened is just as much my fault as it was yours. My

actions or lack thereof was the catalyst creating a fisher for someone to step into. I want the company to succeed, but not at the cost of losing what we have. Nothing is worth that.”

“Christian, I—”

He pressed his finger to her lips. “Listen to me. I don’t need the details. I know our marriage has taken a heavy blow, but I’m willing to do whatever it takes to fix it starting right here and now. Are you?”

Instant tears filled her eyes, not born of fear, but of new love filling her heart for her husband.

He wiped away her tears and kissed her gently. “Will you forgive me for my part of the damage?”

Andrea nodded. “If you can forgive me I will gladly forgive you.”

Wrapping his arms around her waist he pulled her closer and kissed her again. “Of course, sweetheart. I love you, through good times and bad, til death do us part.”

Andrea’s soul flooded with relief as she fell forward into

Christian's embrace. She held him tight for a long time.

"Thank you for getting rid of Stephanie and Michaela," She said releasing him.

He laughed. "It was the least I could do. They looked like they were enjoying themselves *way* too much by telling me whatever it was about you. Anything that was making them that happy could do nothing but hurt you and I couldn't allow that. Besides they were trouble makers when we were kids, too. I knew they had to be up no good."

"Thank you, honey. I'm going to do everything I can to make our marriage better."

"And I'm going to be right here working with you," he added, dropping a kiss on her lips.

"That sounds perfect, but, what about the business? You can't stay home with me every day."

A happy smile burst across his face. "That's right, I haven't told you the good news yet! Hold on."

Christian left her on the couch and darted into the kitchen. A few moments later he returned and shoved a stack of papers at her. She stood to accept them.

“Thanks to this project and my brother’s good word, I have eight other fairly large projects lined up into the next two years. Some of the prospects have given me down payments for the jobs as good faith money and Meyers Construction wants to discuss a partnership with me,” he explained excitedly.

“That’s wonderful, Christian! I’m so proud of you.”

“Now that doesn’t mean I won’t have to go away on meetings, but if I partner with Jeff Meyers our company will be Cooper and Meyers Construction and we will share those responsibilities.”

“That’s sound reasonable.”

He smiled and pulled her closer to him blatantly rubbing his pelvis against her. “I was thinking that, if it’s okay with you, you could come with me on some of my trips and we can make it a romantic getaway kind of thing.”

She wrapped her arms around his shoulders. "I'd like that."

"I'm glad you approve. Remember all those suggestions you used to come up with that I said we would try one day but we haven't done them yet?" he asked.

She nodded letting out a giddy laugh. "Yes."

Andrea did not resist when Christian guided her to sit on the coffee table. He pushed the pictures and runner to the floor out of the way. Goosebumps rose on her skin as exhilaration soared through her being as he pressed her shoulders to ease her back.

"Well, those days are over. Feel free to pull those out of your hat," he added with a sly grin. "I'm open to any and all suggestions."

All the things she had buried away thinking Christian wouldn't likely do rose quickly to her mind and she smiled. She closed her eyes to better enjoy the obvious kisses on her neck as he unbuttoned her blouse.

"I think I can come up with—" A gasp ended her sentence as



she lifted her head from the table. “Christian, what are you doing?” she asked wide eyed.

“Just letting the urges take over, baby,” he answered, dropping her panties on the floor. He pushed her legs apart. “I don’t know why I stopped doing this, but I promise I won’t let it happen again,” he vowed.

Christian pushed his face between her legs. He licked and sucked until walls rang with her cries of release.

“Christian, that was incredible. You were wonderful.”

“Oh no, my sweet, Andrea. It is you that is wonderful and I won’t forget it again.”

He reached for her hands pulling her off the table and on top of him as he lay back onto the floor. She landed on his chest and laughed.

“Christian, what—”

“Well, it just occurred to me that you asked several times before if we could do this position,” he explained pushing her blouse

off her shoulders.

“Yes, I remember, but—”

He shook his head sliding his hands over her body. “No more butts. Whatever you want to do or try from now on is what we do at our next opportunity. All right?”

She nodded agreement and moved back to help him pull his pants down.

“Good. Now where were we?”

The huskiness of lust had returned to his voice along with the dominating edge she remembered and loved. She obeyed the subtle direction. Without hesitation Andrea reached back to grip his already hard penis to adjust him. She rose to hover over him briefly then lowered herself onto his erection.

The guttural moans that escaped her came from deep within her chest and rumbled through her body. The sounds Christian sent up to mingle with hers were unlike any she had heard from him. They were almost primal. She held her movement and looked

down at him. The look on his handsome face could only be caused by ultimate pleasure. Suddenly, his eyes sprang open. Andrea took in a quick breath. The flames that burned behind Christian's eyes singed her very soul. His gaze held her in place. She was almost afraid to blink unwilling to break their connection. He gripped her hips and moved her. An all-encompassing feeling warmed her insides. That wonderful, sweet, stirring began to build quickly. His cries of passion fed her arousal.

Andrea leaned forward to palm the floor above his head to control the rhythm they had. She moved wildly over him, slamming herself onto his straining erection wanting more of it.

“Andrea, you look incredible from this angle,” he panted. He reached up to caress each breast. “I had no idea it would enjoy this so much.”

Christian's words, his panting, his moans all pushed her closer to glory intensifying everything she felt. His strong hands held her hips again taking control back bouncing her on him until

his climatic howls filled her ears. The sound triggered her flight to ecstasy. Angela collapsed on top of him breathing raggedly. Christian wrapped his arms around her and she smiled. In her mind's eye she tore down the chart she had been marking for so long. She had her old Christian back and she couldn't be happier. There was no doubt in her mind that she made the right choice marrying Christian. She lay on his chest enjoying the rhythm of his breathing and his heartbeat. Suddenly the soft rumble of his laughter vibrated through his torso shaking her. Andrea pushed herself up and looked down at him.

“What?”

“I was just thinking; the month is up next week. That gives us plenty of time to mark each room of this house before we leave.”

She laughed. “Are you ready for that so soon? How do you feel?”

“It's true, I'm not as young as I used to be, but tomorrow is Sunday I can sleep all day if I have to...unless you *want* to go to

church. Surely you'll want to see your friends Stephanie and Michaela at least one more time," he added with a laughing grin.

Andrea twisted her lips. "Yeah right! Let's do the kitchen next!" she said pulling him to his feet.

Andrea and Christian laughed happily as they playfully ran into the kitchen to start to their new life.

**The End**

**Coming Soon!**

**Book 3: Happily Ever After...**

***By Any Means Necessary Series***

***Seducing Mr. Jefferson***

Once upon a time Daniel Jefferson couldn't keep his hands off his wife Kamiah, but lately that had not been the case. Had he become accustomed to her and no longer found her exciting after only five years of marriage? She hoped not, but luckily for Kamiah she had friends with a few ideas up their sleeves in case he did.

## ***Learn More About Dana Littlejohn***

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