

Cordra

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CHAPTER ONE

I should have known that life would not progress as I planned. Cordra, a three-quarters blood Lakota Indian woman was my chauffeur at the time. I worked for a branch of the State Government, and I was grateful that they went out of their way to help me maintain my benefits and position. I had a full leg cast on my left leg and could not drive. So, they arranged for my chauffeur to pick me up at home, drive me to work, and then the opposite when the day ended.

The year was rough for me. For seven months, starting in December of the last year and running into this year, I suffered from a Chronic Fatigue Virus. (CFV) It started as a case of flu. I got well and got it again. Then there was bronchitis, twice and during this period, the CFV took control. It does that when your immune system is too weak to fight anything. Fatigue? Yes. I worked forty-hour overtime shifts on a special project in one month. It paid for a trip to Florida, both money and time, but I don't remember much of it. I probably added to the whipping I got by doing that.

Problem is, with a CFV, you don't care about much. I slept eighteen hours a day. I got up to go potty, get a drink, eat a snack, look dejectedly at piles of clothes and dishes and papers everywhere, and give the whole house an obscene gesture and go back to bed. I could do nothing. I slept, soundly, for great lengths of time and woke tired. I ventured out sometimes at night. I couldn't stand the daytime. I started drinking Arizona J Green Tea. I griped at myself for buying a case, but in less than a week, it was gone. I bought two, then two more, and in the end, I drank eleven cases during that illness. My body must have loved something in the tea, which is an antioxidant.

Then the CFV was gone. One Saturday I woke, and it was like a switch was thrown, and I had my life back. My energy level returned fairly quickly. That was in June. I went to West Virginia for the Fourth of July reunion and celebration. Had my own fireworks when I broke all three bones in my left ankle. That got me back home, swiftly, in the hospital for an operation and then a lot of pain and a long period of helplessness. My employer, the State of Delaware was very kind and let me work near home and out of my home, anyway I could. They even arranged transportation for me.

That's how Cordra came into my life. She volunteered to give me transportation to and from work for a time until I could manage on my own.

It was another special project but most welcome. It got me out of the house and let me feel useful. Being in a wheelchair, alone in an empty house, can be very devastating to your morale. The first week was relatively uneventful with only a surface exchange of conversation between us. It wasn't to last.

On the tenth day, she waited until I finished the arduous task of crawling into my house and standing by the kitchen sink before I sat in my wheelchair.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" It was the fourth time that afternoon she had asked the question and that time she stood very close to me.

"Not at the moment, thanks." I longed for the wheelchair and the silence when she closed the door behind her.

She closed her eyes and shook her head. "You're so hesitant to ask for anything," she whispered. Her jet-black hair, damp from humidity, glistened in the sun through the kitchen windows. I could smell the odor of stale perfume and body sweat, but still it was pleasant, too pleasant. She slipped her arms around me and kissed me before I knew she had it planned.

There was little I could do, so I stood there and enjoyed the taste of her mouth on mine, and the tiny puffs of air across my cheek, because she chose not to move right away. My hands slipped around her shoulders and slid down her back, using her warm body as a brace for my wounded leg. She bore the weight and finally moved her face away.

"Good?" she breathed the question across my mouth and nose.

"You got it. Good to the hundredth power, near an astronomical explosion. But why? We shouldn't."

"I've got to return the truck tonight. Will you open the door for me when I come back? Or should I keep the keys? I'd prefer you opening the door. Please?" She jiggled the key ring for emphasis. "That would mean a great deal to me."

She kissed me once more before I could answer, and I shivered as her body heat seeped through her clothes and my clothes.

"I'll open the door," I sighed when she released me again. That time she stepped back with a wink and a grin. I shivered and turned to sit in my chair. "It'll be difficult."

"A turn of the lock is easy, Jim."

"I was referring to my cast."

"You'll be on your back, so not to worry. It works well in most any position. Trust me."

"You're bad for me. Why do you use the name Cordra anyway? Mysterious Indian meaning?"

"No. I don't care too much for any cords. Male or female."

"Not much of an explanation."

"I also like to play with cords. Ropes. Twine. Strings. Chastity belts. Whips. Bondage things like that." She grinned. "You like the name?"

"Yes. I like it. It's different, but nice."

"Then cling to me and enjoy the woman who wears it. I'm here for your good. For our good. Trust me."

"That remains to be seen."

"I'll be back within an hour. Hopefully." She handed me the door keys. "Don't worry. I'll make it as easy as I can."

She was back within thirty minutes. She must have flown, thinking I would change my mind. I did change my mind, several times, but in the end, I left the screen door unlocked, and the kitchen door standing wide open, just as she left it. I swear I never saw a happier face than when she stood in my kitchen again and closed the door behind her.

"Traffic lights were generous tonight. Green lights all the way to and from. Another green light here. Tonight Cordra's lucky. Wahoo!"

The deadbolt lock clunked with a twist of her fingers. It set her mind firmer with the rest of the world locked away.

She moved my chair to the hallway. "Let's feed the rush."

"What rush?" I asked, longing to delay what would happen.

"Go, she whispered and pushed me down the hallway toward the bedroom. "Don't speak. Not another word of pleasure, pain, or protest. Not until we're done."

Until we're done? That was more or less set. It had been a year since I had sex with my wife. Possibly longer than that for any pleasant sex. Cordra was hotter now and there was an unmistakable change in her body odor as her clothes came off and she showered me with hugs, touches and kisses.

The next morning when I woke, I heard her in the bathroom. She whistled an undeterminable, repeating phrase over the running water. I stretched and relaxed on my side to observe the leaves on my neighbor's lilac bushes blowing in the breeze. The wind passed through the window and increased in velocity when Corda opened the bathroom door.

"Morning," she said gaily. As her weight shifted the mattress, I rolled into her. "You look much nicer this morning. More relaxed."

"Feel it also. You're amazing."

"Hope you don't mind my using your toothbrush. I forgot to pack mine in the rush of things."

"I can live with it. I won't go psycho over that infraction."

"I'm sorry about this. Unlike you, I have to go to work now. See ya at ten-thirty." She kissed me and ran her hands through my hair. With that, she was gone.

What can I say? The change in my life did me good. The isolation and total dependence on other people to help me with nearly everything in my life worked for her, for our advantage. I lay in the bed for a while, remembering the night behind us and I felt great, for the first time in a long while. At that moment, I didn't want it to end. Eventually, I roused myself from the daydream and clambered into my wheelchair.

Ten-thirty. It was a long time arriving that morning. She laughed and gave a thumb up when I told her it felt like a whole week since I'd seen her last.

"I failed to mention that little tidbit. I'm addictive. Just one connection with a Lakota squaw is enough to hook you and secures my fixes for life."

"Yeah, right. Either that or until my wife comes home."

"Cross that bridge when it's built. Don't fear it. Don't hasten it. However, burn it afterwards," she whispered.

I shivered and stood so she could fold up the wheelchair. The room wasn't cold, but I felt chilled for a moment. She sounded way too serious for a one-night romp in bed. I recalled a flash of Poe's *Pit and the Pendulum* as I scooted out the door, and she handed my crutches. Only the blade was lower and aimed at a much smaller part of me than my stomach.

"Bobbitt, bobbitt," I said, croaking like a frog.

"She wouldn't dare. That would be the worst mistake of her life." The statement was calmly delivered with a great deal of confidence, as if she'd been there before, knew my wife, and was certain of the outcome. I felt strangely secure with that answer. Better than the one thought I had anyway.

She put her State truck away and took me home in her own vehicle that night. I protested, a little, but it did no good. Lakota squaws make the decisions in most matters I was informed. And after all, who am I, a one-legged marvel to argue with her when I looked forward to her company in my house and in my bed.

With my days filled with working on the special project and my nights filled with gaiety, laughter, conversations, playing, and Cordra's warmth, I thought of little else, like a blind man

nearing the edge of a cliff. We lay in bed, early one evening, not long after we arrived home. We both fell asleep, exhausted from our lovemaking spree, and I woke instantly when the bedroom door opened. I raised my face above her breast line and stared across her nipples at the door that was starting to close, pulled by my white-faced daughter, Beth.

“Oh no,” I sighed and rested my chin on her ribs.

“Trouble?” she asked, playing with my hair.

“Yes.” I closed my eyes and didn’t move.

“Mighty quiet. Wife?”

“Maybe worse. Daughter,” I answered as my stomach did a flop.

“Does she always enter your bedroom without knocking?”

“No. But she has a key to the house. And since I’ve been enjoying you, getting fixed every night, and loving it, I’ve not called her or talked with her since we’ve been playing. She’s just worried about me for lack of contact.”

“Well, what are you going to do?” she grinned.

“Tell her the truth.”

The bed shook from her giggling. “That should be fun. Can I watch? Listen?”

“I’m sure the neighbors on both sides will hear.”

I began to regret ever letting her back in the house the first night. I rolled over her, dressed, and got situated in my wheelchair.

She opened the door for me, hugged my neck, and patted my shoulder. “Good luck. I’ll be there for support in just a moment.” She disappeared into the bathroom with her clothes.

Some women have very exquisite faces when they’re angry. When I entered the kitchen, Beth’s face was more ravishing than I could ever recall, and there were photos of her all over the house. Her jaw muscles were tense, and her cheeks and forehead were crimson. The fingers on both hands drummed the tabletop at 125 words per minute without stopping.

“Hi, Beth,” I said, as evenly as I could.

Her face snapped in my direction. “What are you doing, Dad?”

“Nothing major.”

“That’s a laugh! How long’s she been here? You’ve not talked to me for a week or more. Almost two.”

“About that long. About seven days, more or less. Lost track of time. Sorry.”

“You can say that again.”

“Hey, she’s a nice woman,” I said, suddenly feeling the need to defend Cordra.

“Hah! I’m sure you could find fifty men in Dover to back you up on that, but a snapshot is worth a thousand words. Why? Why are you doing her?”

“Well, I never intended for that to happen. Didn’t look for it. She was the one assigned to take me to work and bring me home. Give me a ride.”

“And what else was she assigned to do? Driver and low-life, low-bid hooker for hire?”

“She’s nothing like that. She was there. I was there. And that’s what happened. Don’t make so much out of it.”

“I come here, worried because you don’t call or return my calls, find you in bed with a naked woman, and I’m not supposed to make anything of it? You’re very dense, Dad. Mom’s not going to like this. She’ll be worse than me to deal with.”

On that statement, as if on cue, Cordra entered the kitchen and walked behind Beth. She intentionally extended a hand and brushed it through Beth’s short brown hair, more than enough for her to know it. “Hi. I’m Cordra. You’re Jim’s daughter, but I don’t have a name for you yet.”

"I've got one for you!" said Beth.

"I can imagine. I'm Cordra. Who are you? I like the names of people who hate me without knowing me."

"Beth. As if it matters. Just leave, and leave us alone!"

"You don't have to be so loud," I said to Beth.

"And you don't have to be screwing her. What's Mom going to do when she finds out?"

"I don't know." I felt confidence slipping downhill rapidly. I felt unable to defend myself or Cordra. I longed for a transporter beam to get me away from both. *Beam me up, Scottie. Send me back when the smoke settles.*

Cordra poured a glass of iced tea in the ensuing silence and sat back down at the table. She knew it irritated Beth, and I thought it rather rude, but I couldn't bring myself to ask her to leave. It reminded me of many family get-together from the past.

Beth was blunt about it. "You don't need to be screwing her, Dad. Have you lost your mind?"

I gazed at Cordra for a moment. Her voice was in my head. *She wouldn't dare.* The words came again giving me a conviction I didn't feel at the moment. *I'm addicted. And who better to be addicted to? Lakota woman, you one fine specimen. Zowie! Bend over and grab your ankles.*

And with that thought, I came returned from the corner of the universe, back to the table and the present.

"Lost my mind? No way," I said firmly. "My virginity? Yes, it's gone. My horniness? Yes. It's gone. My mind? No way."

Cordra sprayed a mouthful of tea on the table and grabbed a few napkins to blot it up. "That was a good one. I like that." She winked and blew me a kiss when Beth looked at her.

"Get lost, wench!" Beth said.

I grabbed her hand to stop her in mid swing. "That's not necessary, Beth. Leave her alone. Deal with me. Keep the anger focused where it belongs."

Beth wrenched her hand away, and the look on her face was indescribable.

Cordra stood and tucked the napkins inside the empty tea glass. "Look, since I'm only inciting a riot and hostility here, what say I take a walk around the block or two and let you two chit-chat? Sound great?"

"Yes," Beth said. "Try the middle of the highway. Turn a few tricks and then mosey on home, your home."

Cordra passed her chair and then turned and patted Beth's cheek to deliberately increase her anger. "You're tough. Resilient. I like that in daughters. That's a good quality."

Once more, I stayed the hand that wanted to fight and breathed easier when the screen door closed behind Cordra.

"This is wrong, Dad! So wrong! I can't believe it's happening. Why? Gah!" She slapped the table top.

"Beth, honey, sorry you had to walk in on us that way. Would it have been better if she was clothed?"

"What?" she answered, her face numb with disbelief. "Better if she were clothed? Better if she weren't there at all. I don't want to see my father screwing some low-life hooker who's not his wife and my mother."

I watched her closely and her face began to relax, slightly.

"You're not going to apologize, are you?" she said after a short silence. "You're not going to ask her to leave, are you?"

"I'm still kicking that around," I said.

"Mom's going to be very angry. She'll kill you. I don't want to see you dead. You know what I mean?"

I shrugged and disagreed. However, in the back of my mind, doubts were starting to surface once more.

Beth sighed and rubbed both hands across her cheeks. "Her hands are hot," she said faintly. "Who started it?"

"She asked to help me. She kissed me. She left and came back. I left the door open for her. I wish I could say I regret it, but that part of me won't lie."

"And Mom?"

I coined Cordra's phrase. "I'll cross that bridge when it's built."

"Let her find out like I did?"

"I'm not sure that's a good idea. Like I said, I'm still kicking it around."

"What about me?"

"This has nothing to do with you," I said, and then stopped. It did have a lot to do with her. "I take that back. I didn't mean for you to find out this way. I should have talked with you. Should have had you over for dinner and let you find her here and add two and two beforehand. I never meant for her to be here after the first night. I thought it was just a fantasy of hers to have sex with a crippled man. Some women do. It lets them be on top and in charge for a while. Never dreamed she would be back again. Never dreamed I'd let her come back. Never dreamed I'd fall in love with her. Really. But I have and that's that."

Beth managed a faint smile. "I can hear the truth in that, but."

"I know. I should have stopped. She told me she was addictive. I didn't listen too well."

"Then again, you did. You're my father, and neither of us can change that now. As soon as you grabbed my hand the first time, when I wanted to deck her, knock her brains loose, I knew it was more than a casual affair. It might be a swift love occurrence, but you stopped me. You never stopped either mom or me when we fought in the past."

I stared at her resolute face.

"That's right. I know. I'm not a child any longer. I'm married, remember?"

I simply nodded.

"You listened to her with your heart, body, and mind. She must have sung a good song of love to turn you around so fast. I hope she's worth the hell that's going to break loose. Soon."

"Beth," I started to say.

Her hand came up swiftly. "Don't. Just don't defend yourself or explain yourself. That snapshot of you two in bed said it all. It's ingrained here," she pointed to her head, "forever. It's okay. I'll get over it. Just shut up."

I nodded and she stood swiftly.

"I'm still your daughter. Don't diss me because of a lifestyle change. Okay?"

"Never, duck. That's a given in the formula. I'm sorry I got so involved that I forgot to communicate. I'll get better."

"Good." She stepped beside the chair. She hugged me and kissed my neck. "She wears good cologne too. She smells good, in spite of my anger, and she'll probably be good for you, if you survive Mom. I'll let myself out and I'll call before I come in from now on. See ya."

"Beth," I called when she reached the door.

"I know. You're sorry for me, but not for her. Right?" she said for me. "Right on. See ya soon."

Not two minutes later, Cordra returned.

“You’ve got a strong daughter there. I do believe it would’ve hurt if you hadn’t stopped her. From the looks of her face and your face, I’d venture that things are somewhat okay? Even if it’s still shaky?”

“Something like that.”

“Thanks for stopping her and for defending me. I thought that was very nice. A very romantic gesture.”

“You amaze me, my darling. Are you some sort of medicine woman? Casting spells or what-not?”

“No. I’m Cordra. Born with the name Tiger Lily, and not knowing why, since there were none of those flowers near my birthplace. Maybe it’s my freckles. No spells. Just love. Just a deep attraction. When I saw you the first time, it was like you’d been in my life forever, then disappeared, then suddenly returned. My awareness of the world, my spirit, everything about me came to life when you touched my hand. My heart leapt with joy. Where I was empty, I was full. Where I was lonely, I was secure. The sex only served to bond us. The rest was there from the start. Before we met.”

I scratched the back of my neck. “Well, I don’t know about all that. Sounds good. Are you trying to say, destiny?”

“Yes. Sort of that. That has a nice ring to it. You have too much resolution, too much strength to say no to women. You could walk away and leave a woman panting in bed and never be concerned about it. When my lips met yours, tasted yours, you melted too quickly. It was like a landslide of emotions that set us on a proper course.”

“But what are we going to do? If this is destiny, what’s the purpose?”

“Let your spirit make the choice. It’s worked well so far. With Beth. It’ll work in the future. Patience. Or do you want me to leave? Will that be the proper answer?”

I opened my arms and she filled them. “No,” I whispered into her hair.

“That’s not the answer. Not yet.” *What about Carol?* my mind offered just for kicks.

“Worried about Carol?”

“You eaves dropping on my mind? I’ve thought about her a lot recently.”

“Only because of sex?”

“No. You know better than that. Like you, I feel you’ve been a part of me all my life. I just don’t look forward to the conflict that will happen when she returns home.”

“You’ve been separated so long and for silly reasons. Do you want more of the same? Maybe I shouldn’t ask that.”

“You can ask; you should ask; and the answer is no.”

“I don’t think you’ll have to deal with such a vast problem alone,” she said and kissed me. “In fact, it will most likely be her and me in a battle of sexuality and will. And since she has nothing to gain, and I have everything to lose, the balance of will and power is on my side. She lost when you kissed me eight days ago. The trip to bed was the clincher.”

She kissed me again. “Relax. You’re not in this alone. Cordra’s here, and she’ll stay the treasonous hand this time. Okay?”

“Okay,” I relented, and I truly believed her.

Two days later, Beth was in the kitchen when we got home from work. She gave us instructions to wash up for dinner, but not together.

Beth is a good cook, chef quality, and excels at most everything she sets her mind to do. Therefore the dinner took me by surprise, since she obviously didn't like Cordra's presence in my life. I asked what she was up to and she simply pointed to the bathroom with a wry smile and said to go.

"Mmm, mmm, this smells good," Cordra said when we were seated at the table.

The meal was a simple spaghetti and marinara sauce, but one that Beth had made from scratch, including the spaghetti. The blend of spices she refused to write down for anyone were a killer, but not in the literal sense.

She reserved it for special occasions and banquets and people shelled out a heavy amount of cash to be wowed and delighted.

"Do you have a cup bearer? Someone to sample it first. It might be laden with poisons," Beth said.

Cordra held eye contact with her for a moment then shook her head.

"No cup bearer necessary. And I trust you. You might dislike me intensely, and you might whip my ass unmercifully in a physical fight, but you don't have the balls to poison me. Too subtle an approach for you. A Neanderthal attack with a curmudgeon would be more appropriate to take me out."

Beth laughed so hard she had to sit. "Okay. Point taken. You can eat with no worries. I have a reputation to uphold. Deaths put a crimp in your style in the food industry."

Small talk and groans of delight filled the rest of the dinner. Beth cleared the table and served freshly brewed jasmine tea for us.

"Okay, time for a powwow," she said to Cordra. "What are your intentions? Since I can see you're not planning to leave, what do you intend to do? He is married and to my mother. This won't sit well with her."

"I'm well aware of that. Is this dinner and tea a form of Beth's Peace Pipe?"

"You got it." She gave a thumb up. "I have to know where and how I fit in. I'm not going to lose Dad in this affair, not without a fight"

"Fair statement. You're not going to lose what you have with him You might gain. I told you when we first met that I liked your spirit. I meant that. It's good, healthy, and lively. I wouldn't dare to try to come between you two."

"But you don't mind coming between them?"

"Not entirely a true statement. A part of me dislikes the encumbered situation and says I should stop. I'm not the slut you think. I do have a conscience, but the rest of me, like you, doesn't want to let go. We're probably more alike than you'll be willing to admit for a while, but someday you will."

"I'll admit that now. That's probably why I don't like you being here. You have your mind set and won't back down. And I'd probably do the same if I had the balls to do so. I don't want to see dad hurt."

"I'm not intending to hurt him."

"But what about mom? She has a penchant for violence."

"Not to worry about that. Any obstacle can be overcome. Any mountain can be relocated if only by moving one stone at a time until there's nothing left here, but it reappears way over there."

"So, you're going to stay in his life and then what?"

"Get pregnant and give you a brother and sister, or two, or maybe three to play with. Maybe even four. Bring some Indian diversification to the family."

Beth's mouth hung open and she was silent.

I sat down my glass of tea and said, "What? I didn't hear that correctly, did I?"

Beth answered for her. "You did, Dad. She said what we both heard."

"But I'm too old," I declared and Cordra's hand shot up.

"Speak to the hand, love! I know nothing of age. I know love and I know spirits. That's my trade in life. If you're too old for that, you'd not be sleeping with me still and getting as much as you do. You're not too old; I'm not too young. Speak your darkest fear or maintain silence.

Lakata squaw rule number two.

Beth watched my face and she smiled when I didn't answer. "What's rule number one?" she asked, still looking at me.

"You don't belly bump a Lakota squaw and leave me in the morning. I like that to be a forever thing. I might not be a virgin, but I consider myself one. You take me, and spread my legs, I'm yours for the long haul, white eyes."

I frowned and Beth burst into laughter.

"I like those rules," Beth said. "You have a real peace pipe?"

Cordra nodded. "With real cherry tobacco. Not the imitation stuff you buy in stores these days. Do you want to try it?"

"Yes."

"I'll bring it tomorrow, so it'll be here when you want. Sure you're woman enough to handle it?"

"You know who my father is?"

"Gotcha. 'Nough said."

The peace pipe appeared the next day and so did some of her things.

One item was a simple straw mat, at least on outward appearances, but Cordra treated it like it was made of gold. She placed it before the front door and she would sit on it every day.

Sometimes, after the sun was down, she would toss her clothes on the sofa and sit naked on the mat for an hour, cross legged with eyes closed and whispering a chant.

When I suggested moving it, most likely inspired with what Carol would say when she came home, I met a lot of resistance. She told me in no circumstance would I move the mat one inch from where it lay. I had to ask why.

"This mat is me. It was made by my grandmother, with lots of love and spirit medicine. I sit on it, with or without clothing. It is a part of me. You can't realize it yet, or see it yet, but someday you will. This is the door that Carol will enter. She'll be disconcerted right away. My spirit part that remains on the mat, long after I'm gone, will both shock and chill her to the bone. She'll be slapped in the face, with no harm, and she'll go crazy. That's when you need to be strong and simply let your spirit be free to lie where it belongs."

I looked at the mat dubiously. "I imagine it might smell like you, but I doubt she'd pick it up and sniff it."

She chuckled at that comment. "She doesn't have to. She'd smell nothing anyway. Nothing but grass. You would. You'd be able to find it in a batch of ten, in a perfectly dark room. Love would guide you to it. All Carol needs to do is step on it and it'll be like having her head smacked into a brick wall. She'll feel me, know I've had you, and she'll go crazy, even though there will be nothing of me in this house. Nothing except this mat."

I had a fondness for Indian items. I had dream catchers, pictures of Indian men and women, wolves, white buffalo, and such around the house already. I wore western style shirts. I failed to

see how a worn and faded mat would do anything except set Carol off about another Indian thing. And the condition of said Indian thing.

“You don’t have to understand everything in intricate detail,” she said to ease my mind. “All you have to do is have faith and believe it will work. The main thing to do is be strong when it happens. There shouldn’t be anger, but there will be a fight to stop what she feels.”

“And your chants on this rug will do that?”

“Yes. A Lakota squaw is alive when she’s loved. It will do that and more. You’ll understand someday. Right now, do you want me? Do you want me to remain in your life? Do you accept me as a part of you? Over and above Carol’s presence?”

I hugged her close and felt the pressure of her breasts on my chest when she breathed. “Yes. But there’s still some uncertainty.”

“I know. Will you trust me on this? Bring her through this door. Is that a problem?”

“No. We usually use this entrance.”

“Leave the lights out until you know I have affected her. That will give some more credibility to what I’ve told you.”

“You’re strange.”

“So long as you love me, that’s quite okay with me. I’ll be strange. Be your lover. Be your concubine. Be your squaw. Be your baby maker. Whatever.”

“This is hard for me to take or even think about sometimes.” I sighed and kissed her hair. “I love kissing your hair.”

“You love kissing my hair in other places also.”

“Hush about that. It’s not my ideal situation for where I am in life right now. I should be planning retirement and enjoying grandkids, not going on an escapade with a Lakota squaw. Know what I mean?”

“Because you think like the rest of the molded rats in the great white maze. I’ll open your mind. I’ve opened your eyes, your love, and your sexuality. The mind will follow at full throttle.” She moved her head back and held my gaze. “If you’ll allow it. Why not enjoy your own children, versus grandchildren? Who told you it has to be someone else’s?”

“That’s just the way it is.”

“That’s white man’s way. The Indian refuses that. He lived for centuries, hunting white buffalo, eating jerky cured over oak fires or drying under a pure sunlit sky. Now he lives white man’s way and dies forty years before his time, poisoned by the chemical-laden sky and canned foods. You can open your mind as easy as you open my legs, if you have a desire to do so. Get that desire and want to know life as like you want to know my sexuality, and nothing will get in your path. Experiencing and loving life can be as easy and enjoyable as loving me. Trust me on that also. Please?”

“Okay,” I said and ruffled her hair. “Speaking of your open legs and sexuality, I think it’s time to experience that again.”

“You’re not feeling too old, Grandfather?”

“Nah.”

“I’m already naked. Let’s do it here on the mat.”

“With the door open?”

“No one will watch, or care what we do. It’ll do you good. Consider it training for the future. Keep your focus on me, versus the rest of the world. Love me, regardless of what the world screams at you.”

“What about Beth?” I asked as I unbuttoned my shirt.

“We shared a smoke on the pipe last night. She’s a great person. Really. She never comes here at this time of the night and she’d call if she had a need to visit us. She has her own mat to sit on anyway. I gave her one.”

She lay down in the dim light, and I watched her face studying mine.

“Will this compound Carol’s shock?” I asked, still not thoroughly convinced.

“Considerably. If you do something like this, you might as well deliver a devastating blow instead of a minor kick in the shin. Hit them with all you’ve got and don’t give them the chance to recover until it’s far too late. When that point is reached, the irreversible damage will have happened, and defense becomes a moot point. Resistance will be futile.”

I stretched out on top of her for some kisses. “Why not just kick her in the crotch and let her land on her back in the front yard? That would get the message across.”

She giggled again and played with the hair on my chest. “That’s about what it will feel like for her. Wham! Right in the pelvis bone. And instead of retaliation, instead of a tooth-and-nail fight, and insane anger, all she’ll be able to do is cry.”

“I’ll trust you on that. We need no more conversation now, just action.”

CHAPTER TWO

So life went on for a while. Beth showed up more often and she, and Cordra had intimate powwows where I was the excluded party. I didn't mind. I was thrilled at their compatibility. The cast was off, and I was walking two miles a day when Carol called and wanted to be picked up.

Beth wished me good luck and disappeared. Cordra was silent and moody. She took what few pieces of clothes and items she had and put them in her car. True to her word, the only thing she left was her mat. She also wished me good luck and kissed me good bye.

The ride home was fine. Really. Carol was talkative and lighthearted. She kept the conversation going, even while we shopped for food. She was pleased with the business, pleased with my progress with my leg and life in general. She babbled about the future and asked tons of questions about Beth. What a welcome change from the norm. I felt guilty about the coming discussion about Cordra.

She fell silent inside the front door in the dark and paused. She turned to hug me, and I responded. "Hey, I just wanted you to know that I love you," she whispered and kissed me. Her voice quivered, like she was cold and I could feel her trembling.

"I know that."

"It's just the lifestyle we live keeps us apart, you know?" Her voice had a pleading quality to it.

"I know. We're different." I started to move and she remained still, standing on the mat. "What's wrong?" I stretched out a hand and turned on the light.

"I don't know. Just feel very uneasy." She rubbed her arms. "I felt all right until just now."

It was hard for me to believe, and it was difficult for me not to confess right away. However, I told Cordra I trusted her, and I chose to do as she had said, which was to be quiet and let Carol's spirit do the work.

Carol looked down at her feet and saw the mat. "A new addition?"

"Yes. Like it?" I knew the answer already.

"No, but what do I have to say about it? I don't live here except on rare occasions. But, I still love you." She pulled me close and kissed me again. "Your leg healed enough for you to play around?"

I thought about all the playing I'd done with Cordra, with a cast on.

Carol would not even try to do the sex thing in any position except with her on her back. She would permit no other way, no other position.

"Yes." I was suddenly not enthused by the idea. "But it'll be better with you on top." I hoped that would discourage her.

"We'll try it the other way first," she said and headed for the bedroom. When I walked in, she stood before the dresser, with the light on and stared at the bed. Cordra had changed the sheets and pillow cases before she left. Nothing was out of place, but Carol was uncomfortable.

"Who is she?" she asked when she knew I was there.

“Who’s who?” I answered as she grabbed the bottom of her one-piece dress and removed it over her head.

“Who’s the other woman?” She stood in her underwear and stared at the bed. You’ve had her in our bed.”

I said nothing.

“You’re silent. Look. I’m sorry that I have this business, but I can’t back out now. I’m in too deep. Why don’t you come with me? You can help me. Won’t you consider it?”

I said nothing.

“Look. I can forgive most anything but silence. I’m suddenly horny, and I want you. I want you to make love with me. I know it’s been a long time, probably over a year, but I want to do that now. Tonight. If the leg bothers you, I’ll get over it and do it on top. Okay?”

She peeled off her panty hose and opened a drawer to choose a pair of white Bobby socks. She was doing everything she could to get me involved, and that was a turn on that usually worked well. From the first time we made love, she wore her socks, always. If she remained barefooted, I did without.

There was nothing wrong with her feet, but she did not like them, and I loved her wearing socks when we made love, like the night we made Beth.

Awesome. She was not going to let this go easily.

She was naked then and she kissed me passionately before she reached the bed and pulled down the covers. She lay back on the bed and patted the mattress beside her. “Come on,” she pleaded.

I moved to the bed, still in silence.

She kissed me, and I felt her legs spread on the bed.

“No,” I whispered.

“Who is she?” she asked again. “Give my enemy a name.”

“Cordra I’m sorry, but I can’t do this.”

“You’ve done her here. And in the living room. I can feel it. She’s strong. She’s overpowering. She’s everywhere in the frigging house!”

I simply nodded to the accusations. She was horny, no doubt about that, and she was inviting. Things did not look too good.

“Please, just do me once. I can forgive most anything. I can forgive your turning to other women, but please. Come back to me. Don’t turn me down. I’m your wife. It’ll work. It’ll feel great. Come on.”

The begging voice touched me and for a moment I wished to give in. Then I heard Cordra’s voice in my mind. *She’ll go crazy, and that’s when you must be strong.* Should I be strong enough to reject my wife? When she was this open and willing?

“I can’t,” I sighed and stood from the bed.

“Undress and lay down. I know you can.”

“No. It would work, but I don’t want it to work. The last time I did that was the final time for you,” I found the strength to say.

“Please?” she begged once again.

“No. I’m used to you being gone. And, since I can’t have both of you, I’d rather lose you than her.”

I heard her sigh. “Then why did you bother with me coming home? Why not tell me and spare me the trip here? If she’s that good, so damned desirable, that you can’t touch me, why bother with me coming home?”

"I don't know." I felt helpless. I truly didn't know why I let her get that far and then say no. I should have stopped her at the train station and let her catch the next train back to New York. Better yet, I could have told her when she called. That would have saved her the trip and me the anguish of the moment.

"Well, I'll get out of the way! I'll sleep here, in my bed, alone, and you can call your twist-of-tail and sleep with her in the basement. Screw yourself into oblivion for all I care!"

"That's silly."

"You say that because you're an ignorant jackass!" she fired at me.

"Call her! I'll not bother you. And I'll leave in the morning, in a taxi, but I'll leave through the kitchen, not across that bloody fucking mat where you screwed her! You both can laugh at me and screw on the mat again! Do it! See if I care!" With that she started crying.

"I'm sorry," I said again.

She shoved me away from the bed and started going through dresser drawers.

"What are you looking for?" I asked, trying to be helpful.

She stopped and her shoulders sagged as she heaved a huge sigh.

"Look. I'm tired. I'm so horny I can't think straight, and you're not helping. And this is too much of a shock. I'm looking for my vibrator. And after I take care of myself, I'll be able to sleep. I can't do either with you here, so please go. Just go!"

"Okay," I said meekly. I opened a drawer in another dresser and handed her the vibrator. "There are new batteries in your vanity."

She tossed it on the bed and slapped me. "She must be Indian!" she shouted. "Ignorant jackass! What tribe?"

"Lakota."

"I hope you get VD!" she said and shoved me into the hallway.

"That's not nice."

"Neither are you right now!" She slammed the door and the whole house shook.

I stood there for a moment and listened to her cry. I should be there instead of here. It should be me, kissing, stroking and kneading her flesh until she reached the big o. It all seemed to pass as a dream. It didn't seem to happen in reality. I felt if I opened the door, Cordra would be there or else Carol would be there, and things would be fine. I stood until I heard the vibrator start humming. I realized that was much-deserved guilt, and I shook my head as I walked down the hall and the stairs.

The basement was quiet. It seemed unreal that two stories straight up, was the bed, where my wife lay in crying chaos, and here it was peaceful. I couldn't see or touch, or know what was going on. I shivered although it wasn't cold and picked up the phone.

Cordra must have had a hand on the phone, because she answered before it completed one ring. By the sound of her voice, I knew something was wrong. I took the chance and liberty of voicing my thoughts. "Have you been crying?"

"Yes. When you plant a seed and let it grow, and then you set it free, there's always uncertainty that it will come back to you, no matter how much you wish or desire it. I'm a warrior when I need to be, and I'm a wimp when I can't be a warrior." She sniffed and blew her nose. "So, how are you? Thanks for the call."

"I'm confused, but holding my own."

"You alone?"

"In the basement. She went crazy, like you said. She's in the bed. I'm in the basement. She called me an ignorant jackass and told me to phone you. Do you believe that?"

“Yes. You are and I believe.”

“Are you coming over? This is crazy.”

“Did you touch her?”

“No. She was inviting, but I did nothing. I couldn’t.”

“But you didn’t service her? Help yourself to her goodies because you’re still married to her?”

“No. I felt guilty for not doing that, but the guilt over violating your trust was greater. I couldn’t do it. I don’t even know if I responded to her strong come on. I thought of you, and I could do nothing to her. I told her I’d rather lose her than lose you.”

“Great, love. I’ll be over in a few minutes. Wait for me on the mat?”

“Whatever you want, honey darling. I’ll be there.”

The morning sun shone through a slit in the dark red curtains in my basement and I was loath to move from my position to close them fully. I was on the daybed with Cordra wrapped in my arms. We spent the night like that, and I don’t recall moving at all. The basement door opened and I opened one eye, trying to recall who was there.

“Jim? Hey, are you awake?”

I yawned and then remembered the night before and Carol.

“Jim?”

“Yes. I’m awake now. What?”

“Are you dressed?”

I moved from the bed and repositioned Cordra’s head and arms, but I didn’t cover her.

Carol walked down the stairs, dressed in her housecoat. Even in the dim light I could tell that her eyes were slightly puffy. She stopped beside me and viewed Cordra. She sighed and shook her head. “Wow, she’s gorgeous. That sucks, greatly,” she whispered and started weeping again.

“Can we go upstairs and talk?” She never waited for an answer, just shoved her hands into the housecoat pockets and headed for the stairs.

I donned my pants and shoes and followed her.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that,” she said when I entered the kitchen. She sat at the dining room table, sideways on a chair and facing the door. One arm hugged the chair back, and the other flopped on the table top.

“I’m out-looked, out-sexed, and out-loved. I didn’t need that vision of love.”

I started a pot of coffee and sat beside her.

“This is rough on me,” she started. “I didn’t mean for this to happen to us.”

“I don’t think anyone ever wants things like this to happen.”

“It seems like a dream. Like I’ll wake up tomorrow, and none of this will have happened.” She sighed and blew her nose. “I feel like a fool. I still love you and I want to fight, but after seeing her, I can’t. I want to hug you and kiss you until you can’t say no to me. Would that work?” She looked at me until I made eye contact. “I see it probably wouldn’t.”

“You’ve been gone too long. I no longer feel connected to you.”

“I know that, but I never considered it a problem. If I had, I would have seen this before and corrected it. Your passive nature caught me unaware.”

“Sorry,” I said.

She smiled slightly. “That’s cute. I mean defending her last night, and not apologizing for the love you obviously have for her. I was thinking two-bit whore. I wanted something I could

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