

Meeting a mysterious woman in a bar, Deirdre's life begins to change. Alice discovers the abuse that Deirdre has been experiencing at the hands of her handsome and powerful husband. But what can a petite woman such as Alice do to help her out of this bad situation? And what will she want in exchange for that help?

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MEINEL

Mysterious

Malice

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MYSTERIOUS MALICE

Book 1

She looked around the nightclub, bored with the whole scene. It was the same old, same old: the same people, the same corny come-ons, the same drinks, and the same dance moves. She wasn't going to stay. As she made her way towards the end of the bar heading for the exit, her shoulder ran into another woman.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” the woman exclaimed as they collided painfully.

“Are you okay?” she asked, concerned, seeing that the woman was obviously upset.

“Yeah, fine. I just have to find my friends and get out of here,” she answered distractedly, and then she really looked at the woman she had crashed into.

She was worth a second look. Not too tall. Slender, but not too slender, with curves in all the right places. Blonde, but not your stereotype

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of blonde looks. Her pert, little nose sat over lush, little lips that ached to be kissed, to be ravished. Her big, brown eyes were so pale they looked almost yellow. They were framed by dramatically brown and impeccably plucked eyebrows. The whole package was enticing, exciting, and while not beautiful, very attractive.

“Well, it’s packed in there,” the blonde pointed over her shoulder with her thumb, “You’d do better to sit at the bar and wait for your friends to show up,” she advised.

The other woman nodded anxiously as she looked out over the crowd. There was no way she was going to spot her friends in the crush. She had to admit the blonde was right. “Well, will you wait with me? I could buy you a drink. It’s the least I could do for nearly knocking you down.”

The blonde looked her over for a moment, speculatively, and agreed, heading back to the bar. In that moment she registered the brunette’s long, streaked hair, boyishly slim body, and girl-next-door looks. She had freckles sprinkled across her nose and cheeks, her eyes were a gray blue, and her stubborn little chin invited someone to argue with her. Her straight, white teeth gleamed in the club lights.

“What are you drinking?” she asked as she signaled the bartender.

“I’ll take a Shirley Temple,” the blonde said with a straight face.

“Are you serious?” the brunette asked with a grin and a raised eyebrow. *No one* drank Shirley Temples anymore.

“Very,” the blonde answered with a look that challenged the brunette to say more.

The brunette turned back to place their order then turned and held out her hand, “Hi, I’m Deirdre,” she said with her already familiar grin.

“Alice,” the blonde answered, shaking the proffered hand.

“So, you were leaving?”



“Yeah, this place and a million like them gets old after a while,” she shrugged dismissively.

“I can see that,” the brunette said, nodding as she looked around on the floor for her missing friends.

“You seemed upset?” Alice asked, opening the conversation.

“Yeah, I just got some shit news. That’s why I was looking for my friends,” she confided, and then wondered why she had. She immediately felt the anxiety that had dissipated begin to rise again. Something about the blonde was easygoing, easy to share with. The drinks arrived and Deirdre put a ten spot on the counter of the bar.

“Care to elaborate?” Alice took a sip of her red, fruity drink.

Deirdre shrugged dismissively as she took a healthy slug of her Scotch and soda.

“Easy there,” Alice warned, concerned.

“Well, it won’t matter anyway. I’m up shit creek when I get home,” the brunette shrugged, but Alice could see something in her look.

“Why won’t it matter? What’s at home?”

Deirdre looked at the relative stranger and wondered if she should confide or not. She didn’t know this woman at all; she was a faceless nobody. Maybe she should tell someone, anyone, but fear made her hold back. “I got a call from my husband. He just got home and is pissed that I’m not there.”

Alice didn’t know why, but she was disappointed, and then she noted the telltale rings on the woman’s left hand, an impressive set of diamonds. ‘Fool,’ she told herself. “Why is he pissed?”

Deirdre wondered about telling this stranger her problems and then figured, *what the hell*. She didn’t know her and she would probably judge

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her anyway. She shrugged, “Because I’m not there and I didn’t ask permission to go out with my friends.”

“Permission?” Alice considered the word, her ire rising at the thought of what that implied. An independent woman herself, she bristled at the word.

Deirdre signaled for another drink and held up two fingers to indicate a double.

Alice looked concerned. “Drinking away the hubby?” she asked with a hint of sarcasm.

Deirdre looked back at the attractive blonde. Her eyes were almost glowing in this light, a fascinating and eerie yellow. It had to be a trick of the light... “Well, it will hurt less,” she blurted out and then cursed herself for a fool for letting this stranger know.

“He hurts you?” Alice asked, to be sure, to clarify.

The Scotch was burning through her system, the one in her hand now combining with her earlier drinks, loosening her tongue. She nodded, shamefaced, and looked down at her drink. Her self-esteem was nonexistent anyway. What did it matter what this stranger thought of her?

“Deirdre,” Alice touched her shoulder, almost hesitantly. “Can’t you go somewhere, get some help?”

Deirdre looked up at the compassion-filled yellow eyes. She didn’t see pity, she saw anger on her behalf. And she saw something else...almost an excitement, but undefinable. “I’ve tried that,” she said disgustedly. “You don’t realize how powerful he is. He bought off one person and threatened to kill me if I told anyone again.”

Gently, Alice said, “You told me.”

“Yeah, but you’re a stranger. What can you do?” She believed it too.



'If only you knew,' Alice almost answered. Instead, she said with a shrug, "I can listen."

They shared a second drink together and more conversation. By then, Deirdre was pretty much feeling no pain, which had been her point.

"Hey, let's dance," Alice finally said, waving away the bartender so he wouldn't bring Deirdre another double Scotch.

"I really don't feel like it," Deirdre slurred slightly.

"I'm sure you don't, but your friends aren't showing up and I want to dance. Come on," the blonde implored, and surprised, Deirdre found herself on the dance floor.

The DJ was playing some eighties' tunes and the two ladies had fun gyrating to the beat. One dance turned into two and Deirdre found herself relaxing a little, not thinking as much about what awaited her when she got home. As the music turned to a slow beat, she found herself in Alice's arms, moving a slow shuffle two-step to the sounds of a romantic ballad. She looked down into Alice's eyes and realized they indeed looked yellow, but also hypnotic, concerned, and warm. Without realizing it, she impulsively leaned in and gently kissed her newfound friend.

Alice captured the offered lips and quickly mastered them, swiftly taking control of the situation. She was already holding the brunette close from the dance and she moved slightly, gently, their hips rubbing suggestively together as they kissed.

'Wow, what a kisser!' thought Deirdre as she enjoyed her first girl/girl kiss. Not too wet, firm, and inquiring. Alice let Deirdre think she was in charge as she encouraged, enjoyed, and loved every moment of it. Slowly, reluctantly, Deirdre pulled back and looked down to see Alice's reaction. The look she received made her heart go pitter pat.

"Hey, Deirdre. There you are!" a voice interrupted their dance.

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Deirdre looked up at two women who were standing there, looking at them inquiringly. “Oh, hi,” she said dreamily, her arms still around Alice, swaying to the music. “Where have YOU been?” she asked defensively, wondering if they had seen her kiss this woman.

“We’ve been looking for YOU!” she returned harshly. “Carl called and we’re to take you home immediately!”

Deirdre could feel herself falling into the same old trap. Carl called and everyone jumped. They did his bidding as though they were robots. She stopped dancing and stood there, her arms dropping to her sides as she reluctantly decided to go with her friends as commanded.

Alice felt her hackles rise at the obvious demands of Deirdre’s friends and the absent husband. “Oh, Deirdre said he called earlier. I’m giving her a ride home,” she said innocently to the friends, wondering if they would buy it.

“Who the HELL are you?” the one speaking for the pair demanded.

“I’m Alice,” she said as though they should KNOW.

“Well, Alice, Carl called US and WE are taking Deirdre home,” she said smugly.

Before Alice could get angry, Deirdre answered, “Uh, you heard her, she is taking me home. We are just finishing our dance here.”

The two women looked at Deirdre in surprise and then searched her eyes to see if she was lying. Her innocent look fooled them. “Oh, uh, okay,” she backed off, shrugging. It was her problem, not theirs; they were just trying to do what Carl wanted. “Well then, I guess I’ll call you tomorrow,” she said. The two of them nodded and walked away with only a glance or two over their shoulders.

“Thank you,” Deirdre expressed her heartfelt gratitude to Alice.

“For what?” Alice asked.



Taking a deep breath, Deirdre answered, “For helping me to find the guts for a second.”

Alice nodded as though she understood, and perhaps she did. They finished their dance, holding each other marginally closer.

“So, where do you live?” Alice asked a while later as she drove the woman home.

“Beverly Hills,” Deirdre answered, as though it were the most disgusting place to go.

“Really?” Alice asked, surprised. A Hollywood wife? She wondered....

“Yeah, Carl insists...Must keep up appearances,” she answered tiredly, the drinks and their exertions on the dance floor catching up with her.

“You know, you don’t have to go home,” Alice offered, almost offhand.

“I don’t?” she asked, stupidly.

Alice shook her head and answered, “No, you can come home with me. He’s already angry. Will he be angrier if you’re even later?”

Deirdre considered for a moment what that implied and then said, “Okay, take me to your place.”

Alice glanced over, but in the dim light of the car was unable to see what the other woman was really thinking. She shrugged. *‘Take it as it comes,’* was what she thought.

She drove down to Marina Del Rey and this time Deirdre was the one surprised at the pretty, little condo they pulled up next to. She hadn’t thought twice about the Porsche she had gotten into and the money it implied, but a condo in Marina Del Rey? That said something.

Alice escorted Deirdre inside and flipped on the lights. A little kitchen led to a sunken living room with a view over the marina, a boat sitting at a

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private dock. With a flick of a button, the drapes and curtains closed automatically. Alice escorted her through the living room to a set of stairs that led to an office, a spare bedroom, a bathroom, and then another set of stairs that led to a loft and a large master bedroom with a king-sized bed and its own bathroom.

“I think I should tell you I have no experience in this. Carl asked, but I’ve never...” she left off, embarrassed.

“I know. It’s okay,” Alice told her, her yellow eyes glittering now, or so Deirdre thought.

“Do you do this often?” Deirdre asked, nervously.

Smiling slightly, Alice shook her head. “Relax, I’m not going to eat you...at least not yet,” she joked.

Deirdre laughed at the crude joke and leaned in to kiss the blonde.

Alice knew what she was doing as she seduced the willing brunette. A desperate, abused housewife was prime prey for the likes of Alice. Sure, she would like to find love, like every other lesbian in that joint, but she seemed to attract the desperate, the lonely, or the needy. She rarely found a woman that matched her tastes, her needs, and her secret passions. Well, she had NEVER found one that shared her secret passions, but then she knew, statistically speaking, she was a rare bird. Meanwhile, she had a willing woman in her arms, knew what she was doing, and was going to enjoy her while it lasted.

Deirdre was surprised how gentle Alice was. Alice’s lips were so soft, so delicious, as they kissed her. They softly pried open her mouth to hesitantly thrust a tongue inside, playing with her partner’s tongue, tasting the drinks she had earlier, and caressing every inch of her tongue. This enticed Deirdre’s own tongue to plunge inside Alice’s mouth to taste, caress, and play. She groaned softly when Alice sucked gently on her



tongue. It made a corresponding tug in her crotch that had her realizing, for the first time in her life, how attracted she was to a woman, this woman.

Alice gently began to undress the pretty girl-next-door. The oh-so-innocent looks were a turn-on and she unwrapped her from her expensive dress as though she were a delicate flower, a beautiful gift that deserved the respect and adoration that only another woman could offer.

Deirdre wasn't used to the foreplay that Alice was plying on her. Carl was a selfish man, a selfish lover, and took only what he wanted, when he wanted it. He wanted it a lot, mostly because he sensed her reluctance and this excited him. In a time when her friends complained how their husbands ignored them and chased younger, more beautiful women, she had thought something was wrong with her when her randy husband's advances left her cold. This warmth, this caring, was exquisite and she wasn't sure how to accept it gracefully.

She didn't have to worry though, Alice was gentle, generous, and loving. Alice slipped the dress from Deirdre's shoulders and the slip followed. Standing there in Victoria's Secret's latest apparel, she thought it a shame that the brunette's beautiful breasts looked painfully held up by the push-up bra she was wearing. She released the twins from their imprisonment and they spilled onto her welcoming face. She kissed, licked, and suckled them passionately, adoring them with her hands, earning an indrawn breath and a groan from Deirdre as she lavished attention on them.

Used to having them grasped painfully by her husband, she had become immune to tender play, or so she thought. The adoration that Alice was showering on her breasts made her feel beautiful, loved, and wanted; not for what her body could give her partner, but for herself. She began to

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undress Alice, who stopped for a moment to strip off her own dress and underwear, then stood there unashamed as Deirdre looked at her in astonishment.

Hidden under that dress were two large mammaries, which looked incredible on the petite blonde. She stood there unembarrassed, proud, and sexy....

They came together and Alice quickly stripped the thong from Deirdre's slender body, kissing her way south as she stood there, her hands clutching at Alice with a need that only the blonde could satisfy. Alice stood back up and forcefully held her close, feeling her body against her own, letting the woman feel another woman's body against her for the first time. Slowly, she maneuvered her against one of the walls and moved her hands up and down the brunette's body, arousing her with heated caresses, kissing her deeply, passionately, and deliberately, enjoying the feel of her body against her.

Deirdre sobbed into her mouth, not used to her own passion being aroused, used to being taken. While that had seemed exciting at one time, she could no longer remember what it was like to have someone take the time to excite her, to arouse her, to take the time focus on *her*.

Alice reached up and down the slender girl's body, squeezing her ass gently, pulling her hips closer to her own. They were not matched in height, but that was to her benefit. Her body fit right against the Hollywood wife's, shaved V and she used her body to seduce; to rub enticingly, suggestively, erotically against the taller woman. She had her trapped against the wall and as she sensed her legs wanted to give out, to fall to the floor, or better yet the huge bed that took up the center of the room, she used every advantage she had against the brunette, to their mutual benefit. Long, deep, and passionate kisses were getting the



brunette aroused. Alice's hands were enjoying the feel of her slender body. She raised one of Deirdre's legs and wrapped it around the curve of her own hip, which widened the gap between her legs, left her unbalanced on one leg, and left her strangely vulnerable and dependent on the petite blonde. She teased with her hand, caressing lower, making the brunette's body beg to be touched where her legs came together. She sensed Deirdre's need in her body's reaction to the teasing. Unconsciously, the brunette was signaling she needed to be ravaged, to be royally screwed by Alice's fingers, to be fulfilled by what she and only she could give her. Alice's body began to dance against her, thrusting slightly as she imitated what Deirdre needed, but not fulfilling her...not yet. Her hands teased around her hips, her ass, her lower stomach until Deirdre was mewing into her mouth, looking for that fulfillment. Alice touched along her mound, feeling her way towards the wetness she knew was waiting for her.

Deirdre needed whatever Alice was willing to give her. Her body was relaxed from the alcohol she had consumed, but she had recovered enough to know she wanted this petite blonde. For the first time in her life she craved a woman's touch. She wanted to be royally screwed by a stranger. Her body was screaming out for an orgasm, one that was not given by her own hand. For years, her husband had taken his pleasure without a thought for her own and her body craved the release that was very different from self-service. It craved the feeling that another human being gave you, that allowed you to let go when you weren't concentrating on doing it to yourself. She let her body take over, let it tell Alice that she needed her, wanted her, and was hers for the taking.

Alice knew exactly what she was doing to the inexperienced housewife; she was a connoisseur of beautiful woman flesh. She understood unwritten body clues better than this woman, or most men

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could understand. She had made a career out of it, but then in her line of work it was necessary to observe more than the average person did. She knew it was a sickness sometimes, but other times, like now, it was a benefit. She wasn't going to question her gifts, she was going to take advantage of them.

Slowly, deliberately, she had the taller woman's body begging to be taken. She played with her victim as she unconsciously sent off 'screw me' signals. She began to caress, circling closer to the core of this woman she held so easily against the wall. Her body simulated what she wanted so badly as she thrust gently against her, her fingers taunting her flesh with what they could give, would give, would take gladly. Her fingers *casually* brushed against her lover's bald, lower lips as her upper lips sucked, caressed, and teased at the taller woman's mouth, which was whining against her in supplication...asking, no begging for release. With the casual brush, she could tell the woman couldn't take much more and she deliberately parted those lower lips and sought out the button another woman knows instinctively. The woman's body bucked beneath her hand. She could immediately feel a small amount of wetness that had leaked out on the button. Her fingers pressed lightly. Deirdre whimpered for more. Alice decided to put her out of her misery despite her own need to play with her food.

Deirdre was on fire. She couldn't, wouldn't be able to stand there much longer. If not for the wall against her back, she would have fallen already. The blonde couldn't support her much longer, but with her leg wrapped around Alice, she ached to feel her touch, to relieve this awful, wonderful need that was rising inside her. She clutched at her lover, feeling her hands run through her blonde hair, along her shoulders, her nails curling into the smaller woman's shoulders, unconsciously digging in



as she felt emotions she hadn't dealt with in years. She let Alice know in a million different ways that she wanted her, wanted what she could give her, what she badly needed.

Alice didn't leave her waiting anymore. She took the palm of her hand and deliberately pushed against her mound as her finger spread the nether lips and felt her wetness fully. Her own leg and mound were already becoming wet as the taller woman dripped down from between her legs. Alice's fingers played with it only momentarily as they bypassed the obviously engorged button that waited to be pressed, tweaked, and rubbed. She plunged first one, then two, and then, amazingly, three fingers into the tight passage, plunging immediately and using the heel of her hand against the button standing so erect, causing friction and pressure that Deirdre instantaneously responded to.

"Oh, my gawd," Deirdre cried when she had a moment of air as Alice ravished her mouth, her body, and released her lips to kiss, nibble, and suck along her jaw towards her ear.

Alice returned to Deirdre's mouth as she ravished the willing brunette, plunging inside over and over, her hand and arm pistoning inside her victim, using the heel of her hand to twist and grind against Deirdre's clit. The combination soon had the taller woman crying out and bucking against her in the first of her orgasms. Alice didn't let up until she had wrung a second one from her, then she pushed the leg of her confused victim down off her body, pivoted her around, and pushed her down on the large bed that was waiting for them, lowering herself immediately on top of Deirdre. She impatiently pushed between her victim's legs, capturing the still erect clit of the surprised brunette in her mouth and ravishing her to higher highs. She threw Deirdre's legs over her shoulders and licked

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and sucked her way as her fingers returned and screwed her victim harder and more enthusiastically.

Deirdre rose off the bed in an arch that predicated an ear-shattering orgasm. She grabbed the bedclothes in her fists as her body arched unnaturally at the attack on her clit and vagina. “Ahhhhhhh,” she screeched out as she bucked against Alice’s mouth, enjoying the third and mind-shattering orgasm.

Deirdre was so wet, Alice could barely hold on. She felt the woman ejaculate against her chin and chest and slowly she let her come down from the incredible high. Alice had finished it satisfactorily for them both. She crawled up the slender woman’s body and began to hump against her, spreading her legs over both sides of the woman’s hips so her mound ground down on the brunette’s own soused one. Combining their juices made Alice even more excited than she had been.

As Deirdre became aware of herself again, she wrapped her arms around the lush blonde and caressed her to the best of her ability, encouraging her, having no idea how to help her achieve what she obviously needed. She was fascinated to see the yellow eyes glow as Alice’s lids opened and shut and she ground her mound against Deirdre’s satisfied body. Deirdre could feel the hair from Alice’s manicured, but not shaven mound and she could feel the wetness between her own legs combining with Alice’s as she ground and thrust against her.

“Oh, OH, OHHH,” Alice let out as she came against her. It wasn’t the best orgasm she had ever had, but she had enjoyed herself enough. She ground for a while longer, knowing she could have had a second, but satisfied with the first. Sometimes a second was just that, a second, and not nearly as fulfilling as just enjoying her partner’s satisfaction. She slowly came down and panted against the brunette. Finally, she rolled to



her side, and when she got her breath back she looked over and asked, concerned, “Are you okay?”

Deirdre looked at her, almost in shock, and nodded. She swallowed a few times before asking, “You have to ask?” and then grinning. She hadn’t felt this good in a long time. She felt no guilt for some reason. Alice had been generous in what she had done to her and for her, so she leaned down and kissed the blonde and said a heartfelt, “Thank you.”

Alice smiled. She understood. Gently, she caressed the other woman, calming her overheated body and enjoying the post-coital bliss they were both experiencing, feeling small spasms of pleasure still coursing through her satisfied body.

As she caressed the brunette, she examined her closer, noting distinct differences in their bodies, yet enjoying those differences and enjoying the feel of Deirdre’s body relaxed against her. She saw the various bruises in numerous states of healing: from the dark black ones, to the lighter green and brown ones, to the red and fading ones. All of them were in unobtrusive spots where her clothing wouldn’t reveal them, but maximized the punishment his fists must inflict.

Occasionally, a caress had Deirdre flinching slightly, but she ignored the pain. The hands felt too good to her starved body and she didn’t want Alice to stop. She couldn’t see the now glowing yellow eyes that were angry, deeply and chillingly livid at the bruises she could now see. Slowly she stilled her roving hands. Propping her head up on the other woman’s shoulder, she said softly, “Come on, we both need a quick shower. I better be getting you home.”

“He is going to be so angry,” Deirdre fretted as Alice walked her to the Porsche later. The lovemaking, a shower, and a cup of coffee had her

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thinking straight again. She laughed in her own frightened mind at the phrase *'thinking straight.'*

Alice held her hand and stopped her next to the pearl-colored Porsche, "Hey, let me handle it, okay?"

Deirdre looked down at her. They were both dressed in the same dresses as before, their makeup touched up after their intense lovemaking and the quick shower that had washed away their passion and sweat. She wondered what the petite blonde could possibly do. "You don't understand. I should have left with my friends when he called..."

Alice took up her other hand and silenced her with it, one finger against her lips, which were slightly swollen from the intensity of their passion. "Trust me. I know how to deal with irate men. It's a specialty of mine," she confided with a smile.

"But..." Deirdre began, confused, wondering what the petite blonde could possibly do to keep Carl from hurting her over her tardiness. She had glanced at her cell and saw she had missed three calls from him already.

"Give me your cell," Alice reached out her hand for it.

Deirdre handed it to her with a questioning look in her eyes.

"Is this insured?" she asked as she looked up at her. At Deirdre's nod, she very deliberately threw it to the pavement where it immediately shattered.

"What the hell?" Deirdre asked in consternation.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Deirdre. That man who jostled you when we were going to the car broke your phone," she intoned in a false voice and looked intently at Deirdre to see if she would catch on. She picked up the shattered phone from the pavement.



Deirdre broke out in a grin. She didn't care at all about the broken cell, but realized Alice had provided her with a plausible excuse for not getting his calls. And then she had another thought and her face fell again, "He will ask why I didn't use yours."

Alice helped her into the front seat of the Porsche, tucking her in, and handed her the now ruined phone to hold. "I left my phone at home," she flicked her head at the condo they just left and grinned.

Deirdre laughed as Alice got behind the wheel of the expensive car, but wondered to herself if she could lie convincingly to her husband. "That doesn't explain the time lapse though. He will question my friends."

Alice started the engine. It purred and she put it into gear. It could have roared, but she held her foot off the gas so her neighbors wouldn't hear its engine. "Well, I'm sorry the AAA guys couldn't get to us quicker, but apparently they were super busy tonight with car accidents and a changed tire was the least of their priorities. After all, try to find a pay phone nowadays..." she once again intoned in a false voice and then exchanged a grin with the now delighted Deirdre.

It really was plausible that AAA had taken a while and Alice was right, finding a pay phone these days was impossible. Those little boxes along the highway weren't on the regular roadways either. She relaxed marginally. She knew it was inevitable that she was in for it, but it didn't hold the terror it had earlier. The lies bought her a margin of credibility, a margin that might mean the difference between being berated or being beaten.

"So, how did you meet Carl?" Alice asked casually as they drove along. There was nothing innocent about the question though. She drew out Deirdre as they drove. She learned a lot more about Deirdre than Deirdre learned about her. She never shared much more than her body;

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she knew better. Intimacy, physical intimacy, was one thing. Letting anyone in her head or her life too much was another thing.

Deirdre found once again that Alice was easy to talk to. She asked leading questions and learned a lot about Deirdre, much more than Deirdre intended to share. She didn't know if it was the fact that they had shared so much in a relatively short time and she had enjoyed herself immensely, but she felt comfortable with Alice. She confided more with her than she had with anyone in a long time.

Alice listened intently, already forming plans in her mind. The lies they would now share with Carl were the beginning. Well, she admitted wryly, the lovemaking had been the beginning, but her eyes glittered as she anticipated possible plans and what they could mean for them both.

Deirdre directed her through the confusing hills that meant they were in Beverly Hills. They were granted entry into one of the exclusive canyons and quickly rose and wove through them to another set of gates that opened under Alice's fingers on the keypad. Deirdre could feel her anxiety returning, but felt a little braver with the smaller blonde beside her. As they pulled up in front of the large mansion, she released her seatbelt and took a deep breath.

"It will be okay, let me handle this," Alice told her.

Strangely, Deirdre wasn't questioning that the blonde could handle this, but then she didn't know Carl and how powerful he was. They got out of the Porsche and walked to the front door. Deirdre hadn't even finished putting her key in the lock when the door was yanked open and a tall man stood there glowering at her. "Where the HELL have you been?" he asked, ominously.

Alice assessed him as he hadn't seen her straightaway. Large, confident, and handsome, he was a stereotype in this city of stereotypes:



money, good looks, and power that corrupts. Deirdre had told her he was an investment banker for one of the larger firms in Beverly Hills and she recognized the name. Access to millions of dollars made him very wealthy with what he could turn that money into. She had been bought as a trophy wife, someone he could mold to his needs...her needs didn't enter the equation. She was provided a roof over her head, a place to lay it, and a bed to spread her legs for him. Alice smiled and pushed herself forward with her hand outstretched. No bully wants his behavior observed by the casual observer. "Hello, I'm Alice Weaver," she said, brightly.

He blinked for a moment, the rage in his eyes subsiding as he realized he had an audience. His perfectly smooth persona returned in an instant and he took her proffered and delicate, little hand. "Carl Spaulding," he charmingly returned the greeting. He glanced beyond her at the Porsche, noting its expensive coloring and style. It immediately registered in his mind that this woman had money, a lot of it by the looks of her car. While her name rang no bells, one never knew, and he immediately began to tread carefully.

"I'm sooo sorry for the delay in getting Deirdre home," her voice oozed sincerity. "It's entirely MY fault," she smiled enchantingly. Using her momentary handhold to her advantage, she squeezed slightly, meaningfully, as she smiled up at him, using her other hand to bring it up and engulf his much larger one in its caress, sending unconscious signals to his brain.

"Your fault?" he repeated as she released his hand. It tingled a little, but he dismissed that in his mind. The squeeze, though, had been more than a courteous handshake and he realized that as he examined the strange woman.

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“Yes, I need to get new tires,” she pointed over her shoulder with her thumb at the Porsche. “We left the club to meet you and on our drive back here I got a flat. AAA took forever, but then it’s Saturday night and I’m sure they had a lot of accidents tonight,” she lied convincingly, looking him straight in the eye, knowing a man such as Carl would appreciate this in his business dealings and in personal dealings. If she looked away, he would have doubted her tale, her integrity. He didn’t know her and her confident manner fooled him.

He glanced at his wife, satisfied that she looked chastised and frightened. It fed his ego to know she kowtowed to him, that she obeyed his every command. “That’s what happened?” he asked her as she nodded, not daring to speak. “What about your cell?” he quickly asked, not sure what he hoped to catch her in, but not quite accepting everything at face value.

“I dr...dropped it,” she said in a quavering voice. It was just enough for him to believe her, to snort derisively at her clumsiness.

“You broke it? Again?” he asked, sarcastically.

Deirdre held up the shattered phone to show him.

“We’ll discuss this inside,” he said shortly, dismissively.

“Let’s do,” Alice said, taking charge again, and much to Carl’s surprise, he found himself leading her on his arm into the foyer of his home. “Deirdre and I met tonight and I think it was fate,” she smiled up at the handsome man, so sure of himself and his allure. She was going to use that against him.

“Fate?” he asked, unsure. He was still trying to figure out how she had come to be standing in his home.



Deirdre followed and watched as Alice expertly manipulated Carl, astounded how easily she had done it thus far and on such short acquaintance.

Alice smiled. She knew her abilities and used them unmercifully on women and men such as Carl. “Yes, fate. You know the club we met at tonight?” she asked, guessing that the two women who had been with Deirdre had told him, perhaps to get Deirdre in trouble, but she was going to turn it around on them and on him.

“Yes, and that’s another thing...” he began as he looked ominously at Deirdre who suddenly looked frightened again.

“Well, Deirdre and I hit it off, you know...” Alice interrupted smoothly and with enough insinuation that Carl’s attention was captured.

Deirdre gasped slightly. Was Alice going to tell him they had sex?

Alice licked her generous lips and looked enticingly up at the attractive man, “Yes, and she confided that you might be interested in meeting me.”

This innuendo had Carl’s full attention. “She approached you?” he scoffed, looking at his mouse of a wife for confirmation. She looked miserable enough and uncomfortable enough that he knew there was no way she would do what this blonde was telling him.

“Well, no, but as she was waiting for her friends, she mentioned that I might be your type, and as I had approached her...” she left off to see if he was following her train of thought. He began to examine her from head to toe and she knew she had a nibble on the line. “She didn’t exactly say it in so many words, but I got the impression we could ALL be GREAT friends...” she smiled again. He finished his examination and it was obvious by the look in his eye that he liked the package she presented. The nice dress, the petite, but curvaceous body, all of it was designed to present a nice little bundle to the appreciative...and he was a connoisseur.

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In his own way, Carl was a male whore. He used his looks and his body whenever and wherever he needed to, to make the deal, to bed the women he desired. What did it matter if he made millions off the deal from bedding bored women and from enjoying beautiful bodies? He didn't care that he had a wife at home to fulfill his every desire. He enjoyed the unusual. Like a lot of men, he had fantasized of bedding more than one. He had, of course, fulfilled that fantasy several times with more beautiful women than this, but the offer implied his wife would be participating. He had suggested this many times. He liked the idea of having two women servicing him at his command, but his prude of a wife had refused repeatedly. In his immediate lust, he assumed many things. He looked over at her and said, "Why now?" He didn't trust this stranger's version. His wife wouldn't lie to him, she wouldn't dare; she knew too well the consequences of crossing him.

"Well, look at her," she said bravely, following Alice's lead. She couldn't believe how Alice had manipulated this, had changed what could have been a fatal mistake on her part.

Carl suddenly smiled and Deirdre nearly expired on the spot. It was his pleased smile, the one he got when he closed a multi-million-dollar deal and needed immediate sexual gratification, the one she was expected to comply with. She quavered at the thought, knowing he would be hard on her at this moment. "Well, well, well," he intoned, pleased.

Alice smiled too, as though she was equally pleased at the thought. "I thought the three of us could get to know one another. It will help when the time comes," she emphasized. "That way we all know the score."

Carl was suddenly suspicious again. "When the time comes?"

Alice laughed as though he had made a joke. "Well, I don't fall into bed with just any couple, you know," that statement assuring him that she



was experienced in this sort of thing, “but Deirdre described you glowingly and I wanted to meet you. Having done so, I’m sure the three of us will have a wonderful time...*exploring*,” she hesitated at the word to emphasize it, “and getting to know one another,” she smiled at the double meaning of her words as she looked him up and down as thoroughly as he had her.

Carl had to agree. He liked the idea, liked what Alice implied. She leaned towards him and he bent down as she placed a smooth kiss on his lips. Capturing them, she quickly manipulated them into a passionate embrace right there in front of his wife.

Deirdre looked on, incredulous. She should mind, she really should, but strangely she didn’t. She looked on, inured to her husband’s ardent embrace with another woman, a woman she had just met last night and had amazing and passionate sex with. The only thing that bothered her was that she had enjoyed the kisses of this woman and resented him kissing HER!

‘This woman really knows how to kiss,’ thought Carl as he enjoyed her charms. Her body pressed against his own was an intriguing promise of things to come. He could feel her pillowy breasts pressing against him and wondered how they would feel in his hands as he squeezed them hard and pulled on the nipples.

Alice let Carl experience enough to know that he wouldn’t be dissatisfied when they consummated this relationship, then she slowly, reluctantly pulled back with a smile and a gentle pat on his cheek. He backed away with a look in his eyes that told her he was on the hook.

She leaned over and gave Deirdre an equally passionate kiss, much to the brunette’s obvious surprise. Carl saw how awkward it looked for his wife and assumed it was because she had never been kissed by another

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woman. The thought of this masterful blonde having his wife aroused him further as he watched.

“Good night,” Alice said softly to Deirdre with a little smile that only the two of them understood. Carl didn’t see the tender look on her face towards Deirdre and her ‘good night’ was polite. She looked up at him as she made her way out of the house. “We will be in touch,” she grinned.

Carl looked after the well put together blonde. There was *something* about her, but he dismissed it with his lust engaged. He glanced at his cautious wife who was looking like a deer in the headlights, waiting for his pronouncement. He smiled, “Well, that was a nice surprise,” he complimented her, shocking her further. He turned away and began to head up the stairs. “A nice surprise indeed,” he said as he glanced back to make sure she was following along. “You did good, *very* good,” he emphasized meaningfully.

Deirdre was astonished at this turn of events. She didn’t know how Alice had done it, but what had been a certain beating had turned around completely. Carl was pleased. He was *very* pleased. And while Deirdre didn’t know about a threesome, she knew Carl would love it. As she followed Carl upstairs, she decided that having sex with two people at the same time was a small price to pay for her indiscretion that evening.

* * * * *

“I thought you’d never contact me again,” Deirdre said as she welcomed Alice into the house a few days later.

Alice leaned over and kissed her hello. “I had work to do,” she smiled.

“Carl gave me quite a gift for finding you,” Deirdre enthused, gesturing to the emerald necklace she was now sporting.



Alice admired it. It was a nice piece. The emeralds were connected by diamonds, a very fine piece if you could afford it. Carl Spaulding could afford it, per Alice's research. That was the work that had kept her away the past few days. She now had Carl's credit report, financials, and as a bonus, his tax statements over the past few years. She was good and thorough in her investigations and now knew how much Carl was worth down to the dollar, pound, and ruble. She knew that he played in the big leagues, had foolishly and arrogantly left no will, and was a shrewd and trusted businessman in the community. She also knew a little more of the salacious gossip about the man. He was a man of varied and expensive tastes who enjoyed power, women, and money, not necessarily in that order. He had covered up many indiscretions with his money and power. Women were easy prey to his charms, men admired his prowess and brilliance, and both threw money at his schemes, garnering both him and his bank millions. Already, she had invested heavily in his bank, in a manner that assured her great profits. "Nice," she complimented Deirdre.

"Carl has begun to become annoyed at the delay," she told Alice worriedly.

Alice smiled. He was anxious, was he? He would have to learn patience, she thought nastily. He would learn from a master, if she had her way. "That's why I'm here. I realized I didn't have your phone number and hoped you wouldn't mind me just showing up?"

"I nearly died when the security booth called up to ask if it was okay to let you through," Deirdre confided. She was thrilled to see the blonde, delighted that she had 'just shown up,' and relieved that Carl would stop pestering her. "I got a new phone." They shared a laugh.

Alice smiled again as they sat down in the sitting room. She looked around. This was not a room that had been decorated by Deirdre

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Spaulding. Everything reeked wealth and a sophistication she knew Deirdre didn't have, at least not yet, but someday she might. Her investigation had included getting to know Deirdre. She now knew that the little girl who grew up by Mt. Shasta, CA had gone to school in San Francisco on an athletic scholarship and met the would-be wunderkind, Carl Spaulding. He had chosen her from the hundreds of women who had thrown themselves at his good looks. She had been so honored that he chose her, she let him do whatever he wanted with her, to her, and let him mold her into the woman she was today. Unfortunately, that woman was a coward who chafed at his derision, cowered at his power over her, and had no confidence in herself because he had worn it down over the years. His good looks and money had killed any feelings she harbored for him; they were a lie for the evil that inhabited his soul. "You are going to invite me to dinner," she told the brunette.

Deirdre swallowed in alarm. "So soon?" She didn't know if she was prepared for what was obviously on the agenda.

Alice laughed, delighted, as she shook her head. "No, no, not at all. This is just a way for the three of us to get to know one another better. We can wait until much later to consummate our relationship," she told the alarmed housewife.

Deirdre relaxed. She hadn't known if she could go through with what Alice and Carl had planned. Carl was enthused at her find. Not only had he gifted her with the expensive emerald necklace she now sported (a repossession from the bank btw), but he had been treating her relatively well for the past few days; however, his impatience was beginning to show. She enjoyed her visit with Alice, relaxed with her, talking with her until the housekeeper came in and she ordered dinner for the three of them. They visited until Carl came home at seven.



Carl was delighted to see the pearl-colored Porsche in his driveway. He had asked his wife repeatedly when they would be seeing the petite blonde again and her evasive answers were beginning to annoy him. He had become greatly excited at the idea of subjecting both his wife and the curvaceous blonde to his obvious male superiority. It had aroused him repeatedly at work and he had taken it out on Gina in accounting, bending her over her desk and taking her hard against it. She had enjoyed it immensely, but wondered what had gotten into him. It was just a momentary diversion for him. He dismissed it as a release of the tensions building up in his loins, the anticipation of bedding both his wife and her new friend Alice. Seeing her car put a spring in his step as he returned from garaging his Jaguar.

“Hello?” he called as he came in the door and put down his briefcase.

“We’re in here, Carl,” Deirdre called, falsely, immediately feeling tension.

“We’re on,” Alice said quietly, giving Deirdre a smile of encouragement.

“Well, look who’s here,” Carl boomed as he walked in to see Alice sitting, drinking tea with his wife.

“Yes, Alice came by for dinner,” Deirdre said, still a little nervous of her husband.

Alice put down her tea cup and stood to greet Carl and give him a little peck on the mouth in greeting. He took advantage of the moment to crudely caress her ass, massaging it roughly. She was annoyed at the lack of subtlety, but let it pass, showing nothing in her yellow-brown eyes.

“Dinner will be in a few minutes,” Deirdre said as she stood up.

Carl let Alice go with another grope, this time ‘accidentally’ brushing against her breast. He turned to his wife, well pleased with their dinner

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guest, and gave her an obligatory kiss. Hers wasn't as passionate as Alice's, but then she was relieved, wondering if perhaps Alice was playing with fire.

Throughout dinner, Carl exerted himself to be charming. Alice was equally charming. She was intelligent, witty, and sharp-tongued enough to keep Carl intrigued. When he scoffed at her profession as a day trader, she brought up a much talked about deal that only insiders knew of and revealed that she was the mastermind behind the scheme. She knew Carl would know about this deal in his profession, and name-dropping never hurt. This garnered not only Carl's attention, but his reluctant admiration. Money impressed him as nothing else could. He eagerly anticipated bedding her, but she pointed out that, like a fine wine, these things were meant to be savored. You didn't gulp a hundred-year-old burgundy, you researched it, and you got to know it *intimately*. Instead of being annoyed, he was intrigued, titillated, and found he didn't resent the wait. He loved the double entendre. Having her under him and at his mercy eventually would make it all worth the wait.

Alice counted the night a success. She had kept Carl intrigued and eagerly waiting to bed her. She had included Deirdre without making it too obvious that Carl treated her horribly, derisively, and like a servant to his unending needs. She had spent the late afternoon bolstering Deirdre's ego and the evening stroking Carl's.

They got to know each other over the next weeks as Alice studied them, learning little things that helped with her plans. Carl was becoming impatient, but once Alice set a date for their threesome, he calmed down. They had put some 'rules' in place for the much-anticipated night together: safety words and other ideas to make it comfortable for all of them. What he didn't know was on the afternoons she came early to get to know



Deirdre, she made mind-blowing love to the woman: captivating her, making Deirdre fall in love with her, making her compliant with anything Alice wanted. She also bolstered the fragile woman's ego, teaching her to stand on her own two feet, to become the woman she had been before Carl got hold of her. The few nights she ate dinner with them, she let Carl be masterful over his 'females,' encouraging him towards what he was sure would be a night to remember. He anticipated more than a night though, he expected to enjoy a series of days of debauchery and lechery to his heart's content.

In the meantime, Alice spent her mornings and most days putting chess pieces in place for the night in question. She dressed carefully for that night, arriving later in the afternoon, but holding off Deirdre and her amorous advances. "Now, now, leave that for later. You want to convince Carl that we are new at this, don't you?"

"God, that pig wouldn't know a good screw if he had it handed to him on a silver platter," Deirdre complained. Since knowing Alice, she had learned a lot about making love and she had learned a lot about herself. She felt so much more confident in her sexuality, and while she wasn't sure she wanted to be a lesbian, she knew she was in love with the petite blonde, in love for perhaps the first time in her life. She also sensed that Alice was elusive. She didn't share much. She certainly didn't tell Deirdre that she loved her, but she showed in so many ways that she cared and that she enjoyed her body. Deirdre was under no illusions about how the woman might react to a declaration of love from her and kept it to herself.

"Madam?" the housekeeper came into the sitting room where they were enjoying tea.

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Deirdre looked up, wondering why she had come in. Dinner had been ordered two hours ago, but they were waiting for Carl before serving it. Alice looked up as well.

“There is a police officer at the gate,” she said in her upper crust tones.

Deirdre looked stunned. “A police officer?” she asked.

“Yes. He said he needed to speak with you. Shall I let him in?” she asked.

“Yes, of course, let him in,” Deirdre dismissed her and turned to Alice. “What the heck is that about?”

Alice shrugged, shaking her head, but she *knew*, her gut told her. She felt a curious little sensation begin to hum inside of her. Her yellow eyes began to gleam, but she suppressed her gleeful emotions...now was not the time.

The housekeeper showed not one, but two officers into the well-appointed sitting room. Deirdre rose gracefully and walked towards the officers. Behind her, Alice rose as well and looked on. She knew these were not police officers, but county sheriff’s officers; it was a different kettle of fish.

“Officers, I’m Deirdre Spaulding. What can I do for you?”

Both men removed their hats immediately, out of respect for the women. The first one, apparently, was going to speak for them both. “Ma’am, I’m sorry to have to be the one to tell you that there was an accident today and your husband Carl was fatally injured.” He gulped. He hated having to tell wives these things, but someone had to. He glanced around the room and noticed the attractive blonde standing near the couch.

“Carl?” she said wonderingly, “No, there must be some mistake,” she smiled charmingly. “We’re expecting him for dinner,” she gestured towards Alice.



The officer shook his head. One of the things they always looked for was the reaction of the remaining spouse as it told them a lot about the situation. This one was in immediate denial. “No, ma’am. There was a car accident. He crashed his car and I’m sorry to tell you, he didn’t survive.”

Deirdre stood there in absolute shock. A strange worm of relief began to flourish in her, but it was so far down that she didn’t notice it. She stared at the officer as if he had grown horns.

Alice came up behind her and put her arm around her. “Deirdre, let’s sit down. I’m sure the officers have more to tell you.”

Deirdre let Alice lead her back to the settee and sat there numbly. Alice gestured to the two officers to sit across from them on the other couch. They sat with their hats in their hands, looking around at where the two women had apparently been drinking tea.

Swallowing noisily, the spokesman for the two of them started again. “It was obviously an accident. There will, of course, be a coroner’s report to rule out drugs or anything else,” he began.

“He would hate that,” Deirdre interrupted in a monotone.

“Hate what?” Alice asked before the cop could. It was a way to take control of the situation.

“An autopsy, he would hate that a stranger was cutting him open,” she said, as she began to shudder in reaction to the news.

Alice had an arm around her and put her other around her as well to gather her close.

“I’m sorry, but it’s necessary to prove he wasn’t under the influence,” the officer put in.

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Deirdre laughed a short bark and said, shaking her head as the tears began in her eyes, “If you knew Carl, you would know how he detested drugs and drug users.”

The officers nodded to acknowledge her statement and filed it away in their minds for their report later. The spokesman reached into his chest pocket for two cards, which he put on the coffee table between them, next to the tea service tray. “If you need anything, you can call me. The preliminary investigation and witnesses are pointing to an accident, a tragic one. We will let you know when you can claim the body and have a funeral home pick it up.”

“Oh, gawd,” Deirdre moaned, the enormity of it beginning to hit her. Alice held her reassuringly, holding her own composure although her face was a mask of concern for her friend.

The officers noted her and asked, “And who are you, ma’am?”

“I’m Alice Weaver. I’m a friend of both the Spauldings,” she told them with a straight face.

Never for a moment did they doubt her as she held the grieving and now sobbing woman in her arms.

Again, the officer swallowed noisily. “We will be in touch, ma’am, and as I said, contact me if you need anything or have any questions.” Both officers rose from where they were sitting, relieved to be getting the hell out of the expensive house. It was bad enough to uphold the law, but to have to face grieving widows and tell them their beloved husbands were dead was a horrible part of the job.

Deirdre never heard them as she sobbed into Alice’s arms. “But he was coming home for dinner,” she said unnecessarily to the blonde.

The officers had no reason to question Deirdre’s sincere grief.



Alice watched them leave, relieved to have them gone. She didn't trust cops. They asked too many questions sometimes. That night she held Deirdre as she sobbed out her grief over her relief at having Carl gone. She subsided in the early morning hours as Alice watched over her friend.

Alice was an excellent friend to the bereaved widow over the next few days. Condolences began to arrive in droves, expensive flower arrangements were everywhere. Alice helped direct things for her friend. She drove her to Carl's lawyer's office and pretended surprise that there was no will. The state would take a large chunk of the estate since he had died intestate, but the remaining chunk was considerable. Carl had investments and property in places that assured the widow plenty of money in her coming years. Alice drove her to Carl's offices and helped her deal with the sugar sweet and two-faced condolences of his co-workers and bosses. Already an audit was being ordered for his accounts and monies. On Alice's advice, the family lawyer was looking to protect as much of Deirdre's assets as possible. Carl had been a rising star at his job, a silent stockholder who, if he had wanted, could have eventually been a partner. His holdings were astounding, but then Alice already knew that. It just took a little direction to send the lawyer on the right course. Packing up his office took no time at all, the files had already been rifled through. There were a couple of plants that Deirdre had no desire to take and a framed photograph of a much younger and happier Carl and Deirdre in their early days, before he turned into the monster he had become, before money and power corrupted him.

Alice helped her go to the funeral parlor to arrange the funeral, a necessarily evil before the body would be cremated. She had convinced Deirdre there was no point in letting the man take up real estate and having his body interred in an urn would suffice. The outpouring of sympathy for

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Carl Spaulding from clients and friends was amazing, but then he was an important man, a powerful man, and knew many people. Alice took a discreet step back and let the now more confident Deirdre handle this part. She slowly released her grip on her friend, bolstered her with encouragement, but slowly began to take a back seat. Deirdre's two friends had become suspicious of her interest in their friend. After all, the women had met in a lesbian club. That Alice was still around after all these weeks made them wonder at their relationship. If Carl hadn't bragged to his buddies that he was about to bed both his wife and the apparently bisexual Alice, there would have been a quiet scandal and Deirdre would have suffered. Deirdre though, wisely realized these two 'friends' were a subtle way to keep her in line. Carl and his buddies were equally controlling of their wives, who voluntarily allowed this treatment in exchange for a life that few could imagine. Deirdre slowly distanced herself from these types of people. She no longer needed them in her life and she no longer had Carl controlling the purse strings, controlling her life and dictating who her friends were.

Alice let herself into her condo after the funeral and immediately went to her office and her laptop. She opened it and typed in an encoded password. She also had the pad for thumbprint access to ensure no one could ever break into the machine. She quickly pulled up the information she was looking for, satisfied that things were going her way. She checked and double checked the figures, then issued a silent command that would slowly sell off the mass of stocks, which would begin to rise again now that the boy wonder of the banking world was buried. They had dipped quite low when his death was announced and Alice had bought large chunks of the stock planning for this moment. She had used the occasion of Carl's death to place her in a strategic position that allowed for vast

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profits...her profits. She looked satisfied as blocks of her stock were eagerly gobbled up as a greedy public began to buy the now-rising options she had bought on spec. She enjoyed knowing that this manipulation had worked out to her pocketbook's benefit.

Remembering Carl's derision over her being a day trader, she saluted herself with a glass of expensive wine. She celebrated her astute business manipulations of the bank's stocks and a few of their select customers she had learned of from her investigations. The fact that she had spread her investments over a wide range of unrelated stocks and bonds had allayed any suspicions from falling on her shoulders. After all, no one could have anticipated the death of Carl Spaulding, could they? She smiled evilly.

Over the next few months, as lawyers worked out Carl's investments, settled his estate, and dealt with the state, Deirdre became more confident in her role as a grieving widow, relieved to have him gone. She relied on Alice for a while, but found she didn't need her as much towards the end. Alice was okay with this. She had anticipated this as well. She left Deirdre with a loving smile and a memory that made her stronger, more confident, and self-assured. She would survive now. Alice had ensured that in many ways.

~The End~ K'Anne ;-P

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CompanionSHIP, FriendSHIP, RelationSHIP

~ CHAPTER 1 ~

Have you ever met a person that you just were so in synch with? You knew immediately that they were someone special for you? Would you know how lucky you were? Would you know they were the one?

Joan was sitting at the convention, yawning. It's been a very busy day. Signing prints, shaking hands, listening to conversations until her ears rang. It is already 4 o'clock. One more hour and she is released from this prison. Her manager comes up with another print to be signed. Sitting there at the table she glances around. Her booth comprises a 40' wall of her various prints. She has more but they wouldn't fit on a 40' wall. Her originals fetch six figures sometimes, most only five figures. More than enough to make her life comfortable and indulge in more painting at her leisure. More paintings meant more prints and more money, a vicious, comfortable cycle

As it is the end of the day there are less people viewing the various artist's prints and collections. Her booth is on a corner at the end of the row. First or last depending on where you started in the convention center. Looking around Joan notices a tall blonde woman viewing the only three originals she brought with her to this show. They are new.



Not in the catalogs or on the internet yet. The prints are in the works so she can now sell the originals.

This woman obviously likes what she sees as she is smiling and looks as though she is talking to herself, not aloud but nodding to her own thoughts. Intrigued Joan rises and walks over to the woman. Standing out of the woman's way but in her line of vision Joan gives her a little smile. The woman turns her full attention on Joan and returns the smile.

"So what do you think?" Joan asks with a little nod towards the three new paintings.

Turning back to them the woman answers, "Intriguing. I could get lost in the daydreams that that one creates." She indicates the one with pink and blue clouds and cream. In fact that's its title: *Clouds and Cream*.

Remembering its creation, Joan nods and examines it too. It does have that effect. You look into it and begin daydreaming immediately. For every person its different dreams yet the same effect.

"Good thoughts I hope," Joan answers.

"Very," comes the quick answer.

Looking on to the other prints the woman begins discussing the merits of some. Many seem to interest her. Her knowledge of the prints is very good. She indicates a couple that she has copies of. Chatting with her Joan realizes this woman must be a collector. They talk about almost all the prints displayed before Joan introduces herself.

"I could sign your prints if you'd like," she offers.

Amazed the woman turns to her and says, "YOU'RE the artist?"

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Not sure if she should be insulted or not Joan nods and gives a tight little smile.

“How wonderful!” The woman exclaims. “I’ve often wondered about the person behind these creations. I’ve seen your catalog and it makes me want more of them.”

Genuine enthusiasm makes Joan relax. They continue chatting about the various paintings and the stories behind some of them. Examining the woman, Joan wonders what it is about her that makes it so easy to talk about her paintings. It is a very personal thing to most artists.

Joan looks at her as with an artist’s eye. The woman stands about 5’9”. Her hair is blonde and streaked with lighter blonde; a typical site in California for this time. It looks like she has a nice perm in it. It falls to just below her shoulders. She has the sides pulled back with clips revealing small diamonds in her ears and an ear clip on the left one. She is wearing an off white pantsuit with a baby blue blouse. The blazer fits her beautifully. She carries herself well. Her eyes are brown and twinkling, her nose long and narrow. Her mouth not too thin but definitely not lush. Her face is lightly made up. She is very easy to talk too. Before Joan realizes it they are announcing over the loudspeakers that the day at the art show is over.

Joan’s manager comes over for a couple of last minute signatures and she complies. The manager then begins to drape their booth with the protective drop clothes. Joan helps and the job is finished quickly. Saying, see ya later, the manager departs. The woman Joan has been speaking with is still standing there watching Joan.

K'ANNE MEINEL



“Would you like to catch a cup of coffee, dinner, or something?”

The woman asks.

“I don’t drink coffee or tea either for that matter,” Joan grins, “But dinner sounds great!” Nodding her head in approval. She has enjoyed the conversation with this woman over the last hour or so.

The woman introduces herself. “I’m Grace Monroe by the way, Dr. Grace Monroe.”

Holding out her hand Joan says, “Joan Woods, artist extraordinaire.” Startled that she has been talking with a doctor all this time.

Grinning Grace takes her hand, her face lights up in an elfin grin. There is a spark that both of them feel. Neither let’s go but startled glances are exchanged. The tingle goes all the way up their arms. The handshake goes on a moment longer than necessary before they both realize. Turning, they head for the exit at the end of the convention center.

Along the way they chat about other artists and their works. As they reach the parking garage Grace asks, “Would you like to take your car or mine? Or would you like to go over to one of the hotels?” Her head indicates towards the Hyatt in front of the convention center entrance.

“I’ve been using taxis to get around this time. I’m staying at the hotel,” Joan answers.

“Then you’re probably sick of hotel food. Let me take you to a good restaurant I know.”

Grace leads Joan to a sleek forest green Jaguar coupe. Admiring it, Joan catches Graces eye. Grace is grinning like a Cheshire cat. “My

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one indulgence,” she states. Once more Joan is taken by the elfin grin she sees. Pressing her key button the doors unlock for her and they get in. Grace drives smoothly out of the parking garage and to the payment kiosk. Shaking her head as it cost \$10 just for parking she says, “What a crime!” Turning to Joan she explains that a family could never indulge itself going to a convention and having to pay the expensive fees that they require and forget trying to eat there too. It unfortunately keeps the masses away from things like this. The sleek car pulls out onto Harbor Blvd. and away from the convention center. Grace and Joan continue chatting as though they are old friends. They pull into a nice hole in the wall restaurant a few minutes later. “They have great steak,” Grace states.

Going inside it’s apparent it’s a reservations only restaurant but Grace is spotted and immediately seated. A lot of “Yes, Doctor, How are you Doctor,” goes on as they are seated.

Impressed despite herself Joan asks, “They know you?” Her right eyebrow rises a little with the question and the small grin on her face makes the sarcasm funny.

Slightly blushing Grace explains that she knows the owner and his family. That she has helped them periodically.

“What kind of doctor are you?” Joan asks.

“I’m a psychiatrist. I work at U.C. Irvine over in Orange.”

Immediately uncomfortable, Joan just sits there. Noting her silence and her obvious distress Grace asks, “Is something wrong?”

“No offense, but psychiatrists and psychologist have always made me uncomfortable.”



“Really? Me too. Do you know why?” At Joan’s shake of the head she continues, “Well we’ve been talking for over an hour now and you’ve been fine. Is it just the title or something else do you think?” Joan shrugs and tries to relax.

The waiter hurries over and takes their order. Joan orders a salad with no dressing but extra croutons. Then for the main course she orders soup and fruit. Grace orders a steak, baked potato, and green beans.

“You don’t eat meat?” She asks Joan.

Joan explains that she has trouble if she doesn’t watch her diet. Sticking to fruits, vegetables, and light meats keeps her system in balance. No weight gain and everything runs smoothly.

With a few glasses of wine Joan relaxes and realized that Grace is probably right. The title psychiatrist is probably what was bothering her. Grace turns out to be a very wonderful person. They talk not only about art but medicine, history, and a variety of other subjects. Before they know it is 8 o’clock. They even had desert but they are tying up one of the tables.

Both are reluctant to end their conversation. Their blooming friendship was something both wish to pursue and it was apparent to both. There was also a subtle tension building in the air. Grace offered a suggestion, “I’ve been invited to a party, would you be interested in going?”

“I don’t think I’m properly dressed,” Joan responded, indicating her flowing outfit. She was dressed ‘artsy’. Her brown hair with its red highlights was long and flowing to below her waist. She isn’t tall but



has a fine figure. A high bust with wide shoulders and a muscular look to it. Her waist is trim.

“Believe me, your fine. It’s just some friends of mine and they won’t care if you come half dressed.” Hesitating a moment she added, “Well, maybe the half-dressed part they would mind. But not in a bad way,” she mused. They shared a laugh as they walked back to the Jaguar. Chatting about friends and their idiosyncrasies their conversation continued.

Grace headed the Jaguar back down Harbor Boulevard towards the convention center and past it heading in the other direction, further into Anaheim. Pulling through a residential area she parked in front of an old house that had been converted into apartments. You could see people were already there as several were standing on the steps with beers in their hands. As Grace and Joan walked up they parted to let them into the front door of the house. Taking their jackets was a guy that looked vaguely familiar to Joan. Grace led them into the living room to meet their host. People were sitting around on everything available - couches, the chairs, the tables, a few on the floors. Some were standing and chatting. The room was fairly full.

Suddenly a voice aimed directly at them, “GRACE!” A short black headed woman with a very short haircut came towards them. Her face was the palest of white and she wore bright red lipstick. Her black hair was shaved as a man’s on the sides and she had a braided pony tail down the back. Her black hair was matched by black eyes; a very striking person. She was dressed in jeans and a tight sweater. Holding out her arms for a hug she grabbed Grace close. Joan looked on in amusement. Something she had noticed earlier finally making itself



clear. Most of the people at this party were or had to be gay. Not that gays give off any strange vibes but just how they were behaving and looked made things apparent to Joan. The woman talking to Grace seemed vaguely familiar. When Grace turned to introduce Joan the woman surprised both of them by interrupting with, “JOAN? My god I haven’t seen you in like 20 years!”

Surprised Joan looked closer. Thinking back 20 years to when she would know this woman. Indeed she did know her. They had worked together at a parts supply house.

“JO! Oh my goodness. I never thought I’d see you again. This is your house?” Joanne was a close friend once, one alienated by Joan’s ex-husband.

Grace was amazed that they knew each other. Further explanations revealed how they knew each other, how Grace and Joan had met.

Joanne pulled Joan over to others at the party. She knew several people, stunned to see them again after so long a time had passed. She saw Tina, Addie, and Ken, the guy who had taken her coat. All gay friends from the parts store. Another friend, Tracey, who hung out with all of them - straight and wild. Due to her relationship with her ex she hadn’t seen them forever. Thrilled they all talked and caught up. Grace stood back and listened.

Joan explained what she had been up to. She was divorced. Gave up on the parts house as it was a nowhere job. Went back to school. Raised the boys. There were three of them now. The friends were amazed as Joan had been the least likely to have children. They were all so excited to catch up. As parties go, this one went on and Grace wandered off to different friends and groups. She knew most everyone



in the house. During the course of the evening Joanne and Joan found themselves alone and talking.

“I always wondered what happened with you,” Joanne stated.

“I looked for you but by the time I was free to do so, I couldn’t find a Joanne Chavez in the book. No one knew where you were either and I couldn’t find the others either.” Joan indicated Tina, Addie, Tracey, and Ken.

“Was it hard?” Jo asked.

Joan immediately knew what she meant; her marriage to Craig. It had been awful. They were young and Craig somehow made everything her fault. They were poor but he made it worse with his irresponsibility. Nodding in answer she took another gulp of her wine. Looking around for Grace absentmindedly. She saw her ensconced in a very undignified bean bag chair in the corner, surrounded by people all talking loudly.

Jo noted where her eyes had strayed. “You know she’s gay don’t you?”

Turning back to Joanne, Joan answered, “Yes, I’d have to be pretty obtuse not to realize that at this point.”

“And you two just met today? Joan nodded. “I thought you were straight?”

“I am.”

“Then what be haps here?”

Smiling at the funky way of asking. Joan shook her head. “I don’t know to be honest. I just don’t know.” Looking again at the corner where Grace was she was in time to catch her eye and exchange a



smile. One of those party smiles. Yes, I know where you are, Yes, I'm having a good time too.

It was about 11 o'clock when Grace came searching for Joan. Joan had met some of the most interesting people. Not just the few people she knew but others she had talked with, debated with, exchanged information with. Several were invited down to the convention. It was a relief finally to stop talking. She'd seen Grace around the party too they'd exchanged looks a few times. It was odd how intense those looks were.

"Hey you, are you about ready to go?" Grace asked.

Smiling Joan nodded. They headed for Joanne and a last goodbye. Stay in touch. Don't let it be so long. Joan gave Joanne and the other four one of her cards with her email address on it. Hugging each of them goodbye.

Grace helped her on with her coat and they walked out of the house. The immediate silence was loud. Almost overwhelming. They got into the car and just sat for a minute.

"That was odd," Grace indicated the house with a nod of her head.

"Yes, wasn't it though. I haven't seen those people for ages. I missed them." Joan answered with a little smile.

"Were you involved with any of them?" Grace asked.

Laughing Joan answered, "No, not possible. If you had known my ex you'd understand, we were all just friends at work."

Joan looked at the house with a nostalgic wistfulness. Remembering the young people she had known then. The adults they had all become. Grace watched her face. Finally Joan turned and

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looked at Grace. Something seemed to connect between them. Almost an electrical current between their eyes.

Grace leaned forward and lightly kissed Joan on the lips. Joan felt a tug from somewhere below her belly button. She kissed Grace back. Opening their mouths the kiss deepened. Grace raised her hands and cupped Joan's face holding her there. Joan raised her own hands and put them on the outside of Graces. Then she slid them along to Graces shoulders and under Graces hair. Pulling her head closer to Joan's. They had been kissing heatedly and caressing each other for a while before Grace pulled her head up.

"For a first kiss that was something." She panted slightly.

Stunned for a moment, Joan sat there looking deeply into Graces eyes. She had never. She had never, ever, had the thought of being attracted to another woman. But what she was feeling for this woman went beyond normal attraction. She felt it deep inside her. Her whole body was tingling in anticipation. Panting herself, she broke off eye contact, and leaned her forehead on Graces shoulder.

Grace kissed Joan's forehead and just held her close. She's shocked, thought Grace. She's fighting this attraction. I know she feels it. I do too. I felt it at the show. I felt it at dinner. I felt it all through the party. Now, I feel lust like I've never felt it before. I want this woman. I NEED this woman. I have to take it slow though. She's scared. She's in virgin territory, pardon the pun.

Their breathing returned to normal. The windows on the Jag had all fogged up. Joan pulled her head off of Graces neck and looked into her face. Grace could see the puzzlement but she also could see the wanting in Joan's eyes. Let her make the next move Grace thought.



And Joan did. She took her hand and caressed Graces jaw line. Back and forth. Under Graces ear she lightly tickled with her fingers. Her eyes never left Graces. Joan could read the pleasure on Graces face from the caresses. Grace knew the minute that Joan decided to kiss her again. Heated caresses followed.

A loud noise outside the car attracted their attention. They reluctantly pulled apart. Both were panting. You could smell the want, the need, in the air. Both sat back in their bucket seats. Finally Grace turned to Joan. "Would you like to see my place?"

Joan knew what Grace was asking indirectly. It was a big step. Joan didn't want to lose this person who had come into her life so suddenly. Not trusting herself to speak, Joan nodded.

Grace started up the Jag and pulled away from the curb after the efficient defogger had cleared the windows. Reaching out she touched Joan's hand. Joan immediately took Graces hand in hers.

Off Harbor Boulevard she turned onto the 5 freeway heading south. Needing her hand to shift she released Joan's. Immediately she recaptured it when she was done shifting. They resumed their conversation as though nothing had happened. Grace effortlessly pulled from the 5 freeway onto the 55 heading for Newport Beach where her apartment was located.

She told Joan about her apartment and how she had been fortunate to find it through friends who didn't want to rent it out for summer rentals as it would get trashed. The money was nice but not the headaches. It was one of several they owned in a row. The apartments were actually on the islands in Newport Bay.

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The 55 ended into Costa Mesa and they drove through to Newport Beach and over the bridge onto Balboa Island. Multi-Million dollar homes were on these islands. They were crammed into every available space.

Grace told Joan how lucky she was to live in the boonies as Joan had told her of Wisconsin. Joan lived in a central Wisconsin town called Wausau. She had moved there after her divorce with her three sons. She had a gallery there in an old converted building downtown. Her apartment was upstairs and convenient. Her sons were grown now. Her youngest in college. Her oldest had even made her a grandma last year.

As they drove down a street on the island they came to a security booth. The officer looked up and saw Grace. Waving he pushed a button that opened the gate. They pulled up in front of Grace's apartment and she parked the Jaguar. Grace walked up to her front door and unlocked it; opening it she let Joan precede her into the front room. Grace showed her around. To Joan's right was a kitchenette to her left the living room. Further into the living room a hallway that led elsewhere. Opening her blinds onto a beautiful water frontage Joan asked about the dock in front of the apartment.

"You have a boat?"

"No, I always wanted one. Just never took the time to actually GET one." Grace smiled.

Grace went into the kitchen and pulled out a bottle of wine. Holding it aloft to show Joan she silently asked if Joan wanted some. Joan nodded and Grace proceeded to fill two wine glasses full. Carrying the wine bottle under her arm and the two wine glasses in her



hands she went to sit on the sofa. Joan joined her there. Grace handed her one of the glasses, a deep emerald green with cuts in the crystal. Joan found her hand was shaking a little. Grace noted that as well.

“Relax.”

“I don’t know why I’m so nervous.” Joan lied.

“Don’t you?” Grace raised her eyebrows in question.

Smiling wryly down in to her glass Joan lifted it for a drink. It ended up being quite a gulp and she almost choked. Coughing and laughing she did indeed relax. They resumed their conversation. The talk was easy and non-invasive. Just two people getting to know one another.

Joan told her about living in CA all those years ago. Repeating some of the story that had been told at the party. She told a very small amount about her disastrous marriage. How she had only been 18 when she married. Her first son born at 19. Her second at 21 and her third at 23. By then the marriage had turned very sour.

“What can I say? I was young, naive, and in love with the idea of a happily ever after marriage. The sad thing is once he drained my bank account he went after my mom’s and once that was gone, so was he.”

“Actually, the happily ever after is what a lot of people dream for. They don’t realize that Cinderella or Snow White probably had stretch marks, that their nails broke washing the castle, and that they got fat with age and children.” They shared a laugh at the image this portrayed.

It was relaxing and the time flew. It was 1:00 before they knew it. For Joan it was even later with the time difference. Stifling a yawn, she put down her empty glass. The wine bottle was now empty with their



concerted efforts. Joan realized something right then. Her apparent prejudice against psychiatrists and psychologists was gone or at least against this particular one. Grace was easy to talk to. Not only that, Joan liked hearing what she had to say. It wasn't judgmental. Her life hadn't been any easier than Joan's. She was human. She was real. Looking over at Grace she realized how much she liked this person. How attracted she was to this person. How much she wanted to BE WITH this person.

Grace had been watching Joan throughout the afternoon and evening. Talking with her at the show she immediately sensed Joan's diverse intelligence. That had drawn her immediately. Her body was attractive as well. She had to be about 5'7". Just 2" shorter than Grace's 5'9". She held herself tall and walked with an easy going gate. Her incredibly long brown hair was held back with clips and it flowed past her waist. The red streaks in it looked natural and were. The clothes she wore flowed along her body. She wasn't thin by any stretch of the imagination. She was big boned but not fat. Her face was round but well defined with high cheekbones. Dark green eyes were framed by dark brown thick eyelashes and eyebrows. Her nose was cute and not too long. Her lips drew you in. It was her smile though that really made her pretty. Her teeth weren't perfectly straight. She wasn't beautiful but when she laughed it made her seem so.

Grace had watched her as they talked all evening. She was unconscious about the flow of her own body movements. Grace thought of this as her artistic movements. Joan would have laughed and called these her autistic movements had she but known Grace's thoughts. Grace watched her effortlessly fit into the party and chat with



the people she had known. Making new friends from complete strangers. She hadn't been the life of the party but her diverse interests made her easy to talk to. She drew people to her. A lot of people would have had trouble just fitting in at a stranger's party, especially a gay stranger's party. Not Joan. It hadn't troubled her in the slightest.

The more she watched and listened and talked the more aware of the attraction she became. Kissing Joan in the car had scared her. She was scared that she had frightened off this intelligent, amazing, woman. So far though Joan didn't show any signs of bolting. Grace was determined to proceed with care. She wanted to KNOW this woman, intimately.

Watching her hide the yawn she suddenly realized how late it was for Joan. Apologizing she offered her the couch or the bed, whichever Joan preferred.

Caught off balance she stammered her reply, "But I thought, I thought that you..." and she trailed off. Blushing at her apparent misunderstanding Joan turned slightly away.

Realizing that Joan was embarrassed Grace quickly went to reassure her. Leaning over on the couch she caught her by the shoulder and turned her back. Joan's head rose to look her in the face. "I didn't want to do anything that you didn't want to do. Okay?"

Nodding but mute Joan looked for that spark she had seen before. It was there in Grace's eyes. Again something seemed to reach out between them. Joan leaned slightly forward and met Grace halfway in a searing kiss. It didn't end. Before she knew it Joan found herself pushed back on the couch with Grace half over her. She could feel the desire in her own body. Her crotch was wet with it and pulsing.

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Grace's beautiful body was pressed against her own and her hands were caressing her. Joan's own hands were kneading Grace's shoulders, pulling at her, sliding down her back to pull her even more on top of Joan. Grace deepened the kisses, drawing a half moan from Joan. Panting heavily Grace pulled back. Looking deep in Joan's eyes she asked, "Are you sure?"

Joan whispered breathlessly, "Very."

At this Grace stood up, pulling herself up and off Joan. It took a second to get her balance. Looking down at a bewildered Joan she held out her hand and pulled Joan up and off the couch. Planting a kiss on her lips Grace led Joan down the hallway. Her bedroom was decorated with modern furniture. Cold and sterile. A small lamp was switched on by the bedside. Joan could see into a bathroom across from the bed.

Leading Joan to the bedside she took her in her arms and just held her. Joan relaxed in her arms, pulled slightly back and looked up into Grace's face. Bending slightly Grace met Joan in a kiss. It wasn't enough for either of them. Grace quickly began to undress Joan. Joan tried to follow suit but was nervous and inept. Stilling Joan's shaking hands, Grace put her hands on Grace's body in mute appeal for caresses. This Joan did understand, want, and could do. Swiftly Grace took off Joan's flowing blouse. Underneath was a satin push up bra. Surprised at this Grace took the time to kiss along the top of Joan's breasts. Throwing the blouse to a chair, Grace unhooked the bra from in front and Joan's breasts spilled out into Grace's face. Grace buried her nose between them.

Joan was watching with a detached air. She wasn't sure what to do with herself. Grace obviously knew what she was doing and Joan tried



to follow her lead. Joan's hesitant hand on Grace's body was doing more than Joan realized. Grace was already losing control. She took deep breathes and calmed herself. She didn't want to scare Joan at the intensity of her passion. Not yet. Not when it was all so new to Joan.

"Are you all right?" Joan asked.

"Yes, it's just that I want you. Immensely. But I don't want to frighten you." Grace breathed in her ear.

"It's all right, I'm not frightened. If something doesn't feel right, I'll let you know."

With that Grace felt much better and began raining kisses down Joan's neck and chest, leading to her breasts that were spilt out of the bra. Pulling the bra off the rest of the way, Grace threw it on the blouse. Reaching for Joan's pants fastener Joan stopped her. Grace looked up to see the desire flooding Joan's eyes. Joan reached to remove the blazer that Grace was wearing. That too wound up on the chair. Joan gently began unfastening the buttons to Grace's baby blue blouse, a lot more competent and not shaking now. Her fingertips grazed Grace's flesh. Pushing the blouse off her shoulders the whole thing was stopped because they hadn't unfastened the buttons at the wrists. Grace was effectively trapped in her own blouse. Joan's shoulders began to shake with laughter. After a moment of frustration, Grace joined her in laughing at their predicament. This eased the tension a bit and relaxed both of them. Pulling the blouse back on she quickly released her wrists and threw off the blouse. After a moment's hesitation Joan unfastened the bra holding in Grace's breasts. This too was discarded. Joan stopped, uncertain and nervous. Grace lifted her chin with one finger and gently kissed her, which soothed her fears,

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igniting more of her passion. Joan wasn't sure how this immense attraction had come about but she wanted this woman more than she could bear. In short order they were both standing there naked. Joan shyly looked everywhere but AT Graces body. Grace had no qualms and looked lustfully over Joan's.

Pulling her in for an embrace, Grace could feel the tension in Joan's body. The unfamiliarity of a woman's body was scaring her, despite her wantings. Grace soothed her with gentle caresses. Nothing intimate. Just gentle caresses. Soon Joan was returning those caresses and reaching to Grace for a kiss. Joan surprised Grace with the intensity of the passion that came with that kiss. Grace wondered if Joan was as aware of what she was doing as Grace was. She didn't think so. The caresses became more fevered and gently intimate. They both wanted it, they craved it. The first touch below her navel had Joan making small moaning noises, unaware how inflaming they were, they coincided with her harsh breathing from the kisses they were exchanging. Graces hand circled lower to Joan's lower hair. Definitely red in color, her fingers stretched through it, touching lightly. Joan took her own hand and pressed Graces harder against her crotch, slightly grinding it in, her hips pushing against the hands. Surprised, Grace granted her wish.

At the first touch of her clit Joan's knees began to buckle. Grace lowered her to the bed and began making love to her in earnest. No hesitation. Determined caresses meant to arouse her. Joan was nibbling along Graces shoulder but she actually bit her when Grace touched her wet crotch. Moaning in a pleading sort of way, Joan was on fire. Grace set out to put more fuel on the fire by placing a finger



inside of her and moving slowly. Joan bucked up at that hand. Two fingers and she was moaning, shamelessly. Grace knew her own crotch was wet from these goings on. She placed Joan's other hand on her own crotch and cringed a little at how zealously Joan imitated her. Slowing her down a little to an even rhythm had them both in ecstasy. Grace came quickly. She knew her body well and knew the desires that had been building all night. She captured Joan's mouth again with her own and deepened the kisses; deeply her tongue plunged, imitating her fingers. She could tell by the gushing moisture on her hand and the moans coming from Joan how close she was to a climax. Grace captured Joan's scream in her mouth as she came. Grace didn't stop the rhythm though. She continued until Joan had come a second time. Little cries followed for a time. Grace was amazed at the power of Joan's climax. Smiling to herself at what she had caused, she lay down next to her, kissing her breasts and her mouth, in a thank you. Soothing caresses followed. Not wanting to frighten her by doing other things to her, Grace decided not to proceed any further tonight.

When their breathing had returned to normal, Grace rose and went to the bathroom to clean up. As she had left so abruptly, Joan was confused. She laid there stunned. Her own insecurities surfaced and she thought she had done something wrong. Joan was about to follow to the bathroom when Grace returned with a warm wash cloth. She proceeded to wash between Joan's legs much to her mortification. Joan reached for the cloth to finish and Grace let her knowing she needed to adjust. Joan was surprised and then embarrassed at the amount of cum that she was cleaning up. It seemed to be never ending. Finally she rose to go to the bathroom and finish cleaning herself.

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Shyly returning to the bedroom she saw that Grace had pulled off the bedspread and pulled down the sheets. She was unselfconsciously naked as she adjusted the pillows. Joan watched her from the bathroom door. Grace looked up and with her hand invited her into the bed. Hesitating only slightly, Joan joined her. Grace pulled her into an embrace with Joan's head resting on her shoulder. They snuggled together.

"Any regrets?"

Moving slightly to face up to her Joan replied, "No, should there be?"

"That depends on you actually. I don't have any."

"I don't think I do either."

Smiling, Grace leaned over and kissed her gently. Lying there together, holding each other was just so nice. Both became drowsy.

"Grace, I must tell you something."

Instantly awake and looking for her regrets Grace let Joan rise up. "What?"

Her face a mixture of emotions Joan was looking down at her hands. They were entwined with Graces in a hand hold. Disentangling them, Joan took a deep breath and blurted, "I've never had a climax before." Her faced flushed with her confession. She looked up to Grace and noted the amazement in her expression.

"Never?" She asked in astonishment. The passion that this woman had shared with her made that statement sound like a lie.

Joan shook her head. Her face was darker if possible with embarrassment.

"But you were married for seven years, you said."



Nodding in agreement Joan looked back down in mortification. “I know I’ve been close several times but never actually made it over the mountain.”

Blown away at this news, Grace could only stare. Pulling herself together she realized how vulnerable this woman was who lay in her bed. “Not even by yourself?”

Shaking her head Joan looked up. Grace could see the hurt that this news had inflicted on this woman. Reaching over, Grace again took her hands in hers and said, “Hey, this isn’t ANYTHING to be ashamed of, okay? I can tell you I KNOW for a fact that it couldn’t possibly be your fault. After what you just showed me you never need to convince me that you can’t orgasm. You may not know it but that was pretty powerful stuff.”

Looking up to see if she was just being placated, Joan smiled. Returning it, Grace again pulled her against her chest, kissing her on the way down, cuddling her close. They both drifted off to sleep.

TO BE CONTINUED...

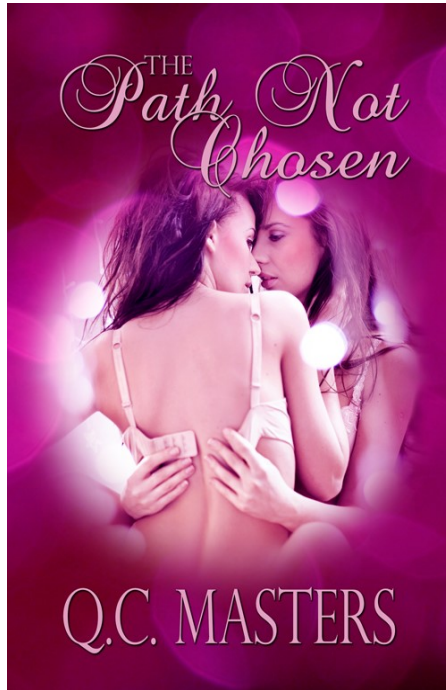
~ About the Author ~



K'Anne Meinel is a Lesbian Fiction bestselling author with more than 88 published works including shorts, novellas, and novels. She is an American author born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and raised in Oconomowoc. Upon early graduation from high school she went to a private college in Milwaukee and then moved to California for seventeen years before returning to the state. Many of her stories have Wisconsin in them as settings for her wonderful, realistic, and detailed backgrounds. Named the lesbian Danielle Steel of her time, K'Anne continues to write interesting stories in a variety of genres in both the lesbian and mainstream fiction categories.



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~

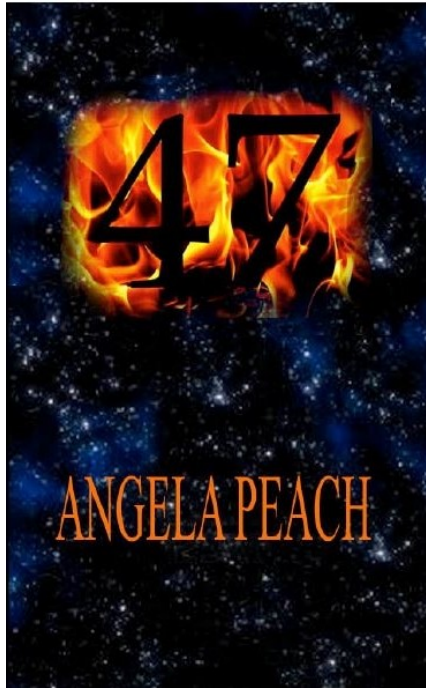


What do you do when you meet someone who changes everything you know about love and passion?

Paige Harlow is a good girl. She's always known where she was going in life: top grades, an ivy league school, a medical degree, regular church attendance, and a happy marriage to a man. So falling in love with her gorgeous roommate and best friend Alyssa Torres is no small crisis. Alyssa is chasing demons of her own, a medical condition that makes her an outcast and a family dysfunctional to the point of disintegration make her a questionable choice for any stable relationship. But Paige's heart is no longer her own. She must now battle the prejudices of her family, friends, and church and come to peace with her new sexuality before she can hope to win the affections of the woman of her dreams. But will love be enough?



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~



*As I watch the wormhole start to close, I make one last desperate plea ...
“Please? Please don’t make me do this?” I whisper.*

“You’re almost out of time, Lily. Please, just let go?”

I look down at the control panel. I know what I have to do.

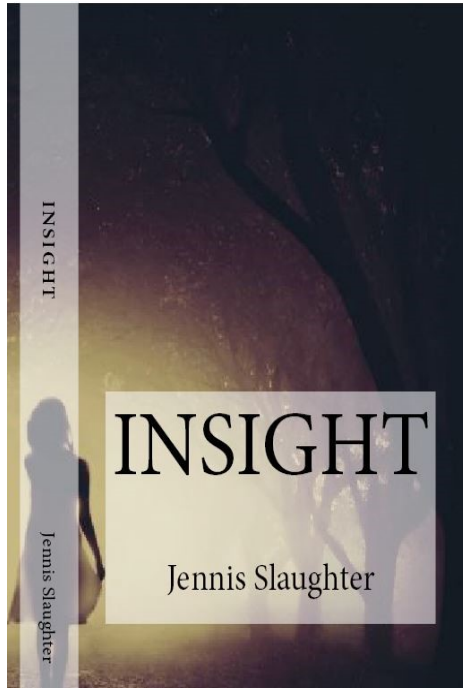
Lilith Madison is captain of the Phoenix, a spaceship filled with an elite crew and travelling through the Delta Gamma Quadrant. Their mission is mankind’s last hope for survival.

But there is a killer on board. One who kills without leaving a trace and seems intent on making sure their mission fails. With the ship falling apart and her crew being ruthlessly picked off one by one, Lilith must choose who to trust while tracking down the killer before it’s too late.

“A suspenseful...exciting...thrilling whodunit adventure in space...discover the shocking truth about what’s really happening on the Phoenix” (Clarion)



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~

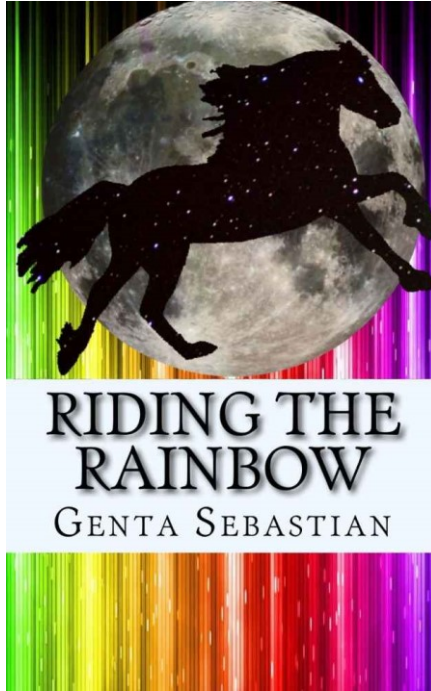


When Delaney Delacroix is called to locate a missing girl, she never plans on getting caught up with a human trafficking investigation or with the local witch. Meeting with Raelin Montrose changes her life in so many ways that Delaney isn't sure that this isn't destiny.

Raelin Montrose is a practicing Wiccan, and when the ley lines that run under her home tell her that someone is coming, she can't imagine that she was going to solve a mystery and find the love of her life at the same time.



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~



A Children's Novel for ages 8-11

Horse crazy Lily, eleven years old with two out-loud-and-proud mothers, is plump and clumsy. Her mothers say she's too young to ride horses, she can't seem to get anything right in class, and bullies torment her on the playground. Alone and lonely, how will she ever survive the mean girls of Hardyvale Elementary's fifth-grade?

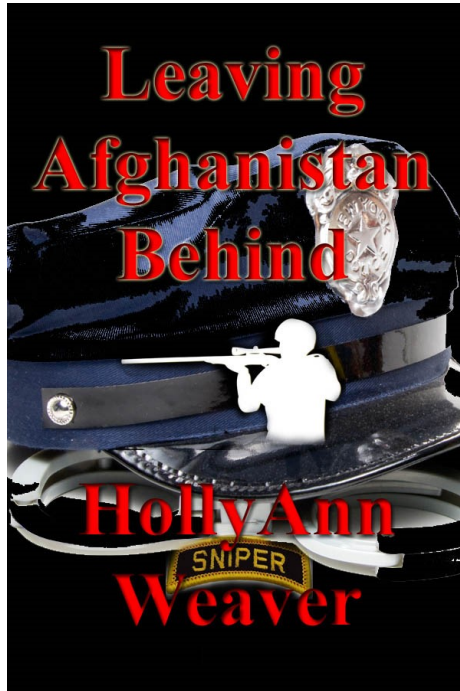
Across the room Clara sits still as a statue, never volunteering or raising her hand. To avoid the bullying that is Lily's daily life she answers only in a whisper with her head down, desperate to keep her family's secret that she has two fathers.

Then one day Clara makes a brave move that changes the girls' lives forever. She passes a note to Lily asking to meet secretly at lunch time. As they share cupcakes she explains about her in-the-closet dads. Both girls are relieved to finally have a friend, especially one who understands about living in a rainbow family.

Life gets better. As their friendship deepens and their families grow close, their circle of friends expand. The girls even volunteer together at the local animal shelter. Everything is great, until old lies and blackmail catch up with them. Can Lily and her mothers rescue Clara's family from disaster? Or will Lily lose her first and best friend?



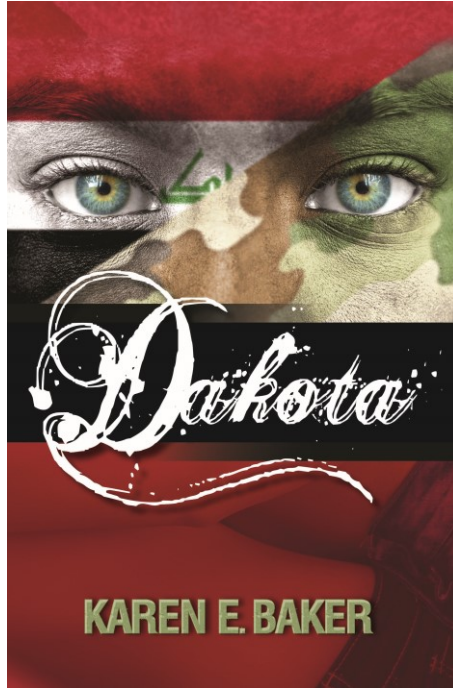
~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~



Amelia Gittens had the credit of being the first and only woman thus far in the United States military of being a sniper in combat, made possible by being in the Military Police unit of the crack 10th Mountain Infantry Division. After retirement she joins the City of New York Police Department, and suddenly finds herself involved in a suspect shooting incident which soon encroaches upon her entire life. In order to protect her therapist who has been targeted as a revenge killing, Amelia takes on the responsibility as if she was still in the Army, treating it as a tactical maneuver.



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~



When U.S. Marine Dakota McKnight returned home from her third tour in Operation Iraqi Freedom, she carried more baggage than the gear and dress blues she had deployed with. A vicious rocket-propelled grenade attack on her base left her best friend dead and Dakota physically and emotionally wounded. The marine who once carried herself with purpose and confidence, has returned broken and haunted by the horrors of war. When she returns to the civilian world, life is not easy, but with the help of her therapist, Janie, she is barely managing to hold her life together...then she meets Beth.

Beth Kendrick is an American history college professor. She is as straight-laced as they come, until Dakota enters her life, that is. Will her children understand what she is going through? Will she take a chance on the broken marine or decide to wait for the perfect someone to come along?

Time is on your side, they say, unless there is a dark, sinister evil at work. Is their love strong enough to hold these two people together? Will the love of a good woman help Dakota find the path to recovery? Or is she doomed to a life of inner turmoil and destruction that knows no end?



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~



An abused and bullied teenager is suddenly granted great and terrible powers by an ancient goddess. Each step towards womanhood is shaped by her new abilities, as is the woman she will become. Devil or angel, which will she be? Will the woman who chases her ever know for sure?

Both men tried to shoot her then, and the two women were stunned at the speed with which she moved. Penny charged straight at the gunmen then dove under their fire. Spinning on her back she kicked the legs from under one man, and as he fell, she kicked the gun from the other man's hand. Spinning back to the first man she saw the gun barrel moving toward her, and she lashed out with her foot. Her boot crushed his skull and she rolled to her feet to grab the last man in a neck lock. A quick twist and he lay lifeless in her arms.

She let him fall, as, breathing deeply, she came down off combat mode. "Are you ladies all right?" she asked as she untied the ropes that held the older woman.

"Who are you?" asked the old woman fearfully, as she pulled the tape from her mouth.

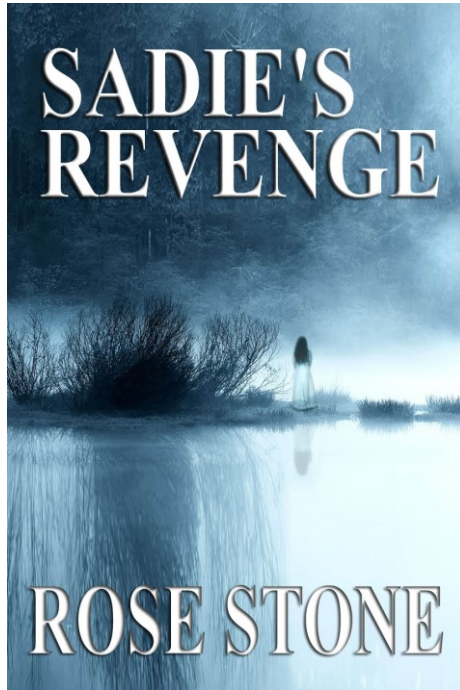
"They call me Lady Blue," smiled Penny as she helped the woman to stand.

"What are you?" It was the younger woman who spoke.

"Cold, hungry, dead tired, and covered in blue war paint," giggled Penny as she released the older woman's arm. She turned and began to search the bodies.



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~

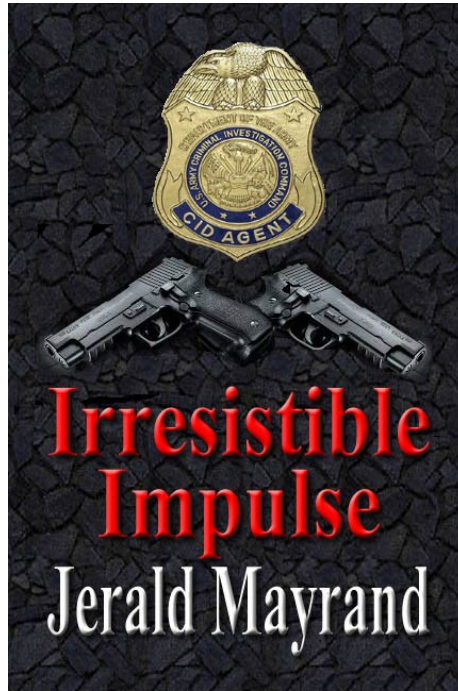


Slim Pritchard had been Sadie's first kiss and he planned to make her his wife one day, but when Sadie meets her new neighbor, Sparrow, plans change. Sadie is in love for the very first time.

One day, while defending Sadie, Sparrow comes to blows with Slim and he vows to take his revenge. Sadie's life has already been marred by so many tragedies. Will Slim come between the lovers? Or will Sadie and Sparrow overcome adversity and be together forever?



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~



When Mary Beth Kracko is found murdered in the enlisted housing area of Fort Kellog, Special Agent Barry Sheldon and Special Agent Robert Downs of the CID are put on the case. As the CID Agents investigate, they find there is a lot more to this than a simple homicide as they unravel a mystery where their own lives may be at stake. In 1971, the United States Army Criminal Investigation Command was designated as a separate major Army Command-to avoid command influence and give the investigating agents more room to do their jobs. These Agents are now only three phone calls from the Chief of Staff. Working with local commanders, the CID stands ready to solve crimes from the petty to the truly heinous. As the killer watches Agents Sheldon and Downs investigate the murder, his curiosity and impulses are at war with each other. Most people can control their urges, or impulses, but a certain few can't do that. They feel this compelling urge to do something and they do it. The assailant had an impulse he couldn't control and now there is a dead woman. Is it the first, will it be the last, will he be able to control his irresistible impulses?



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~



Louisa Cannes is trying to juggle her human resources career with looking after her family and keeping her girlfriend interested. Her ethics are repeatedly tested at the difficult job she depends on to pay for her nephew's life-saving treatment. Cripplingly long hours, an incompetent, lazy line manager and a couple of vindictive rivals don't exactly help, and she is in danger of burning out. But why does the evil boss, Penelope, seem determined to destroy Louisa one minute then groom her for promotion the next? Can Louisa avoid competing with her best friend, can she still call herself a people person, and who can she really trust in the race to the top...?



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~



This romance does not stop at the bedroom door, it brings you into the minds of two women falling in love. In Just Life & Love, the first installment in the love story of Elaine and Taryn, you get an inside look, up close and personal, at how things happen in the lesbian world; socially, romantically, as well as professionally. Just a heads up, this book is very racy, but heartfelt. You'll feel as though you're a part of everything that happens in this beautiful love story - in their bedroom or wherever they are. Whether you're laughing, crying, or caught off guard, this book will draw you in and cause many reactions that will leave you heavily anticipating the next.



~ Because a publisher should stand behind their authors~



After an unhappy marriage, Marie is lonely and wants to find love. Her old ways of searching for someone special hasn't worked. So after learning a new technique, she found the love of her life. Marie puts everything she has into this new relationship with Jada, wanting only her happiness, sacrificing all, even her mental and physical health. However through Jada's family and personal secrets, she wonders what is in it for her. Did she really find what she was looking for when she met Jada, a younger black woman?

Jada answers the call for companionship with Marie, but she's holding on to the past, unwilling to let her mother know her closely guarded secret. Unfortunately, she's confronted with some disturbing news which threatens to destroy her future.

Will her secrets keep her from happiness with Marie? Will her suspicions cause her to miss out on the best thing in her life?

Unbeknownst to Kelly, "another" answered the call for friendship with Marie was well. When Kelly's attracted to her dance partner, "Kelly" makes it her life's mission to become more than just Marie's friend, even if that means ruining her love's life.

Those that lie within the unsuspecting woman are a mystery to Kelly, but also to Marie and Jada as well.

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