

# GLIMPSE

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### *Disclaimer*

All characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to a real person, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

*This book is intended for mature audiences.*



*To you, my valued reader. Thank you so much.*



# 1

A week had passed since my split from my five-year relationship with Paige and I had decamped to a downtown apartment, furnishing it with my own items in preference to the ones tarnished with memories of my time with her. Even the refrigerator had been scratched by Paige's ring when she had leaned back to support herself in a frenzy of passion, although such displays of vigor as these had faded along with any hope in the months leading up to our break-up.

The nights in the new place brought desolation as I fell asleep under a maelstrom of thoughts. In the middle of the night my outstretched arm felt for Paige but, instead, I awoke staring at a void of blackness.

The days held their own challenges; one minute, I craved the closeness I had shared with Paige and the next, I was enjoying my freedom. I longed for a resolve to my conflicted emotions and attempted to immerse myself in my work, but it offered little distraction from the torment.

Paige's tears of sorrow stayed with me as a recurring reminder of unsettling times and prompted thoughts: *Maybe*

*I'll stay single and satisfy my sexual urges on a path of promiscuousness to prevent the heartache of another break-up.* I needed to subdue such thoughts, so they did not poison my prospects of finding love again.

I returned to the gym. Amid the turmoil of the break-up, I had neglected my adherence to a trimmed and toned lifestyle. I decided to use the gym in my apartment building, which was equipped with treadmills, exercise bikes, weight benches, and a dumbbell rack. In the back corner, a punching bag, which I intended to use to hone my passion for mixed martial arts, hung from the ceiling. Inside the gym, I spotted one other person – a girl jogging on a treadmill. Her workout pants and top clung to a body molded from the template of my desires. Her blond hair, pulled back into a ponytail, touched the middle of her back.

I placed my towel on the seat of a weight bench and glanced toward the treadmills. I caught her eye and smiled. She acknowledged me with a polite smile and returned her attention back to the treadmill's display.

Twenty minutes passed and, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed her reduce the speed to a walking pace. The machine came to a stop, she stepped off and sat on an exercise mat in a stretching position. After ten minutes, she got up from the mat, gathered her gear and headed toward the exit.

I sat performing dumbbell shoulder presses as she approached. I turned my head in her direction. Our eyes met. Her skin glistened with beads of sweat, droplets of nectar trickling down her tanned physique. She smiled as she walked past. I placed the dumbbells on the floor and glanced toward the exit. She had disappeared from view behind the closing door. Her flirty glances had conjured thoughts of the dating scene and what would transpire when I returned to it.

## GLIMPSE

\* \* \*

Three weeks passed. I divulged my intentions to friends of getting back into dating. They displayed concern and urged me to restrain from the temptation, but I defied them.

My first date after the end of a five-year relationship would be on a Saturday. I showered, shaved and got dressed for the date, throwing on jeans and a white long-sleeved shirt. The day's end brought a chill with it, so I grabbed a black overcoat from the closet. I put it on and made my way outside onto the balcony. The view from my twentieth-floor apartment incorporated the city and the hugging waterways of the river. I leaned on the balcony's railing and gazed at the glistening water as it snaked into the distance.

I caught sight of an object clinging to the sleeve of my overcoat and plucked it from the fabric, bringing it to eye-level to examine it. I rolled it back and forth, a single strand of hair pinched between my index finger and thumb, its shade of blond and length resembling Paige's. My mind drifted into a state of reminiscence of our time together. I released my grip, allowing the breeze to steal it from my grasp. But the assault continued, this time effusing from the collar. I pressed my nose into the wool fibres and smelled the residue of an enchantress as the scent of Paige's perfume filled my nostrils. I tightened the overcoat around my body, visualizing Paige wrapped in my arms. I continued to stare into the distance with apprehension at the thought of my plunge back into the dating scene.

I arrived at the date before Harper and found a table inside the café. Minutes later, she appeared at the doorway. I gave her a saluting wave. Harper smiled and wove her way through the tables.

I stood up to greet her, placing a hand with the lightest of touches on her arm and kissed her on the cheek. I pulled back to meet her gaze, observing how the smokiness of her eyeliner accented the greens of her eyes. Her shoulder-length auburn hair resembled the curls and waves of the ocean at sunset and freckles scattered across her nose and cheeks enhanced her pale complexion.

During the date, I was reluctant to engage in Harper's flirting. The touch of her hand upon mine carried an element of deceit. The physicality of my time with Paige may have passed but the specter of her affected my date with Harper.

I was overcome with apprehension as I sat with this beautiful, intelligent woman. As our conversation continued, guilt took hold of me. Harper had gone to the effort of dressing up and meeting me, but I could only offer her a glimpse of my charm.

Ten minutes passed. Harper looked at her watch and ended the date, mentioning she had to meet a friend for drinks. Her abrupt departure didn't surprise me. My disposition had, in all likelihood, been construed as a sign of disinterest. My behavior had sabotaged the evening and decided my fate with her.

\* \* \*

The dates continued, at times with a sense of nostalgia whenever I attended cafés and restaurants I had frequented with Paige. My date with Jennifer was a testimony of such occurrences. She suggested we meet at a café that held fond memories for me.

I parked the car and glanced down the street at the café. My affiliation with the place had kept me from setting foot inside since the break-up. Approaching the door, I stared at



the grey bistro-styled tables and chairs outside, where Paige and I had spent summer evenings savoring French cuisine and enjoying tastings from the world's winery regions. I recalled how the flame from the candle on the table had drawn me into her gaze as it flickered in the evening breeze.

The aroma of coffee and baked pastries greeted me as I entered the café. Raphael, the owner of the establishment, stood behind the counter at the rear of the shop. I caught his eye and he gave me a nod accompanied by a smile. I mustered up a half-smile in return as discomfort washed over me at the thought of Paige's absence from my side.

Paige and I had forged a friendship with Raphael over the years. He had met his Australian wife while working in Paris in his twenties. They had come back to Australia to set up a French-styled café. Paige and I had visited Paris together two years into our relationship and had fallen in love with the city.

Raphael's wife emerged from the back room and his steady gaze absorbed her presence. Normally, witnessing their affection would allow me a degree of sentimentality, but my break-up with Paige had clouded the prism of their love with a sting of reality. I diverted my gaze and scanned the room to see if Jennifer had arrived and spotted her on the far side of the room. I smiled at her, hoping it would mask the chaos of my attempt to suppress thoughts of Paige.

After an hour, the date ended. I thanked Jennifer for a nice time and mentioned I'd take care of the check. Our conversation had flowed with ease but, with the absence of chemistry, I decided against a second date with her.

I made my way to the counter. Raphael looked up from his paperwork over the lenses of his glasses and smiled.

"How are you?" he asked.

"I'm OK," I replied

“And Paige?”

I cleared my throat. “Paige and I have split up.”

His eyes widened with shock and surprise. “So sorry to hear that,” he said. He hesitated, then spoke to me in French. Over the years, we had spoken in French to one another as I was interested in learning the language.

I frowned and hung my head before finally dragging my gaze back to his compassionate stare. “Merci,” I said, acknowledging his solicitude.

I paid the check and made my way toward the exit. Stepping outside, I slipped on my sunglasses to avoid the morning glare, with Raphael’s words resonating in my thoughts. “You two seemed so good together.”

## 2

The weeks turned into months. I planned to collect the remainder of my possessions from the house that Paige and I had shared. I realized I would be severing my ties with her in more ways than one. My apprehension about this visit was amplified by the thought I would be parting from a cherished possession – our dog, Bonnie, who we had bought six months into our relationship together.

I reflected on the day we had picked up Bonnie from the breeder. We had approached the pen and spotted four puppies huddled in the corner fast asleep while the remaining three played. One particular puppy ignored her siblings and acknowledged our presence by waddling toward us and placing her front paws on the cage. She was a cute, black Maltese Shih Tzu. I asked if I could hold her. The owner reached into the pen, scooped her up and placed her tiny frame into my cupped hands. The puppy's tail wagged with excitement. I'll admit, growing up, my family had a Labrador Retriever, so I was inclined to bigger dogs. But, after holding her and noticing Paige's expression of adoration, there was no question about whether we'd take her.

After our separation, my work schedule, which had required me to be away for days on end, hindered my chances of getting custody of Bonnie, though the conditions of our break-up allowed me to visit her. Paige would be at work whenever I went to the house to take Bonnie for a walk. Eventually, I began to taper off my visits, knowing I would have to refrain from seeing Bonnie so often, as the realities of the break-up unfolded.

So, on the day I planned to part from Bonnie permanently, I drove to the house to take her to the beach for one last run. When I pulled into the driveway, she raced from the front porch onto the lawn and waited by the gate, tail wagging. I opened the gate. Bonnie greeted me and scooted into the open driver's side door before leaping into her position in the passenger seat. I collected the last of my possessions – some sporting gear – from the garage before joining Bonnie in the car.

On the beach, I bent over and released her from the leash. She dashed for the water before veering toward a flock of birds and then continued to race off until she was a speck in the distance. I walked for miles along the beach, finding the ocean air a diversion from the distress of the break-up. Bonnie would appear from a dune to be by my side, tail wagging, and then race off again.

After returning from the walk, I sat on the steps of the front porch with Bonnie nuzzled against my leg. I savored the minutes while dreading the moment I would have to say goodbye to her. I was consoled by the thought that Paige loved Bonnie as much as I did and I would be leaving her in good hands.

Gripped by the dilemma confronting me, I drew a deep breath, gave Bonnie a cuddle and whispered, 'Bye girl.' My

voice shook with emotion. She stared up at me with her adorable tiny black eyes. Sorrow surged through me. I made my way to the car with reluctance while Bonnie watched me through the porch's wooden slats. Driving away, I took one last look at the home Paige and I had built together.

\* \* \*

I went on a flurry of first dates. I construed my actions as a means of escapism and as a way to replace the once familiar companionship in an instant.

The majority of my dates were from online dating services. I learned not to take rejection to heart. There were women I found appealing and whose criteria I appeared to meet, yet they declined my request for a date. I accepted these women's predilections as their prerogative. After all, my own criteria could be questioned as I had rejected requests sometimes from women for superficial reasons.

There was one date that stood out more than the others.

\* \* \*

I made my way to Anna's bayside suburb located a thirty-five minute drive away on the other side of town. My search for a parking spot along the esplanade was hindered by those seeking refuge from the intense heat of the day. I broadened my search and located a parking spot down a side street, a fifteen-minute walk from the café where we were meeting. As I walked in the direction of the café via the esplanade, a breeze blew from across the bay but offered little relief in the sultry conditions.

I entered the café, welcoming the chill from the air-conditioning unit that screamed in protest over the sound of the customers' chatter. I searched for Anna as sweat ran down

my back. All the women in the room with blond hair had partners with them.

A movement caught the corner of my eye and I looked toward the back of the room where a woman was waving in my direction. The hand signaling me belonged to a brunette with hair styled in a bob cut, not the long-haired blonde depicted in Anna's profile shots. I approached and she smiled. Dimples appeared on her cheeks, enhancing the beauty of her smile.

As soon as I sat down, the waitress arrived to take our orders. I scanned the drinks menu, skipping over the hot beverages which canceled out my preference for a latte. Three quarters down the page, the words 'ice-cold lemonade' caught my eye.

The waitress walked away with our orders and Anna opened the conversation with an apology for her change of appearance. She told me how, after her divorce, she'd had the urge to change her look and had found it reinvigorating. I admit, I preferred her as a blonde, like her photos, but as our conversation continued, I found she captivated my attention. I decided her chameleon inclinations were irrelevant.

After an hour and a half of chatting, we decided to leave and get a bite to eat. As we exited the café, the sun was sinking into the bay and the heat had subsided.

We strolled to an Italian restaurant a few minutes' walk away, where we ordered pizza accompanied by two glasses of red wine.

As the date progressed, the topic of discussion touched on a more solemn subject. She confided in me, expressing how her seven-year marriage had ended a year before the actual split, but she couldn't come to terms with it. She confessed that hope had kept her company in those last twelve months.

A shadow crossed her eyes as she revealed the hurt. I sipped my wine, listening to the unburdening of her suppressed thoughts. At times, her voice trembled as she divulged the details of her marriage break-up.

Then she asked, "How long have you been single?"

I swallowed. "Not long, a few months."

"I thought so," she said.

"That obvious?"

"Just something I noticed in your eyes when I mentioned certain things about my break-up."

I nodded slightly in acceptance. She was so right. A woman's intuition is so admirable.

A silence fell between us as we both collected our thoughts before continuing the conversation with a more light-hearted tone.

By the time we left the restaurant, a cool breeze was blowing. I walked Anna down a dimly lit side street to her car. She turned to face me and thanked me for a nice time. Her smile faded. "I apologize for being so frank during our date."

"No apologies needed. To be honest, I found it comforting ... talking to you."

"I was thinking the exact same thing." She kissed me on the cheek and whispered in my ear, "Thanks again for listening."

The warmth of her breath and the sincerity of her words took the chill from the night air. She opened the door to her car.

"Hey," I said. She turned to look at me. "Your hair looks great, by the way."

"Thanks." Her eyes brightened at my comment.

As her car pulled away, she gave me a smile and a quick wave.

I waved back and shivered as another chilling gust swept through the streets.



### 3

I walked in the direction of the street-side entrance to the rooftop bar where Claire and I had planned to meet. The vibrancy of the bar's Friday night atmosphere cascaded ten floors onto the street below. Claire had arrived before me and I greeted her with a kiss on the cheek.

Two-and-a-half hours passed and the date ended. In the process of saying goodbye and thanking Claire for a nice time, it occurred to me that, bound by my own self-obsession, I never pursued the women who showed an interest in seeing me again. I decided to break my reckless first-date regime and I asked Claire for a second date, which she accepted with a smile.

A week passed before we caught up again. I arrived before Claire and stood outside the restaurant where we had organized to meet. I glanced over my right shoulder and saw her approach. She wore a dark-green, long-sleeved dress, its hem sitting inches above her knees. The wind blew, catching the fabric so that it clung to her skin, caressing the contours of her body.

After dinner, we left the restaurant and Claire asked if I'd like to come to her place for dessert.

"What do you have?" I asked and smiled.

"You'll have to wait and see," she replied with a coquettish grin.

Upon entering her apartment, Claire went to the kitchen and pulled out a container of gelato from the freezer. She opened a cupboard, grabbing two bowls and spoons from the top drawer and placing them on the counter. She grasped a handful of her long, black hair, pulling it over her right shoulder and baring the curves of her neck.

I approached her from behind and placed my hands on her hips as I kissed her on the collarbone before slowly ascending the fragrant curvature of her neckline and nibbling on her earlobe.

She spun round to face me. We kissed, but I found the passion of the moment was haunted by memories of Paige. I continued to kiss Claire, hoping my distraction did not unnerve her.

I caressed the nape of her neck with my right hand while my left reached under her dress, feeling the smooth skin of her thigh. My touch moved with purpose, inching upward and expecting to find the material of her underwear, but nothing. I checked one more time and pulled back. Her eyes widened with humor.

"The whole night?" I asked

She grinned. "Uh-huh!"

"That's so hot," I said.

During the act, the taste of Claire's lips, the smell of her scent, and her touch upon my skin felt foreign. Afterward, I lay on my back in the dark, wide awake, staring at the ceiling as Claire lay beside me fast asleep. The silence of the night

was broken by my heavy sigh as I surrendered to thoughts of intimacy in my relationship with Paige. I would know how to react and respond to Paige's urges and desires with ease. But now, my prowess met with frustration as Claire's responses differed from Paige's.

I continued to torment myself with memories of Paige moaning for my touch and to experience it one more time. Although I banished the notion due to the nature of our split, the disintegration of our amity had affected romance in the bedroom. Passion became lost in a whirlpool of confusion. The distinction between making love and just having sex had become a blur with Paige, which is why such acts of intimacy became scarce near the end of our relationship.

I tried the 'sleeping with the ex' thing after a previous relationship for a short period but concluded that what we had was a paradox. I asked myself, *why spend this time together if there's no emotional or spiritual connection anymore?*

The following morning, I stood outside Claire's apartment building squinting at the rising sun as I waited for the cab to arrive. I sighed with discontent. With my feelings shrouded in conflict as a result of the break-up, I couldn't entertain the prospect of our one night together progressing any further.

\* \* \*

I hoped time would heal the effects of my break-up with Paige, but recollections of our time together would creep into my daily thoughts. After the split, I sometimes appeared cold to my friends and colleagues when referring to the break-up with Paige. I hadn't shown many signs of grieving in the face of adversity but, instead, had imprisoned my feelings in the depths of my mind. After months of suppressing and treating

my feelings with contempt, I couldn't restrain them any longer.

One day, I was in the gym in my apartment building. I was not delivering the usual controlled punches and kicks to the punching bag that it had become accustomed to. My session, fueled by frustration, culminated in a discharge of emotions. I collapsed in an exhausted heap on the floor. In the isolation of the gym, it dawned on me, the depth of my love for Paige had been obscured by the pain in the midst of our fallout.

\* \* \*

One Saturday morning, a few weeks later, I heard a woman's voice call my name while I jogged along a riverside pathway. I turned to look behind me. An image of beauty greeted me. Chantal, an ex of mine, stood there with hands on hips, puffing from her run. I'd always had a soft spot for Chantal and seeing her again reaffirmed this as my heartbeat quickened in her presence.

We exchanged updates on each other's lives. Her presence tested my already vulnerable heart as it attempted to rid itself of one ex while another asserted her charm upon me. Our encounter evoked a cocktail of memories about why we broke up. By the time I'd recognized the disparities in our personalities, emotions had assumed control and my judgment had become clouded. I persisted but, as the months went by, nothing changed. A sense of trepidation cast a shadow over us, even during good times together.

Although I cared for her and craved for resolve with each passing day, the inevitability of our demise loomed. My emotions in overdrive, I tried to find a remedy to our daily tug of war. Unfortunately, we couldn't reach a compromise and

I had to succumb to a sense of self-condemnation. I had to accept Chantal for who she was and not for who I wished her to be.

In spite of the downfall of my relationship with Chantal, I still held fond memories of our time together. We had shared an intensity I hadn't experienced before in all facets of our relationship, from the bedroom to our debated discussions. The first time Chantal and I slept together she exposed another side to her personality. The sex had the energy of a grappling match as we moved from one position to the next. The following morning, I went into her bathroom and looked in the mirror to find fine scratches from her fingernails covering my back.

Thoughts of Chantal's sexual proclivities and a willingness to make use of her surroundings came flooding back to me. One Saturday night, we were having drinks and Chantal suggested we have sex on the balcony. I wasn't surprised by her bold request; she had alluded to her tendencies while on our second date together, making remarks in regard to her sexual orientations, although I was yet to discover the extent of her inclinations. On that night, with the balcony lights turned off, two silhouettes merged as one in full view of the surrounding apartments.

I hadn't met a woman as risqué as Chantal before. The higher the risk of getting caught in the act, the more aroused she became. Throughout our time together, she'd take advantage of any situation while out to satisfy her urges and appetite to perform such acts of audacity. Looking back on the places we'd had sex, that moment on her balcony now appeared restrained, if not tame, for her.

Now, as our encounter came to an end, I felt an urge to experience, once more, the passion we had shared, for old

time's sake. But, due to the nature of our split, I restrained myself and didn't act upon the impulse. My relationship with Chantal had exposed me to the perils of love and my first heartbreak.

We said our goodbyes and, as I turned to walk away, she called out, "Maybe I'll see you again," with the cutest grin.

## 4

I received a message from Jody who I knew from the business seminars I had attended over the years. I found Jody's persona during conferences to be professional and I never thought she was attracted to me. Maybe any attempt by her or any other woman to win my heart had been stifled by my stirring love for Paige.

Now in my late thirties, I guessed Jody was at least ten years younger than me. In response to her message, I called her. After a thirty-minute conversation, which involved some flirting, we agreed to meet in two days.

I arrived at the café before Jody. She emerged from a side street, the corporate attire I'd seen her wearing at conferences now replaced by jeans and a white blouse. Her hair, freed from the workplace bindings, now fell past her shoulders. On our date, the depth of our conversation was a far cry from the chitchat that had circulated at seminars. I learned that she was twenty-four years old. An hour into the conversation, the topic turned explicit by touching on sexual intimacy.

“What advice would you give someone on how to pleasure a woman?” Jody asked.

“Practice, practice, practice!” I said. By the look on her face, I could tell she thought I referred to the other male organ. I decided to clarify myself. “I’ve learned the tongue has other uses and, if exercised effectively, can be just as satisfying to my partner as words of praise.” I grinned.

“Oh! Wow.” Her voice trembled with excitement as her tongue caressed her lips.

After drinks, we walked two blocks to a bistro nestled among what used to be an industrial area but was now converted to luxury apartments. As the date came to an end, I asked if she’d like to go to a restaurant or come to my place for a home-cooked meal for our second date.

Jody looked away and pursed her lips. “Hmmm, I’ll take the second one.” Her eyes glowed with amusement.

\* \* \*

The day of our second date, I opened the door to the wine fridge and scanned the labels of the many reds and whites, but none were from the region Jody had mentioned on our date. I grabbed my phone and keys from the kitchen table and headed out the door.

The elevator stopped on the seventeenth floor. The doors slid open and in walked the girl from the gym. She smiled at me. I recalled how her smile had provided me with a brief relief from the turmoil of my break-up when I’d first seen her all those months ago in the gym. This time a drumming sounded from within my chest.

She wore a black leather jacket and a white v-necked top, revealing a hint of cleavage. Her neckline was embellished by a gold medallion necklace, her earlobes accessorized by pearls,



her cheeks were tinged in an autumn glow, and her manicured nails shone with pink polish. A pair of black pants and strappy heels completed her outfit. The scent of her alluring perfume filled the elevator, provoking explicit images flashing through my mind of the two of us in the confined space.

She leaned up against the side of the elevator wall and tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

"Big night planned?" I asked, attempting to stifle the intensifying drumming.

"A friend's birthday," she replied.

Before I could say another word, the elevator reached the ground floor. She smiled and said, 'Have a good night,' before she exited the elevator.

I shopped for the items I needed and returned to the apartment to get dressed for Jody's arrival. An hour later, the intercom buzzed. I pressed the button allowing Jody access into the building and elevator to my floor. I opened the front door and waited for her to exit the elevator. She appeared wearing an off-the-shoulder dress that reached to the middle of her thighs. In her heels, she stood eye-level to my six-foot-one frame.

The dimmed lighting and soft music that greeted her as she walked into the living room created an intimate mood, which I hoped would be a prologue to the evening's conclusion. I passed her a glass of red wine from a region she'd mentioned. She commented on the simmering aroma of the night's offerings. I had prepared a pasta dish which I had learned she liked on our first date. We sat outside on the balcony, enjoying an assortment of cheeses and olives, and sipping on wine, while watching the sun go down over the city, before moving inside to a dining table lit by candles.

After dinner, we relaxed on the sofa, chatting and listening to music. The lightest brush of her hand against my arm left a tingling sensation in its wake. Whenever I looked away, out of the corner of my eye, I could see her gaze linger on me. I placed my wine glass on the coffee table, leaned in and kissed her. She straddled me on the sofa and I placed my palms on either side of her cheeks. Her hair provided a canopy while we kissed. She swayed her hips, rubbing herself upon my denim jeans with an arousing effect. She moved her mouth to my neck, whispering how amazing I smelled and leaving a trail of soft kisses until she nibbled on my earlobe. Her hand reached for my crotch, rubbing and caressing. She unbuckled my belt, undid the button on my jeans and slid the zipper down. As she reached inside, I could feel myself harden in her hand.

She got up, kneeled on the sofa beside me and moved her thumb over the head, feeling my arousal before wrapping her lips around it. I watched her flickering tongue pleasure me and pulled the elastic edging of her underwear aside, massaging, until my finger slid inside of her. I removed my hand and she grabbed my finger, placing it into her mouth, licking and tasting herself. I removed her dress, underwear and bra, and lay her back onto the sofa, burying my head between her legs. Jody let out a moan as my lips touched the tender skin of her thigh. I kissed her inner thighs, neglecting and prolonging the inevitable. I repeated this teasing over and over again until she cried out, aching for my tongue to finally touch her.

She quivered beneath the tip of my tongue, while I rode the rapid movements of her body. She grasped my hair, arched back and tilted her head to one side, lips pressed together with the corners curling upward, displaying her delight. She was

deliciously swollen and wet as I circled her clitoris with my tongue and played with her nipples, listening to her reaction. I could feel myself growing larger and harder, turned on by the rapture escaping her lips. Her body stiffened under my hands, until she cried out my name in pleasure, climaxing in my mouth.

I made my way up her stomach with soft kisses on the skin and smiled to myself at the thought of satisfying her. I kissed her nipples and neck before hovering over her mouth. She lifted her head and pressed her lips hard against mine.

I led Jody by the hand to the bedroom where I stripped off my clothes and entered her. A moan resonated from deep within me as the anticipated urge to indulge in her body became reality.

Afterward, she lay in my arms with her head resting on my chest. She glanced up at me and smiled. I kissed her on the forehead and we fell asleep.

The next day I woke up with a numb tongue from its exertion of the night before. The after-effects evoked memories of Paige and our lovemaking. I'd never gone down on a woman as often as I had with her. I would joke with her, saying my tongue had to be the fittest part of my body.

\* \* \*

I decided to take Jody on a weekend getaway to a cabin by the lake, a two-hour drive away. Jody asked if the roof of my convertible could be retracted for the journey. She relished in the experience although, after thirty minutes of wind-blown hair, she reached into a bag at her feet to grab a cap and hair tie. She pulled her hair back into a ponytail and slipped it through the cap's rear opening.

Just over an hour into the drive, I could see the mountain range which would be the backdrop of our indulgence. I glanced at Jody, slumped in her seat, watching the lush countryside go by through sleepy eyes and tapping her feet to an eighties rock band on the radio. I noticed an object in the bag she had fetched her cap from earlier.

“Jody?”

She turned her head to look at me, “Yeah,” she murmured.

“What’s that?” I motioned toward the bag.

“Oh. It’s my new toy.”

“And what’s it doing on our trip?”

“I thought we could have some fun with it later.” She gave me a sheepish grin.

“Really? How about now?” I smiled.

Jody grinned and reached into her bag, grabbing the object. She spread her legs and, as she was wearing a short denim skirt, I could see the whites of her underwear. She turned the object on and placed it between her legs.

“Ready?” she said, holding the ‘toy’ inches from herself.

She placed her head back onto the headrest and closed her eyes. I attempted to concentrate on driving but with difficulty as the sounds of pleasure spilling from her pressed lips distracted me.

She continued, then all of a sudden, she let out a loud moan.

“Wow,” I said, still attempting to focus on the road.

“You’re telling me,” she said, tossing the vibrator back into the bag.

We stopped at a town near the lake to pick up supplies. A few miles out of town, we turned off the main road onto a gravel surface canopied by overhanging trees. After a few minutes driving, a clearing appeared revealing a cabin with

the lake as its backdrop. I parked and we stepped out of the vehicle, soaking up the surroundings as the smell of pine pervaded the air.

The sound of pebbles beneath our feet accompanied us up the path to the front door of the cabin. I unlocked the door and entered, scanning the living room. To my right, a stone fireplace made an enticing centerpiece. On the far side of the room, the sun streamed through French doors highlighting a vase on a large wooden table, containing a mix of flowers. I had prearranged for them to be placed there as I knew Jody loved fresh flowers. The hardwood floors creaked as we entered the living room. Jody grabbed my hand and squeezed it as she noticed the flowers, expressing her gratitude with a kiss before walking over to smell them.

Once we settled in, we took a walk around the lake and returned an hour later to change and prepare dinner. As we cooked together, I took Jody in my arms and slow danced with her in the kitchen. I pivoted her away from me and back. She smiled in amusement. I spun her round and kissed her on the neck before continuing with the dinner preparations. She leaned over, swooning against the kitchen counter. "Wow!" she said.

We ate on the back deck with its picturesque view of the lake and mountainscape.

After dinner, Jody took a sip from her beer and placed it on the table. She rose from her seat without saying a word and descended the steps of the deck. She ambled toward the lake, pausing a few feet from the water's edge and glanced over her left shoulder at me. She flicked the left strap of her sundress off her shoulder, followed by the right. The dress slid over the contours of her frame and fell in a heap at her feet. Jody turned her focus back to the lake, taking off her

bra and underwear. She waded into the water, until her lower body was submerged. She turned to face me. "Coming in?" she said.

I headed toward the lake at a brisk pace, stripping off clothing, but then slowed to a dawdle so I could take in the beauty of Jody's silhouetted body against the setting sun. I dabbled my feet into the chill of the lake and stripped off the last of my clothing – a t-shirt – and tossed it on the ground. I approached Jody and wrapped my arms around her from behind, feeling the warmth of her body pressed against mine. We listened to the creatures of the night awaken in the fading light. Our bodies swayed together. I moved my hands over the curves of her body, feeling wet silky skin. We peered upward at the night sky as stars materialized in their masses without the hindrance of the city glare.

Being on the cusp of autumn, the summer warmth in the air waned. We retreated inside to the fireplace, looking forward to enjoying its amorous touch. In a state of undress, we wrapped ourselves in a blanket in front of the fire, listening to the wind encircle the cabin with an eerie knocking.

I took Jody's hand and led her into the bedroom. I guided her backward onto the sheets, her body illuminated only by the flickering flames from the fireplace in the living room.

Jody had told me about a fantasy of having her hands held behind her head. I grabbed hold of her left hand and placed it behind her head, before doing the same with her right one. An expression of anticipation appeared on her face as she relinquished her body to me. I held her hands in place while we moved our hips in unison.

"Do you like it?" I asked softly.

"Love it," she murmured.

I released my grip and buried my fingers in her hair. She groaned with every slight tug. Then she pulled her legs back with admirable flexibility while I circled my hips, slowly thrusting over and over.

“You feel so good.” I groaned with pleasure.

“I’m so wet for you,” she murmured.

“I love that you are ... Wait there! I’ll be right back.”

I made my way to the kitchen where I grabbed ice cubes from the freezer and returned to the bedroom.

She smiled. “Oh, I’ve always wanted to try this.”

I asked Jody to close her eyes and held the cube above her legs so it dripped down her inner thighs, then continued to slowly trail it up her belly. She gasped and arched her back as the ice touched the warmth of her aroused skin. I traced the ice around the base of her nipples as they hardened and her moans of delight resounded.

“How does that feel?” I asked.

“Amazing.”

I placed what was left of the cube between my lips and ran it up her body, between her breasts, then transferred it into her mouth.

“Can you go down on me now?” I asked.

She smiled and slid down my body with the ice in her mouth. Afterward, she made her way up my stomach with chilled lips until her tongue met mine.

“What did that feel like for you?” she asked.

“It’s an incredible sensation. There’s the warmth of your mouth and the coolness of the ice, all mixed together.”

I positioned her on all fours and entered her from behind. Jody watched me in the reflection of the closet mirror.

“You’re so sexy,” I said, moving my hands up her back to her shoulders before slowly gliding them back toward me, caressing her ribs and waist, then grabbing hold of her hips.

I increased the rhythm and she lowered onto her elbows. “That’s it, harder,” she urged, clutching the sheets and burying her face into the pillow.

I thrust harder and faster, again and again, until I was close to exploding, so I slowed the tempo, controlling my breathing to prolong the impending orgasm. I didn’t want to come just yet as I relished in her pleasure.

Bending over, I cupped her right breast in my hand and kissed her once between the shoulder blades.

I moved onto my back and guided Jody on top of me as she placed me inside of her. I raised my pelvis slightly, feeling her grind against me.

“Wow, you’re deep,” she said, placing her hand on her navel.

She arched back. I placed my hand gently on her throat and then traced my middle finger down her cleavage, brushing her breasts with the other fingers, before continuing down her stomach and massaging between her legs with my thumb. I moved my hands back to her breast and gently pinched her nipples until her body stiffened and she orgasmed on top of me.

I placed my hands below her rib cage, lifting her up and thrusting with a quickened tempo until my body spasmed inside her. Jody collapsed forward onto my chest before moving and snuggling into my side.

We stayed like this for an hour, talking and entwining our fingers before taking a shower together. I watched the water cascade over her beautiful breasts. I recalled her saying how she had experienced her first orgasm in the shower, purely from the



sensation of water caressing her sensitive nipples and running between her legs. As I washed her back, I handed her the exfoliating sponge and whispered in her ear, "I'll be right back."

I stepped out of the shower and wrapped a towel around my waist making my way into the bedroom. I grabbed the toy from her bag. I knew it was waterproof because I had used the same type on a previous partner. I walked back into the bathroom with the towel slipping from my waist and falling in a heap on the floor.

Jody noticed the vibrator in my left hand. An elated smile spread across her face. I entered the shower, pinning Jody against the tiled wall, holding both her hands above her head with my right hand. I slightly tilted the shower head toward us to get more of the water flow.

Turning on the vibrator, I kept it on the lowest setting and placed it between her legs.

"That feels incredible. I'm so turned on," she said.

While we kissed, I changed the intensity of the settings, listening to her moans as warm water streamed between our bodies. Her body convulsed against the head of the vibrator and she groaned as water trickled down her lovely profile.

\* \* \*

In the morning, I woke before Jody and crept out of bed in an attempt not to wake her. She shivered from the absence of my body heat. We had banished the duvet to the foot of the bed during the night as our naked bodies provided enough warmth. I pulled the duvet up to her shoulders before heading to the kitchen to prepare breakfast. Peering out the kitchen window, I marveled at the ghostliness that had descended over the lake.

While I brewed coffee and prepared breakfast, I heard Jody call from the bedroom, “Good morning,” followed by a lengthy yawn as she stretched before saying with a playful tone, “I’m starving, what’s for breakfast?”

“Morning, your favorite: scrambled eggs,” I replied

“Oh yum, come give me cuddles first,” she said, giggling.

I abandoned breakfast and made my way into the bedroom. The top of her head and two eyes peered out from beneath the duvet, and I could sense her smile. When I reached the foot of the bed, she flung open the covers, inviting me in with a broad grin. We had planned to go for a walk around the lake after breakfast, but the fog hadn’t lifted. We went back to bed and made love again.

\* \* \*

I was working from home on a Thursday when I received a call from Jody asking if I’d like to have lunch with her. A work conference in the vicinity had brought her to my side of town. Jody mentioned she’d pick up sandwiches and be at my place in twenty minutes. She arrived carrying a paper bag labeled with the name of the downstairs deli. I kept the door open, admiring her figure as she entered. She was wearing a pencil skirt with a white blouse and high heels.

“Mmm!” I said with a grin, releasing my grip on the door handle.

She turned to look at me as she placed the paper bag on the kitchen counter. “They’re just my usual work clothes; you’ve seen me in this many times before.” She chuckled and tossed her hair out of her eyes.

“Sexy,” I said.

She blushed. “Well, thank you.”

She took the sandwiches from the paper bag and unwrapped them. I approached her from the side, pulling her hair away from her face and whispered in her ear, "I want you."

"Eh, what ... now?"

"Yes," I said.

"OK, but we don't have much time." She undid the zipper on her skirt.

"Leave it on," I said, my tone assertive.

I pushed her against the wall, pinning her arms above her head with one hand while the other hand made its way under her skirt. I began to rub. I could feel the material of her underwear becoming soaked. I kissed her lips, around her ear and down her neck.

"I love it when you pin me like this." She moaned.

I bent her over the kitchen table, lifted up her skirt, pulled her underwear aside, and entered her. I thrust inside her, then with one hand and keeping my fingers together, I slapped lightly in an upward motion on her behind.

"Do you like that?" I had recalled her mentioning this was one of her fantasies.

"I love it; you can do it harder if you like," she murmured.

I slapped her again, this time a little harder but in a slightly different area, being mindful not to hurt her.

"Harder," she said and moaned again.

A third time.

"That's it."

I replicated the intensity two more times.

I clasped her hair near the nape making a ponytail in my fist and pulled gently. I spanked her behind with the other hand. She moaned but louder this time.

She clutched the edges of the table as I thrust inside of her with a quickened tempo.

"I'm going to come," she murmured.

Her body convulsed with me simultaneously exploding inside her.

"Wow, that was intense," she said, panting, her upper body still laid out on the table.

"Sure was." I took a deep breath to slow my breathing.

When she stood up, I wrapped my arms around her from behind and kissed her on the neck.

"You like?" I whispered in her ear.

"Very much so." And she grinned.

Afterward, she adjusted her skirt, blouse and hair, and ate a sandwich, preparing to make her way back to the conference.

"Well, that revitalized me. The conference is so boring," she said.

I grinned. "Glad I could help." I gave Jody a kiss goodbye as she left the apartment.

Over the next few weeks, we caught up many times, although I knew the relationship wasn't going to last. I had known since our first date together when Jody had expressed her desire to give away the drudgery of working and backpack around the world for a year or two.

## 5

A few months passed.

I made my way through a crowd at the local markets which were held at night and where the cooking of different world cultures wafted through the air. I felt a tug on the back of my shirt and turned to the radiating presence of Paige.

The world blurred into the background as she stood before me. She spoke, the sound of her voice igniting a host of emotions. She stood only a few feet away. I knew every inch of her body, even the parts she considered imperfect, which made me love her more but now lay dormant from my adoring touch. Her blond hair, now a few inches shorter, rested on her shoulders.

We chatted. I inquired after her and how Bonnie was going, but I knew the conversation was a prelude to the topic of our break-up.

Sure enough, she expressed how she had treasured the time we spent together but, for the last eight months of the relationship, she felt I had fallen out of love with her, although her feelings for me had remained the same.

I stood stunned, attempting to curb the anguish welling up inside me. Words I longed to say were perched on the tip of my tongue. “I never stopped loving you,” I said.

She looked at the ground while I became transfixed by a flame from a tiki torch as it danced in the evening breeze. It still hurt to witness anguish upon her face.

After we said goodbye to each other, she smiled but her eyes remained sad. She turned and walked away. I stood watching her as she disappeared into the crowd and my heart sank as I thought about the love I had lost.

When I reached home, I slumped on the edge of the bed and reflected on our relationship once again, ruminating over what had gone wrong. My work commitments had absorbed my time to the point that I had ignored what mattered to me the most in life. In the year leading up to our break-up, our relationship had been further weakened by the notion of a failing love. In the midst of confusion and frustration, resentment added fuel to arguments filled with meaningless words. We spent many nights lying in bed together with the absence of touch. A kiss eluded our greetings as we arrived home from work each day and silence took hold of our life together.

In the end, our parting offered a resolution to end the arguing, although the sad conclusion could have been prevented if I hadn’t been so stubborn. My time with Paige had taught me to be more aware of my mulish ways.

A tear escaped from the outer corner of my eye. It flowed down my cheek, carrying the weight of my burden. As it cascaded from my chin and dissolved into my shirt, a sense of closure comforted me.

\* \* \*

Six weeks passed and, out of the blue, I received a call from Susan, who was in town for a work conference. I had met Susan in my twenties at a toga party held at a university campus she attended. A friend who was studying medicine had invited me along.

Thirty minutes after arriving at the party, I noticed Susan and introduced myself. Within minutes of chatting with each other, it began to pour with rain and toga-clad partygoers scattered for cover. Susan and I headed to the sanctuary of a boathouse by the river. We both chuckled as the effect of water on white garments took shape. I noticed the contoured beauty of her breasts revealed through the dampened material of the sheet. We sat on a bench as we chatted and watched droplets of rain dance on the wooden railing.

Four hours elapsed, which seemed like minutes, before we said goodbye to one another. Susan graduated not long after and headed back to her hometown two thousand miles away.

On the day of meeting Susan again, I had intended to go home after work to shower and change before our date, but the rigmaroles of work commitments had delayed me.

We greeted one another with a hug and a kiss on the cheek, although I longed to defy the formalities of our rendezvous by placing my lips on hers. The flow of conversation reaffirmed the chemistry we had shared all those years ago.

After drinks and tapas, we took a stroll along the river. With every step, I had the urge to kiss her. When we reached the end of the pier, I turned to face her, placed my hand on her hip, pulled her against me and kissed her. Our lips parted and the blues of her eyes now looked like large black pearls in the night.

"I've been longing for that all night," she said, smiling broadly.

"That makes two of us."

She bit down on her bottom lip. I boldly responded with, "My place?"

Within a breath, she answered, "Uh-huh," and grinned.

Back at my apartment, Susan made her way to the balcony and stepped outside to admire the view. I headed to the kitchen and grabbed a bottle of red from the wine fridge and poured two glasses. I carried the glasses out to Susan on the balcony.

I took a sip of wine, placed the glass on the outdoor table and kissed her.

She reached up, running her fingers down my cheek to my chin. "I love a light stubble on a guy," she said.

"I'm glad, because I didn't get time to shave before our date." I grinned.

"Hmm, I'm glad too." And we continued to kiss.

I led her by the hand to the bedroom where we began to undress each other. She yanked the tie from my suit and tossed it onto the bed. I unbuttoned her blouse and reached behind, unclasping the strap of her bra. It came loose with a single flick of my fingers.

Susan pulled away and stared into my eyes with a look of surprise. "Oh, you've done that a few times before," she said and smiled.

I laughed. "That was a fluke."

The next day, we farewelled each other and promised to stay in touch.



## 6

Since joining online dating, I had received messages from women living in other parts of the country. The thought of exploring beyond the confinement of my own city was enticing and led me to meet Ashley, who lived in Sydney, five hundred miles away. When we had first chatted over the phone, she mentioned how she loved the sound of my deep, husky voice. We messaged one another for a couple of weeks before organizing to meet.

One Friday after work, I threw a toothbrush, cologne, condoms, two extra t-shirts, underwear, socks, shorts and a pair of sneakers into an overnight bag. I showered and shaved and, while I put on jeans, dress shoes and a navy polo shirt, I organized a car to pick me up. I caught a flight to Sydney, checked into my hotel where I freshened up, then set out for the cocktail bar where we had planned to meet.

The buzz of the city brought an air of expectancy as I awaited Ashley's arrival outside the bar. Eventually, I caught sight of her among the hordes about to cross an intersection. Her long, brown hair was tinted by the descending twilight.

The traffic lights changed and, through the crisscrossing of pedestrians, our eyes met.

After a couple of hours of chatting we decided to go for a stroll. Our path took us to the city's wharf precinct which had been converted into bars and restaurants. The tantalizing aroma lured us into a waterside eatery. A waiter greeted us and offered us the last table, although he expressed concern as it was outside on the restaurant's waterfront deck and prone to mother nature's touch.

I glanced at Ashley who smiled and nodded. We left the reverberating sound of patrons and live music inside to sit at our outdoor table which offered views of the harbor bridge and city lights. Ashley invited me to sit beside her on the bench seat to face the view. A chill emerged from the darkened waters of the harbor as our bodies gravitated toward each other. Ashley shivered and moved her body up against mine, the sensation of her touch warming in itself.

After dinner, we made our way to my hotel to indulge in the rooftop bar and, two hours later, I invited Ashley to my room for a nightcap. I kissed her but, as we were both weary from our night of indulgence, we agreed to suppress our carnal urges.

We planned to share the king-size bed. I stripped down to my underwear and lay in bed waiting for Ashley to exit the bathroom. Ashley had asked if she could borrow a t-shirt and, after a few minutes, she appeared at the bathroom door wearing the shirt and purple lacy underwear. She slipped under the covers and edged closer with her back to me until I wrapped my arms around her.

When I woke up and looked at the bedside clock, it displayed seven in the morning. The hotel's curtains hampered the sun's rays from entering the darkened room, except for a

trace of daylight that peeped through the edges – enough to illuminate Ashley’s body. We hadn’t moved from our position all night. Her hair was pulled tight where she lay on it, exposing her neck. My t-shirt had moved up her torso, revealing part of her lower breast.

I kissed below Ashley’s ear, making my way down her neck and back up again. She reacted by wriggling her butt against me. Her eyes still closed, she tilted her head, offering more of her neck as I continued to place soft kisses on her skin. My hand drifted down over her belly and slipped under the elastic waistband of her underwear. I made small circles with my finger.

In a single motion, she spun round to face me and grabbed my crotch. “You are driving me crazy,” she said, kissing me on the lips.

I undressed her and took my time exploring her, listening to her soft groans from my kisses and my featherlight touch on her body. She spread her legs further apart. I positioned myself between them and she placed her right hand in the middle of my chest, eyes filled with vulnerability and anticipation.

“I haven’t had sex in a year,” she said, hesitating. “You know ... children and a business to run.”

“I understand!” I whispered, giving her a reassuring smile. I leaned into her, my breath blowing a stray wisp of hair from her cheek. “I’ll be gentle.”

She smiled and placed me inside of her, an intimacy beyond anything, trusting me as she offered her body to me. We moved together. I listened to her moans, adjusting my rhythm to meet her needs. We continued and, after I had come, I whispered, “I want you to orgasm.”

I recalled Ashley saying in our initial messages together, as we delved into each other's sexuality, that her main erogenous zone was centered in her breasts. She had also divulged that she could only orgasm from having her nipples played with and never through penetration. I remembered how aroused she had become with our sexting and how, by the end of our messaging, she was touching herself. She told me she wouldn't normally text about that stuff so early on but she felt comfortable with me.

The edges of Ashley's mouth widened in a gratifying grin. She lay flat on the bed with me on her left, my head propped up by my elbow. I traced my finger up her stomach, scaling the smooth slope of her left breast. She let out a gasp as I paused at the base of the nipple and continued to move my finger in a slow circular motion, feeling it harden as I brushed it. I placed two fingers either side of the nipple and applied slight pressure. She groaned with every squeeze. I pushed down on top of the nipple with a gentle press of my thumb and slightly rotated it, her body quivering under my touch. At times, I'd lick and twirl my tongue around her nipples, listening to sounds of delight escape from the lips of this goddess. I repeated the process over and over until cries of pleasure filled the room.

We stayed in bed until it was time to check out. I made her climax two more times the same way.

I had intended to go home the following day, but Ashley convinced me to stay for at least another night.

She took me to a café near the hotel for breakfast. Afterward, we returned to the hotel so I could collect my bag from concierge. We caught a cab for the thirty-minute ride back to her place.

Ashley owned an online clothing business and supplemented her income as a masseuse. She showed me through her contemporary-style two-storey home. A room downstairs contained a massage table, it's dual access from inside allowing her to separate the business from the rest of the house. As we entered the room, the smell of aromatic oils filled the air. I ran my finger down the edge of the massage table. "I could so use a massage," I said and grinned.

She laughed. "Well, strip down to your underwear," she said.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course," she said, smiling. "Lie face down on the table and I'll be right back." Then she left the room.

A few minutes passed and I heard the door open. I lay half-naked, peering at the floor through the face-cradle of the table. I lifted my head as Ashley walked in wearing a white masseuse uniform that hugged the contours of her petite frame. She displayed an aura of professionalism as she readied the room, lighting candles, turning on relaxing music and placing a towel over my buttocks. I placed my head back into the cradle listening to her apply oil to her hands before I felt her fingers press into the muscles of my upper back.

We chatted throughout the massage although my flow of speech would be interrupted as she applied pressure to a muscle knot. At one stage, I grabbed her leg and playfully squeezed it but was met with resistance. "No, you bad boy, no funny business, mister." She playfully slapped my hand.

After she finished, I propped myself up onto my elbows. "Thanks, that felt great. Now it's your turn."

"You sure?" she asked.

"Yep," I said, putting my clothes back on.

I had given foot and shoulder massages to women before and received praise, so I decided to try my abilities on Ashley. I mimicked her instructions, asking her to undress before I made my way out of the room. She giggled as I closed the door behind me, doing my best to keep a straight face. A few minutes later, I re-entered the room. She had positioned herself facedown with a towel covering her buttocks. I applied oil to my hands and commenced the massage, focusing on her neck and shoulders.

“You have a lot of tension,” I said.

“Oh, that feels so good,” she replied.

I continued to massage her shoulders for a few minutes before guiding my hands down her back to reach her hamstrings and calf muscles. She released muffled sounds of pleasure as I massaged the bottoms of her feet. I ran my hands back up her inner thighs with my thumbs inching closer to the warmth between her legs. I paused inches away, my fingers tingling at the thought of touching her there but, with admirable self-constraint, I continued back up to her shoulders.

She flipped onto her back, sat upright and twisted herself around, dangling her legs over the table. “Thank you, it’s nice to be the receiver for a change.”

“My pleasure,” I said.

Ashley held out her hand, I grasped it and she pulled me into her, wrapping her legs around me. We kissed and, with a heave, I lifted her off the table and carried her upstairs. At the top of the staircase, a burning sensation engulfed my limbs from the exertion.

“Hmm, I love big biceps on a guy,” she said, grinning at me.

I attempted a smile under my strained expression.

I could feel my arms shaking by the time we reached the foot of the bed. I tossed her on top of the throw pillows.

She chuckled and held out her hand. "Come here, you." She placed the palm of her hand on my chest once again. "No need to be gentle this time," she said.

Afterward, we made our way downstairs for a bite to eat. While Ashley prepared a snack in the kitchen, I scanned the photos of her family on the wall in the living room. She had two children – a girl and a boy. She'd mentioned on our date that they stayed with their father every second weekend.

A sense of admiration washed over me as my mind drifted back to the women I had dated who'd had children. I had always praised their perseverance and the beauty of a mother's love for her children. I just hoped happiness and good health embraced their daily lives.

I remembered Ashley saying how she'd always wanted to go for a cruise on Sydney's spectacular harbor but didn't have the time between the demands of her kids and her businesses. I decided to treat her, so I made enquiries into chartering a yacht.

The next day we made our way to the marina and boarded a sleek white and black yacht. The majority of the time we sat on the yacht's bow, chatting and sipping on champagne. Ashley sunbathed in a pink bikini.

As the sun lowered in a cloudless sky, I made my way down to the galley to get another bottle of champagne. I retrieved a bottle from the refrigerator and turned to see Ashley entering the galley. She paused and motioned with her eyes toward a cabin, then back to me with a broad grin. I smiled in concurrence with her luring gesture. Above us was the only other person on board, the captain.

Inside the cabin, we kissed and I lay her back onto the bed, tugging on the string of her bikini bottoms, revealing a sunburned bikini line.

I entered her and she wrapped her legs around my waist as the motion of the yacht moved beneath us and the aesthetic glow of the setting sun streamed through the portholes.

Afterward, we made our way to the upper deck to enjoy the illuminating lights of the approaching city. Once we arrived back at the marina, we headed back to Ashley's place.

The next morning, Ashley drove me to the airport. We both agreed our time together would be a one-off encounter that we would cherish as an experience worth remembering.

On the flight home, I peered out the plane's window and reflected on my break-up from Paige with more clarity. I had made the mistake of dismissing the desolation which had occurred in the wake of loving Paige. I should have given myself time to heal from the wounds of my break-up, time to overcome those feelings of intimacy and the sense of comfort and support that I'd grown accustomed to over the five years.



## 7

A month later, I found myself embroiled in a dilemma. Three women had caught my attention with their online dating profiles. I had no intention of exploiting the dating scene by seeing three women at the same time but, on the off chance all three women would accept my invitation, I sent a message to each one to solicit their interest. And as it happened, I received replies from each of them.

### *The first girl*

As Chloe walked toward the café to meet me, her hair blew across her face in the strong wind. I could tell it annoyed her when strands got caught in her lips but she brushed them aside with finesse. As she crossed the street, her eyes made contact with mine and she looked away, grinning to herself, then skipped onto the sidewalk. Her smile added a radiance to the gloom of the overcast day.

### *The second girl*

Hayley's profession meant she worked among the high-flyers of the business world. We ate at a waterfront restaurant and

she mentioned that her work schedule involved the use of a private jet. As we continued to chat, Hayley divulged she craved a loving companion, but her career had hindered her aspirations. By the end of our first date I understood that, for Hayley, it was a case of finding a balance between searching for Mr Right and focusing on her career. Striving to find a happy medium in her life meant also finding a man who understood her aspirations.

### *The third girl*

I became very fond of Amy with her purity and modesty. As a nurse, she was devoted to helping others and contributed to the community by doing charity work on her days off.

After four weeks of juggling three women, I had to decide which one to commit to. As my feelings for each of them grew, so did the guilt of my pretense. I hadn't slept with any of them at that stage and planned to withhold from the temptation so as not to complicate matters, although I knew it would be difficult as my attraction to each woman grew with each date.

As it turned out, Hayley decided our fate. I received a phone call from her expressing her dissatisfaction about my perceived lack of commitment and she said she couldn't see a future for the two of us. Her decision didn't surprise me, nor could I condemn such a judgment. I would have liked to have spent more time with her, but I knew stretching my time over three women and, of course, adhering to my code of conduct would be detrimental. But I had hoped to prolong the situation until I had decided who I wanted to be with.

Days after Hayley broke it off, I conceded to reason and decided to put an end to the façade. I needed to resort back to

dating one woman at a time. Although I had become fond of Amy, I found Chloe's enchanting ways irresistible.

\* \* \*

As I prepared for my date with Chloe, I had a rush of excitement at the thought of seeing her again. After showering, I shaved and sprayed on cologne with a squirt near my neck. I threw on a long-sleeved, black shirt with jeans and a pair of black dress shoes.

I had booked a table at a restaurant and bar situated underneath my apartment building for seven o'clock. I thought about our conversation on the last date and how much she loved to talk about her traveling experiences. I was keen to hear more.

I met Chloe in the visitors parking lot. When she got out of her car, another frisson of excitement ran through me. She wore tight jeans and red heels.

We greeted each other with a kiss on the cheek, then made our way to the restaurant. As we chatted and ate dinner, I enjoyed the odd flirtatious touch and playful banter, all of which increased my urge to kiss her.

An hour into the date, Chloe said, "Do you realize there are four very attractive women sitting nearby trying to get your attention?"

I shrugged. "So? I'm with you," I said softly, quirked an eyebrow.

She blushed as I kept a steady gaze upon hers.

After the date, I walked Chloe back to her car. She turned to face me. My gaze flickered from the emerald-green of her eyes to the luster of her lipstick. I leaned into her and our lips touched with a passion that had been brewing since the first date.

\* \* \*

In the weeks following, we nurtured the passage of our courtship to see where it might lead.

I planned our first day trip together – a drive to the beach, returning via the inland mountain ranges and rainforests to explore the shops.

After a couple of hours sunbathing and swimming, we headed inland. We visited a few craft shops and boutiques, which wasn't really my thing, but Chloe loved them and that made me happy. She tried on summer dresses while I stood outside the fitting room talking to the owner. Every time Chloe changed, she modeled the outfit to get my opinion. I remember there was one dress in particular which had me imagining her straddling me on the chair in the fitting room with the dress draped over our legs. She ended up buying that one.

After shopping, we visited a few local wineries and had a coffee at a café overlooking the rainforest.

Driving home, I glanced at Chloe slumped in the passenger seat asleep, wearing her sunglasses, head turned away toward the window. I drove with one hand on the steering wheel and the other holding her hand as it rested on the center console.

When Chloe woke up, she gave me a smile that made my heart melt.

Later that afternoon at Chloe's place, we prepared a roast dinner together. After Chloe finished prepping the meat, she washed and dried her hands, and headed into the bedroom. A few minutes later, she came out wearing the dress that she had bought from the boutique. She gave a twirl. "It's so comfortable. I love it," she said.

"It looks great on you."

"Thanks, handsome."

As I chopped up vegetables, I watched her walk back and forth while she tidied the house, still wearing the new dress. Suddenly, I dropped the knife on the cutting board with a clatter.

She spun around to meet my gaze laced with desire. She grinned. "What's up?"

I didn't say a word. I abandoned my meal prep and strode toward her, grabbing hold of her hand. In an assertive tone, I said, "Come here, you!"

I led her into the bedroom and guided her backward onto the bed. She lay flat on her back and I lifted the dress above her waist, yanked her underwear off, and went down on her.

"You taste great."

She lifted her head off the pillow and said, "Really?"

"Yes, and you smell good too, I love going down on you. Every inch of you is so beautiful."

She placed her head back onto the pillow with a broad grin.

After she had come. I placed her dress back over her legs and got up.

"What about you?" she asked.

"I'm good for now." I grinned at her before heading back to the kitchen to finish preparing dinner, leaving her lying on the bed with an elated smile.

After dinner, while I watched TV, Chloe looked up from her computer. She had work to finish before the morning. "I'm still so wet from earlier," she said.

I grinned, loving what she had just said.

Later, we watched a movie together. I stroked her hair, which she loved, as she laid her head on my lap. We ended up

going to bed early. A few hours later, I woke up and reflected back on Chloe's arousing words of earlier. Under the sheets, I was hard – rock hard.

As I lay on my back, I turned to look at Chloe. The moonlit night illuminated her body enough for me to see a peaceful look on her face. I always slept naked. Chloe alternated between a silk nightgown and just wearing underwear. That night, she wore only bottoms and the sheet stopped at her waist, so her breasts were on display.

I moved my hand to her stomach and, with just my index finger, lightly stroked in a circular motion, just above her bikini line. I then moved my finger toward her navel and back down again. It was one of her fantasies to be woken up in the middle of the night, aroused.

She was in a deep sleep and, when there was no reaction, I repeated the movement. A faint moan filtered from her slightly opened mouth. Her pelvis moved under my fingertip. She tilted her head back, letting out a louder groan. A grin appeared on her face. I moved my finger downward, rubbing between her legs. I rolled onto my side and placed two fingers inside her and massaged.

"I love the way you touch me and when your fingers are inside me," she murmured.

I kept rubbing, feeling her body quiver beneath my hand until she climaxed.

"I want you to come in my mouth," she said.

I smiled thinking how sexy that sounded.

Chloe grabbed a hair tie from the bedside table and pulled her hair back into a ponytail. She then moved down between my legs. I was so hard at the thought of her going down on me.

She only used her hand at first, stroking up and down, and gently twisted her palm over the head. I moaned.

“Do you like that?” she asked.

“Love it.”

She repeated it over and over again. By this stage I was begging for her beautiful mouth. She finally wrapped her lips around me, moving her hand and mouth together simultaneously in one motion.

I held her ponytail gently at the base with one hand while I grasped the sheets tightly on the edge of the bed with my other. My hips convulsed as she slightly changed the speed and pressure of her grip.

“That’s it, right there. That feels amazing.” I groaned, then lifted my head off the pillow to watch her gorgeous profile – all soft lips and twirling tongue as she pleased me. I was all hers in such an intimate act. I put my head back onto the pillow and moaned.

“Keep going, just like that.” I felt myself stiffen.

My body went completely rigid, before I yelled out her name and exploded into her mouth. She moaned keeping her lips wrapped around me, consuming every last drop as I continued to slightly spasm.

She slowly released me from her mouth and kissed the tip once. “Nice?” she asked, smiling up at me.

“Wow, that felt incredible. The build-up was so intense.”

Afterward, we fell asleep and woke to the alarm.

While Chloe was having a shower getting ready for work, I made my way to the kitchen and brewed coffee. I took a cup of coffee for Chloe into the bathroom. She had just stepped out of the shower, her hair dripping at the tips. I admired her natural beauty. “There you go, beautiful,” I said, placing the cup next to the sink.

She beamed at me. "Thank you."

I could hear Chloe blow drying her hair while I made the bed. Afterward, I made my way into the living room to watch TV.

A few minutes later I heard Chloe call out from the bedroom, "Oh, wow! You made my bed. Thank you so much."

"You're welcome."

She emerged from the bedroom in her corporate attire. "That has put a smile on my face," she said.

I grinned at her endearing words.

\* \* \*

Over dinner one night, Chloe revealed a childhood dream to go up in a small plane and expressed her desire to learn to fly one day. I didn't tell her that I had a pilot's license as I wanted to surprise her. Two weeks passed and I told her I had organized a joy flight but didn't divulge the fact I would be piloting the plane.

It was a crisp morning when we arrived at the aero club. I went inside to prepare for the flight while Chloe waited outside, under the impression I would be returning with a pilot in tow. After exiting the aero club, I found Chloe standing behind the airport fence, admiring the planes parked on the other side. I approached her from behind, wrapped my arms around her waist, bringing her tight into my body and pressed my cheek against hers.

We made our way through a security gate to a blue-and-white-striped, single-engine plane.

"Where's the pilot?" Chloe peered in the direction of the aero club.

"I'll be your pilot today!" I said.



“What, really?” Chloe’s eyes widened. I imagined she was both surprised and amused by my revelation.

“Yep,” I said, grinning. I explained how I’d obtained my pilot’s license in my twenties.

I performed the exterior inspection showing Chloe the various components. We climbed in and I strapped Chloe into the seat, then handed her a headset to put on. Chloe scanned the instrument panel of the cockpit as I completed my preflight checks. I started the plane. Chloe glanced at me and smiled as we taxied toward the runway. We took off into blue skies but with the prospect of rain in the afternoon.

When we reached our planned altitude, I instructed Chloe to put her hands on the controls while I demonstrated some maneuvers for her. The joyful expression on her face as she followed along with me will be forever engraved in my mind.

After forty minutes of flying, the sandy stretch of coastline appeared through the windshield and I commenced the descent. I advised Chloe we were going to land.

Her eyes widened with surprise. She scanned the coastline below. “I can’t see a runway.” She looked at me, puzzled.

“The beach,” I said, pointing to the uninterrupted stretch of sand below.

After landing, I shut down the engine and reached into the rear seat to retrieve a picnic basket. I had organized for it to be placed inside the plane prior to our arrival at the airport. Chloe’s eyes glowed.

After lunch, we lay on a picnic blanket with the plane’s wing providing a sheltered oasis. The warmth of the sea breeze coaxed us to doze.

Later, we strolled along the sands hand in hand, our bare feet skimming the water’s edge. On one side, miles of sand

covered an unforgiving landscape and, on the other, wind-whipped waves crested the ocean.

All of a sudden through a hazy horizon, an outline of a figure appeared. I held my hand up to shade my eyes from the sun's glare. Now, the object had separated and was approaching at a quickened tempo. I had witnessed this once before as a twelve-year-old on a camping trip with my family. I grabbed Chloe's hand and led her into the sand dunes where we sat among the tussocks of grass. Chloe tightened her grip on my hand as a pounding sound resonated over the breaking waves.

I counted fifteen of them, led by a magnificent creature with his black coat gleaming under the afternoon sun. A shiver of excitement leaped through my body. He owned every grain of sand that thumped beneath his hooves. I turned to look at Chloe whose face was flushed with joy as the salty breeze blew strands of hair across her skin. Her eyes glistened from the glare of the ocean. I could feel myself falling for her.

We continued to watch the horses until they disappeared from sight. We sat a little longer in awe of what had occurred before heading back to the plane.

We landed as shadows from the trees aligning the runway lengthened with the setting sun. I grabbed tie-down ropes and began to secure the plane. Dark rain clouds loomed and the tap of droplets on my shirt increased with every passing minute. By the time I'd finished, the rain was falling at an angled velocity. We took shelter inside the plane, a wall of water obscuring the aero club from view.

Chloe climbed into the backseat and motioned with her forefinger, inviting me to join her. We kissed for a while as rain sheeted the cockpit windshield. With night upon us, the deluge outside embellished the airport's floodlights. I placed my hand between Chloe's legs and she became aroused at my

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touch. I continued to play until I felt her muscles contract around my finger and she moaned with pleasure. She lifted her dress up above her knees and straddled me but kept her underwear on. These she pulled aside so she could place me inside of her, then she swayed her hips in the confined space, commanding every move. I admired her on top of me; it wasn't just her body, but *her* I adored.

## 8

One night, I invited Chloe over for a home-cooked meal and a movie. After dinner we sat on the sofa, Chloe with her legs flung over my thighs and lying slumped backward with her head resting on the armrest. In the movie, a boy held his dying mother's hand as cancer gripped her body.

The poignancy of the plot reminded me of the loss of my father and the heartache of watching a loved one wither away. Chloe had asked about my parents on our first date together and I had told her what had happened to my father. That night, she stroked her thumb back and forth over my hand as the movie's story unfolded. I glanced at her and she turned her head to look at me – no words were necessary.

When I was twenty-two years old, I had received a call from my mother informing me that my father had been diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. The doctors gave my father six months to live but, by the third month, his condition declined to the point where he was confined to the bedroom.

At the age of twenty, I had left home to study in a city two thousand miles away. I took the trip home to see my father many times after his diagnosis. I recalled the last time I spent with him in the family home. The winter sun streamed through the bedroom window onto the bed where his fragile frame lay. I occupied most of the day sitting and reading in a chair placed in the corner of my father's room. In his weakened state, he spent most of the time sleeping but, on occasion, he would wake up, glance in my direction and give me a faint smile.

When it was time for me to leave for the airport, I kneeled down beside his bed and took hold of his hand as he slept. He opened his eyes and turned his head to meet my gaze.

"It's time for me to go, Dad," I said.

He tried to speak but the cancer had affected his speech. His words rolled into a heart-wrenching slur before fading into a labored breath. I closed my eyes and hung my head in despair. My father squeezed my hand.

My life with him flashed through my mind. He'd been a good father and an even better husband to my mother. I raised my head. "I love you so much, Dad," I said, swallowing a lump in my throat.

At the door of the bedroom, I paused and turned to take one last look at my father. The image of his downcast eyes was seared in my mind. We both knew it would be the last time we would ever see each other.

I hadn't shed a tear the entire time I had visited my father, nor did my eyes well up when I said goodbye to him in the bedroom. On the night flight home though, I made my way along the dimly lit cabin past sleeping passengers to the lavatory. I shut the door and leaned against it as my body heaved

uncontrollably with a violence that revealed the extent of my despair.

Two weeks elapsed. I received the call from my mother telling me of my father's passing. A viewing of my father's body had been arranged for the day before the funeral. Despite my apprehension after experiencing the pain of his decline, I decided to attend the viewing. Seeing him at rest, however, brought me comfort after watching his recent suffering.

I stood over his body and reflected on summers spent at the beach house as a family. My father had intended to retire there and dreamed of growing old with my mother. I turned and noticed my mother standing idle in the doorway. I walked toward her and wrapped my arms around her, my heart aching for her loss of such a loving companion.

Back in the present, after the movie had finished, I got up from the sofa to get a drink from the fridge. I turned and noticed Chloe standing at the doorway of the kitchen. She slowly walked toward me, her eyes filled with sorrow. Not once did she break eye contact until she wrapped her arms around my waist. I drew in a deep breath and her grip tightened. I kissed her on the forehead, keeping my lips fastened to her soft skin and closed my eyes, enjoying the warmth of her embrace.

"So sorry about your father," she whispered.

"Thank you," I said. My voice shook, choking back a surge of emotions.

I took Chloe by the hand to the bedroom and made love to her. Afterward, I held Chloe from behind, kissed her on the shoulder and nuzzled into her neck. She brought my hand to her lips and placed a lingering kiss upon it before falling asleep.

After showing me more of her caring side, my affection for her had increased even more.

\* \* \*

Two weeks later, Chloe and I attended a wedding of a friend of mine. We caught a two-hour flight north to a tropical coastal town. After landing, we got a shuttle bus to the hotel resort with time to spare to get ready for the ceremony. As I put on my tie in the bathroom, Chloe's reflection appeared in the mirror. I turned to face her, my eyes flickering in awe as I admired what I saw, from her blond waves to her glazed lips, then on to the ruby-red, figure-hugging material that followed the contours of her body. My eyes gravitated to the draping neckline and front slit that finished three quarters of the way up her leg before moving on to her stunning silver heels.

She twirled and revealed the low back of the dress, then waited for my verdict.

I smiled. "Wow, you're going to turn heads!"

We made our way to the area of the beach where the ceremony would be held. In the distance beyond the towering cliffs of the beachside town, we heard the sound of thunder, but for the moment blue skies greeted us as we walked the boardwalk in our formal attire, past the half-naked beachgoers, restaurants and craft shops.

By the time we arrived, most of the guests had congregated in front of a makeshift altar covered in white flowers. We stood to the side of a marquee which seated half the guests, with the remainder positioned on the sides and at the rear. The groom, a friend of mine, stood on the stage chatting to the three groomsmen. Twenty minutes later, a horse-drawn carriage arrived and out stepped the bride in a white lace

dress. She descended the steps of the carriage most elegantly, just as the approaching storm made its presence known with a crack of thunder, making the guests jump.

Later, during the ceremony, the wind picked up and a menacing cloud trailed the cliff edge. I scanned the faces of the gathering and, although the guests' eyes were fixed on the altar, their worried expressions showed they were thinking about what was looming above them. Yet not a single drop had escaped the blackened mass.

The groom finished his vows and the bride had begun to convey hers when droplets splattered the sand at my feet. Then, just at the moment when the bride and groom kissed and their lips separated, rain pelted the earth with its fury.

The majority of the guests huddled together under the marquee. The onslaught only lasted a few minutes, but the strong winds and drenching rain had defaced the altar which now stood flowerless and with a slight lean to it. The storm made its way out to sea with blue skies reappearing in its wake.

Chloe and I headed back to the resort to freshen up while the wedding party had their photos taken. A few hours later, we made our way to the reception which was being held at a beachside restaurant. The champagne flowed while the guests congregated on the restaurant's oceanside deck, waiting to be seated.

During the speeches, I felt Chloe's foot rub up and down my ankle. I glanced at her and she waggled her eyebrows. I grinned and squeezed her hand twice in recognition, returning my attention back to the speech of the bride's proud father. I placed my hand under the tablecloth resting on Chloe's knee, then moved it slowly with the lightest of touches between the slit of the dress. Her breath hitched. The end of the dress's slit



hindered my advancement, but I stretched my pinkie to just touch the material of her underwear. Chloe let out another faint gasp. I removed my hand and placed it back on hers on the table.

After the speeches, the guests either mingled or made their way to the dance floor. While I chatted to a friend of mine, I caught Chloe's eye from across the room and held her gaze, surrendering to her stare. Minutes later, she approached, her hand caressing my shoulder. She glanced toward the overcrowded dance floor with a longing expression. I took hold of her hand and led her outside onto the deck and down the stairs onto the sand. She took her shoes off and carried them in one hand, and we strolled hand in hand to the water's edge, listening to the waves lap in the darkness.

When we reached the shoreline, we focused our gazes out to sea and watched the light show from the storm that had interrupted the ceremony. I turned to face Chloe and placed my arm around her in the waltz position. Our bodies swayed to the band playing inside. I held her close, feeling her breath on my neck.

"Hmm ... You smell good," she said.

We swiveled round in the direction of the flashes of lightning out to sea, then twirled to face the vibrancy of the restaurant.

I whispered in her ear, "Only you could make today what it was!"

She smiled. "And what's that?"

I pulled back and looked into her eyes. "Unforgettable." And I kissed her.

An hour later, we decided to head back to the hotel room. Chloe stood in front of the bathroom mirror brushing her teeth. I approached her from behind. She looked at me in the

reflection of the mirror. "I enjoyed today," she mumbled with a mouthful of toothpaste and brush.

"It's not over yet!" I said, giving her no indication of my intentions. I placed my hands on her waist as she spat into the sink. "What are you up to?" she said, grinning, before continuing to brush her teeth.

I moved my hands slowly down over her buttocks making my way to her ankles, grabbed the hem of her dress and lifted it above her waist.

"Oh!" she said, giggling.

I stood upright with an impassive expression, staring deep into her eyes in the reflection of the mirror, never breaking eye contact. I yanked her underwear down and they settled around her knees. Reaching between her legs, I massaged her until the tip of my finger slid inside her with ease. I unzipped my pants and placed myself inside of her.

In the reflection of the mirror, Chloe's expression of pleasure grew in intensity. She let go of the brush to support herself and leaned forward on the bathroom sink with both hands. She hung her head and clasped the edge of the sink, her knuckles turning white. The toothbrush dropped from her mouth into the sink while a deep moan emerged from her lips.

It didn't take long until I heard her say, "Don't stop." She repeated these words three more times but, by the third time, she had difficulty pronouncing them. I grasped her hips as her body shuddered under my fingertips.

As we lay in bed, Chloe said, "That was some of the hottest sex I've ever had."

"Really? I thought I was just being spontaneous. Why do you say that?"

"It was pure primal. Completely unexpected," she said.

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“Hmm ... I’m glad to be of service. I’ll have to remember that.”

## 9

Chloe and I were sitting in the living room chatting. I noticed her looking at a framed photograph of New York's skyline at sunset which I had taken ten years earlier on my first visit. She admired the city's immensity and expressed a longing to visit there.

Chloe and I had organized to take a vacation together, but we hadn't decided where to go, so the following day I searched airfares to New York and surveyed the business-class fares. I'd flown business class a number of times over the years attending conferences within Australia, but I knew Chloe hadn't. I wanted to offer her the opportunity to indulge in its pleasures, so I purchased two tickets.

A few days later, I went to Chloe's place, slipped a postcard under the door, and rang the doorbell. The sound of her footsteps descending the wooden stairs from the second floor heightened my excitement about seeing her and surprising her with my gift.

I heard a scream of delight come from the other side of the door. When she opened it, she was holding the postcard

which contained a photo of New York. On the back I had written, *Pack your bags, gorgeous.*

\* \* \*

Three weeks later, we arrived at the airport for our flight to the US. I hadn't yet told Chloe where in the plane we'd be sitting. As we wheeled our suitcases toward check-in, I noticed the line-up for our flight was stretched past the roped off area.

Chloe expressed her frustration. "Oh, look how long the line is."

"Let's try this line; there's no one in it," I said, pointing to the business-class check-in counter.

"We can't. It's for business/first class passengers only," she said.

I smiled. "Argh, let's be rebels."

At the counter, I gave my passport to the check-in agent. Chloe followed suit but hesitated a few feet from the counter. I could tell she was readying herself for a rebuke and to be told to go to the other line. The agent processed our papers and told us our flight would be boarding in two hours' time, before passing the tickets back to us. I thanked him and handed Chloe her ticket.

She glanced at it and her eyes widened. "Business!" She smiled and clapped her hands in excitement.

"I know how much you love surprises," I said.

"I certainly do." Her eyes gleamed.

While we settled into our seats, the flight attendant approached and offered us a glass of champagne. We clinked our glasses as the captain made an announcement. He mentioned the flight would be delayed an hour due to waiting on connecting passengers. By the time we departed, Chloe and I had consumed two glasses of champagne each. She leaned

into me as the plane rolled down the runway. "I'm so hot for you right now," she said, smiling.

I grinned at the thought of making love to her on the flight.

Over twenty hours of flying time later, we arrived over a dusk-cloaked New York City. Chloe peered out the plane's window and expressed her amazement of its magnificence. We landed and headed in the direction of the baggage claim area. After collecting our bags, we made our way to the exit. A sub-zero evening greeted us as we walked outside. I inhaled the cool night air, finding it bracing to be back in New York's orbit once again.

We caught a cab from the airport to the hotel located near Times Square. Chloe tightened the grip of her right hand, which was resting on my knee, as we entered Manhattan. She stared out the passenger window. I could guess the emotion that was surging through her. I had felt the same on my first time in New York. She turned to look at me, her eyes glowing after beholding the splendor outside. I was so happy to be the one to chaperone her through the great city.

After checking in, we made our way up to the hotel room. Chloe took her jacket off, threw it on the bed, and made her way to the window, pulling aside the curtains to soak up the atmosphere outside. I approached her from behind and wrapped my arms around her, feeling the soft textures of cashmere. I kissed her neck and joined her, looking down onto the busy street below.

"Do you realize how much I wanted you on the flight?" I said.

"No. Show me." And she smiled.

\* \* \*

We planned to stay six nights in New York. Chilled days of clear blue skies favored our stay although we longed for the romanticism of snow fall.

On our third day Chloe mentioned that she had organized something for the two of us later in the day, but it was a surprise so she couldn't tell me.

Six o'clock that night we made our way in a cab through steamed-filled streets toward the piers.

"We're here!" Chloe smiled.

I gasped with surprise. "I've always wanted to do this," and kissed her on the lips before getting out of the cab.

As we made our way across the helipad, I wrapped my arm around Chloe's waist, pulled her in tight and kissed her softly on her head. "This is amazing; I'm so excited."

The pilot greeted us and opened the door as Chloe and I climbed into the rear seats of the helicopter.

Ten minutes into our scenic flight over Manhattan, I glanced at Chloe. Her eyes were fixed outside the left window. There was all the splendor below to behold but, for that moment, my gaze transfixed on something that pulled at the very depth of my vulnerability. But I was not unnerved by such feelings as I had fallen deeply in love with her.

Holding Chloe's hand, I gently squeezed it. She turned her head to look at me. I gazed into her eyes without saying a word. She smiled, leaned in and kissed me.

"Thank you so much," I said.

"You're most welcome. I loved seeing the surprise on your face."

I reached up and caressed her cheek with my hand and kissed her again, before continuing to look out our windows.

\* \* \*

On our last night in New York, I arranged to take Chloe to an award-winning restaurant. I had made a reservation on the day of booking the flights. I didn't tell her the name of the restaurant as it was to be another surprise for her.

We caught a cab to the restaurant and, as we approached, I covered Chloe's eyes with my hands. The cab pulled up outside and I opened my hands revealing the signage of the restaurant.

"You remembered," she said with glee as she flung her arms around my neck.

She had mentioned the restaurant to me on our second date, saying it was on her bucket list.

The maitre d' greeted us as we walked inside. He took our overcoats and ushered us to a table by the window. Chloe looked stunning in a long, black gown with black heels. I chose to wear a white dress shirt and black pants. The waiter placed the napkins on our laps and handed us the menu and wine list.

After Chloe had finished her mains, she placed her knife and fork on the plate, signaling she was done, before excusing herself to go to the restroom. I smiled to myself, admiring her decorum, as I watched her walk away.

A passing waiter took our plates. I scanned the restaurant and realized I hadn't noticed anyone come or go all evening. I'd been too mesmerized by the miniature moons levitating in Chloe's eyes from the lights of the restaurant as we chatted.

Chloe returned from the restroom as the waiter arrived with our desserts. I glanced outside, admiring Chloe's beauty in the reflection in the window. Then, a magical sight descended over the hustle and bustle of the city streets. Snow!

"Oh, wow!" Chloe said as she caught sight of the spectacle.



We left the restaurant and walked back to the hotel with snowflakes caressing our overcoats. I led Chloe away from the stream of people into a shop doorway. I pulled her in tight against me and kissed her. The sounds of the city around us fell silent as our lips touched.

As soon as we arrived back at the hotel room, we shrugged off our overcoats. I gazed deep into Chloe's eyes and kissed her, nibbling on her lower lip. I reached around to her back and slowly pulled down the zipper of her dress. I slid the strap over her right shoulder and gently kissed her neck, inhaling her scent. "Damn, you're sexy," I whispered in her ear. As I removed the other strap, the dress fell to her feet.

She stood before me wearing a lacy bra, underwear and high heels. I kneeled before her, resting my hands on her thighs. I kissed the fabric between her legs feeling the moisture of her arousal on my lips. Chloe tilted her head back and moaned.

I pulled her underwear down and slid them over her left shoe, followed by the right, then stood upright and kissed her softly on the cheek. "Keep your heels on," I said.

Chloe grinned. She unbuttoned my shirt and pushed it off my shoulders, tossing it on the chair in the corner of the room. She trailed her finger down the right pectoral and over the muscles of my stomach. "Hmm ... looking good," she said.

I kissed her, our tongues entwining in a graceful dance. I traced my fingers from the nape of her neck down her back to her bra, which I unclasped before pulling it down her arms. My fingers caressed her soft skin as I slid the bra off and cupped her left breast in my hand. Her nipple hardened as I gently pressed down with my thumb and rotated.

She moved her hands to my pants and unbuckled the belt, then undid the button and slid down the zipper. She reached inside and rubbed my underwear. I moaned, feeling myself harden against the restricted confines of the material.

Chloe kneeled in front of me, yanking my pants and underwear down to my ankles. Holding my erection with both hands, she wrapped her lips around the head, sucked and slowly released.

She stood upright. I guided my hand down between her legs, tracing circles around her clitoris, before I slid the tip of my finger inside her.

“You’re so wet. I love it,” I said.

I took off my shoes and socks and stepped out of my pants and underwear. I lay her back onto the bed and listened as she reacted to my featherlight touches and kisses on her skin.

“I want you inside of me,” she murmured.

I positioned myself between her legs and entered slightly, then slowly pulled out. I repeated this again and again. With each movement, her breath hitched and a soft moan escaped from her parted lips.

I finally eased into her.

“You feel so good,” she said. She traced her fingers over my body, gripping and clawing.

I propped myself up onto my hands and, focusing my gaze between her legs, I slid my hand slowly down to her waist and clutched her hip.

“That’s so hot,” she said, lifting her head off the pillow to watch me slowly slide in and out of her.

I continued with the slow rhythm, telling her how amazing she felt, while controlling the depth of my thrusts. I ran my thumb across her upper lip. She took it into her mouth and sucked hard.

I slowly pulled out and moved down between her legs, lightly sucking and licking her clitoris.

“That feels amazing. I’m going to come.”

Chloe clenched the sheets above her head. Her body convulsed as she climaxed, and she called out my name. I trailed my tongue upward licking the sweat of her naked body as it gleamed under the glow of the city lights that shone through the windows. I paused at the navel, circled it with soft kisses before moving up between her breasts and kissing her hard on the lips.

“My turn,” she said, making her way down to take me into her mouth.

I loved the way she took charge. I gasped as my body lurched with pleasure.

After a few minutes, I said, “That feels incredible but I have to be inside you again.” I couldn’t get enough of her.

I moved Chloe onto her back and entered her as I rested on my elbows, pressing my body against hers. I grabbed her hands and held them firmly behind her head while I moved my hips in a circular motion and listened to her groans. I quickened the tempo slightly, thrusting harder on every third rotation. I repeated the sequence over and over. I could feel her tilt her hips to meet my thrusts.

“That’s it, keep going,” she murmured.

“I love feeling your weight on me. I feel so safe beneath you,” she said.

“I like that you feel completely safe with me.” I gave her a soft lingering kiss and continued replicating the rhythm and intensity of the action.

“Don’t stop,” she said, moaning with pleasure before repeating her request, but louder and more insistently. “Keep going.”

Her ecstasy-filled words brought me closer to climaxing. I took a deep breath and focused on subduing the urge to explode inside her. Suddenly, her groans fell silent before a loud moan filled the air.

I released my grip on her hands and propped myself up again, finally giving myself permission to climax. I increased the rhythm, thrusting harder, over and over again. Chloe's breathing and grip changed as she anticipated my impending explosion, her lips curled up with joy, until I called out her name along with obscenities.

I lay on top of Chloe, still inside of her, my heart pounding against hers. I kissed her on the forehead and placed my cheek against hers, listening to every breath expel from her body with a satisfied murmur.

"Oh, wow, that was a different orgasm from when I'm on top," she murmured.

"I love learning what you like and making you orgasm in different ways," I said as my breathing began to return to normal.

Afterward, she lay in my arms as I made light circles with my finger in the middle of her back.

\* \* \*

Flying home the next day, I glanced over at Chloe as she read a magazine. I loved the way her hair framed the contours of her face.

She turned to face me. "Thank you for a wonderful time."

"I had an amazing time too."

Keeping her gaze on me, she whispered, "I love you."

Those three words would be forever etched in my heart.

"I love you too," I replied and kissed her.

\* \* \*

Two months later, as wind-swept rain whistled outside around my apartment, I ran a bath for Chloe and encircled it with candles. I had prepared dinner hours before and the aroma of the slow-cooked dish wafted through the apartment. I poured two glasses of Chloe's favorite pinot noir and waited for her to arrive home from work. I heard the sound of the key in the door and Chloe entered.

She moved toward me, a frown creasing her forehead and head down, avoiding eye contact.

"What's wrong?"

She didn't respond. Instead, she collapsed into my arms with her face pressed up against my chest. Finally, she raised her head to meet my eyes. I'd never seen her like this. My stomach muscles clenched with uncertainty.

She drew a deep breath. "I got a call from head office today, offering me a promotion, but it means moving to London."

London was half a world away. My heart sank at her news, although I was proud of her achievement.

At first, she contemplated not accepting the position due to her attachment to her friends, family and, now, me. I reminded her that during the short time I had known her, she had spoken about this kind of opportunity and this offer exceeded her expectations. Although, my heart constricted with each spoken word; I didn't want her to go.

Chloe mulled over the decision for days on whether to go or not, until she decided to accept the offer.

With a flicker of hope in her eyes, she suggested I go with her. I looked away, contemplating her offer, but the hope faded as I explained I couldn't go with her due to my business ties.

I hugged her. "I'm going to miss you so much," I whispered.

Her voice trembled as she replied, "I'll miss you too."

My heart collapsed under the weight of her words.

\* \* \*

The night before Chloe flew out to London, we made love, but I had mixed emotions which tussled for supremacy as the reality of losing her sank in.

I gazed into her eyes. A swirling vortex of love and affection with a glimmer of profound sadness stared back at me.

Afterward, she fell forward on top of me and wept quietly. I felt a tear run over my chest. I wrapped my arms around her. I didn't want to look into her eyes; the pain would've destroyed me. I just held her as close as I could in a loving embrace, wishing she could stay in my arms forever.

I drew the light circles on her back that I knew she loved more than anything until she fell asleep. Later in the night, I got up as my troubled mind wouldn't let me sleep. I got a drink of water and snuck back into bed. As I placed my head on the pillow, I whispered, "I love you," while Chloe slept. I did not expect a response but, from the darkness, she uttered the words, "I love you too."

We left for the airport at seven o'clock the next morning. We parked and walked into the terminal. After having a coffee together, I walked her to the entrance of the departure gate. I gave her an extended hug and stood back holding both her hands.

Her eyes welled up – those emerald-green marvels now a watery orb of despair as a teardrop fell and caught in her long eyelashes before spilling over her cheekbones. I kissed her and tasted the salty residue of a tear. Our lips detached

## GLIMPSE

with reluctance and my heart sank as Chloe released her grip from my hands. I watched her walk through the security doors and disappear from sight. An emptiness engulfed me as the abrupt ending of our love affair left me to contemplate what could've been.

## 10

Over the next few months, I didn't go on one date, my insipidness reflecting a lack of desire following Chloe's departure.

One Wednesday afternoon, as I was pushing a shopping cart through my local grocery store, I shared flirty glances with a woman when we passed each other in the aisles. I collected the items I needed but, intrigued by this temptress, I delayed heading to the cashier.

I spotted her further down the aisle examining the contents of a jar and approached. As I came closer, she glanced in my direction and smiled.

"Hi, you should try this brand," I said to her as I reached for a jar of curry paste on the second shelf.

"Really? Maybe I will." She smiled. "Do you like curry?"

"Love it."

The conversation flowed naturally from there. Tracy chuckled at my bold attempt to lure her and I asked if she'd like to meet again for a drink and a bite to eat. She accepted my invitation with a smile, and we swapped phone numbers.



The following Saturday, we went on our date. She arrived wearing a short black skirt and leather jacket. After sharing a delicious meal, Tracy said, "I have something to tell you!"

"What is it?" I asked.

"I have a partner."

I frowned with displeasure at her admission.

Giving me a reassuring smile, she placed her hand on mine. "The thing is, I'm bi, and I have a proposition for you."

My resentment receded and I looked forward to hearing what she had to say. I grinned at her. "So, what do you propose?"

"A threesome with my girlfriend and myself," she said.

The motive for this date – to pursue a relationship – had changed and had been superseded by this enticing anomaly.

I followed Tracy back to her place in my car. I parked outside Tracy's place and we went into her apartment. Her girlfriend, Scarlett, was leaning up against the kitchen counter. She wasn't surprised to see me, so I assumed Tracy had alerted her to my possible presence if all went to plan.

I sat on the sofa with Tracy beside me while Scarlett relaxed in a tan-colored leather chair opposite. We drank wine and chatted for an hour then, without warning, they both got up from their seats and each grabbed one of my hands. Their assertiveness aroused me. They led me into a bedroom lit by the muted glow of a bedside lamp.

Tracy and Scarlett stood facing me and, using their fingertips, explored my body through the thin fabric of my dress shirt, before unbuttoning the shirt and taking it off. The three of us kissed. I felt Tracy's fingers trail down my bare stomach and move over the crotch of my jeans. She unbuckled and unzipped my jeans, then knelt down to take me into her mouth. I continued to kiss Scarlett as she relished in the

fruits of her lover's offering. The two girls exuded a sexual confidence that enabled them to pleasure at will. At times throughout the encounter, they moved their focus from me to adore the beauty of each other's figures. Our bodies entwined in an orchestrated display of sexual tapestry as we changed from one position to the next.

Afterward, I thought maybe they'd dispose of me once they had satisfied their urges, but they allowed me to remain in their innermost sanctum for the remainder of the night.

As I left their apartment the next morning, Tracy and Scarlett mentioned they had threesomes when the urge to spice up their relationship arose.

"Although," Tracy said, "this rarely happens. You just have great timing."

\* \* \*

Two weeks passed. I was leaving my apartment building on my way to a business meeting when the elevator stopped. I didn't notice the floor level until the elevator voice announced it was the seventeenth floor. I looked up from my phone as the doors opened but an empty hallway greeted me.

All of a sudden, I heard a female voice call out, "Hold the elevator, please."

I launched myself at the doors as they began to close and placed my hand in front of the sensors. I heard the sound of an apartment door closing and, within seconds, a figure appeared dressed in business attire – black suit pants, crisp white blouse and a stylish jacket.

"Thank you," she said, her eyes fixed on her purse. Then she looked up. "Oh, hi," she said, smiling.

During our descent, as the doors frequently slid open and shut with residents piling in dressed in their corporate work

attire or exercise gear, I stole the odd glance at her, admiring her beauty. The elevator reached the ground floor and everyone poured out in a rush, leaving us standing alone once again. I gestured with my hand, "After you."

She smiled at me as she exited the elevator. She turned left toward the main entrance while I headed right in the direction of the parking lot. I stopped. I felt an urgent need to know her name. My heart pounded with anticipation. I turned around and called out, "What's your name?"

She paused and turned to face me. "Emma," she said and smiled before continuing on her way.

As I drove out of the parking lot and headed down the street, I realized I had a grin from ear to ear on my face.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bryan Morgan grew up reading thrillers. In his thirties, inspired by movies about relationships and the beauty of two people falling in love, he discovered romance novels. He's been hooked on the genre ever since.

Rejoining the dating scene after the end of a long-term relationship, Bryan noticed his friends were fascinated by his experiences. And so the germ of an idea formed to write his own romance novel but from a man's point of view.

*Glimpse* is his first published book.







