

Beyond
THE
Breakwater

by
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CHAPTER ONE

September, Provincetown, MA

Dr. Victoria King tilted her face to the sun and let the swift ocean current carry her to shore. She rested her paddle across the front of the seventeen-foot-long, twenty-one-inch-wide red kayak and squinted in the early morning haze toward the beach at Herring Cove. Men and women perched on the undulating curve of sand marking the border between earth and water, casting baited lines to tempt the sea bass to their last meal. In the black ribbon of parking lot sandwiched between the dunes and the shore, vacationers were just beginning to stir, opening the windows and doors of their mobile homes and airing out their sea-dampened linens and clothes.

Tory was so used to seeing the idyllic tableau, she barely took note as her craft glided the last few feet and touched bottom in the frothing water at the ocean's edge. But then, she wasn't watching the locals *or* the end-of-the-season tourists. There was only one thing for which she was searching.

Smiling, she found it.

As it had almost every morning for the last two years, a police cruiser sat amongst the battered trucks belonging to the early-morning anglers and the huge Winnebagos of intrepid travelers. And, as it never failed to do, the sight of the vehicle settled her world even as a swift surge of pleasure raced along her spine.

Carefully, she pulled her legs from inside her shell and swung a foot over each side, straddling the kayak as she stood up in the shallow foam. Once she had her balance, she moved to the needle-

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thin front and pulled the boat onto land. The fiberglass construction was amazingly light, making it easy for her to maneuver it over the sand unaided.

As she unzipped her life vest and tossed it into her boat, the sound of a car door thudding closed penetrated the roar of the waves. Looking up, she stopped what she was doing to watch the tall, lean, uniformed figure walk toward her across the shell-littered sand, a blazing grin on her handsome face. Tory was used to seeing the deputy sheriff's cruiser on the shore every morning, too, as natural a part of her personal landscape now as the dunes and the sea and the clear blue skies. But seeing the dark-haired, blue-eyed woman made her heart flutter just as it had the very first time they had met.

There were moments like this, after they'd been apart, when Reese would appear and Tory would wonder fleetingly if perhaps she had conjured her. Because, after all, women don't walk out of your dreams and right into your life. And because, after all this time, her heart still fluttered. *Walk slowly, so I can watch.*

Reese must have read Tory's mind, or maybe she just read the gleam in her eye, but she took her time crossing the beach, one dark eyebrow quirked to match her cocky grin.

"Good morning, Sheriff," Tory called on the wind, her eyes roaming the trim body in the immaculately pressed and polished uniform, moving slowly from the broad shoulders over the faint swell of breasts to the narrow hips and long, muscular thighs. Reese had left her hat in the patrol car, and the wind ruffled her thick black just short-of-short hair, giving her that slightly wild look that Tory loved. *God, you're gorgeous.*

"Good morning, Doctor," Reese replied easily, stopping a few feet away, shoulders squared in that unconscious military posture that was second nature to her. She knew Tory was watching her, *wanting* her, and she liked it. Her skin tingled under the stiff cotton of her khakis everywhere Tory's glance fell, the visual caress as tangible as a touch. The two feet of air between them shimmered like the currents above blacktop on a hot summer's day. "Nice out there today?"

"Mmm. Yeah, it was."

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Reese smiled. Tory's clear, lightly tanned skin was flushed from the wind off the water and the exertion of her recent paddle. The T-shirt she had worn under her PFD was damp with sweat and spray, the thin material subtly outlining her firm, high breasts. Her mid-thigh-length shorts hugged slender, toned legs. Even the scarred and damaged calf held a trace of valiant beauty.

"Give you a hand?" Reese's voice was husky. *You are so very lovely.*

"Anytime." Tory let Reese take the kayak up the beach, following with paddle and drybag, but falling slightly behind as her unsteady gait in the sand hampered her progress. Still, the lightweight high-impact plastic brace on her right ankle was far better than the full metal one she had needed until recently, and she wasn't complaining, especially now that she rarely, if ever, needed her cane. If it had been anyone other than Reese, though, she would have refused the aid. She had managed such things on her own for so long that it was second nature for her to decline assistance.

She caught up to Reese by the side of her Jeep and opened the back. Tossing the items she carried inside, she then turned and found the sheriff leaning against the side of the vehicle, watching her... watching her with that particular sparkle in her eye that suggested she was considering things one couldn't do in public. Things Tory really didn't want to think about at eight in the morning when she had forty patients waiting in her office.

Flushing, Tory looked away and reached for the rear of the kayak. "Ready?"

"Any time you say, love." Except Reese wasn't looking at the kayak.

Tory reached for the lift strap on the end of the boat. "Stop."

"Oh, I don't think so." Reese's voice was playful.

"Just help me with this and try to behave."

"Anything you want."

Tory laughed, and together they lifted the craft to the roof rack and secured it. As they stood facing one another by the side of the vehicle, their eyes met and they moved close enough that their hands touched. Tory slid her fingers under the starched cuff of Reese's shirt, lightly encircling her wrist.

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“Busy day today?” Reese brushed the auburn collar-length hair back from Tory’s face with her fingertips, letting her hand linger against her lover’s cheek.

“Uh-huh,” Tory murmured, pressing her face to Reese’s palm as she rested her free hand on the taller woman’s chest. “You?”

“Routine,” the sheriff replied, watching the green eyes deepen to the color of the ocean in August. “I won’t be late. Can we have dinner?”

“Probably. Call me when you finish your shift, and I’ll see where I am with my patients.”

“You think Randy will let me interrupt your office hours, even for dinner?” Reese referred to Tory’s clinic majordomo with genuine deference. “He doesn’t like it when I interfere with your schedule.”

“He’ll make room for you if he knows what’s good for him.”

Reese laughed. “I’ll tell him you said that.”

“Mmm, okay.” Tory ran a finger down the buttons on Reese’s shirt, thinking about the hard muscles and soft smooth skin underneath. She thought about waking with her that morning and how much she had wanted her right then and knowing that there wasn’t time—knowing that she would want her all day, knowing that in the evening there *would* be time. “I love you.”

Reese lowered her head and brushed her lips over Tory’s, her hand beneath Tory’s hair caressing the back of her neck. “Me, too,” she whispered against her lover’s ear. “I don’t suppose you could get away at lunch?”

“Now you’re pushing it, Sheriff.” Tory’s laughter was rich and full as she pressed both palms against Reese’s chest and pushed, backing her up a step. “No, I can’t. And it won’t hurt you to wait.”

“I’m suffering already.”

“Go to work,” Tory ordered as she stepped away. Reese had a dangerous glint in her deep blue eyes, the kind of spark that promised flames. Tory was afraid that if they touched again they’d kiss for real, and then she wouldn’t be able to concentrate all day. Twelve hours was an eternity when your body was on fire.

“When?” Reese persisted, but she didn’t move. She didn’t dare. *You always do this to me—make me so hot I can’t think.*

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“Later. Now go.” Tory slid into the Jeep, pulled the door closed, and started the ignition with shaking hands. After two years, she had expected the passion to lessen, the heat to cool, but neither had. She glanced into the rearview mirror as she drove away. Watching Reese stride to her patrol car, she hoped that they never would.



Later turned out to be eleven o’clock that night.

Tory’s patient schedule had been disrupted while she sutured a series of nasty lacerations on the forehead of a cyclist who had blown a tire coming down Route 6 from Truro. He’d catapulted into the guardrail, and he looked it. By the time she got home, her head ached, she was exhausted, and sex was the last thing on her mind.

“Did you ever get dinner?” Reese, in jeans and a faded green T-shirt with *USMC* stenciled on the left chest, met her lover on the rear deck of the house they shared overlooking Provincetown Harbor.

“No.” Tory sighed as she flopped into a deck chair, absently petting the huge brindled mastiff that lumbered to her side. “Hey, Jed,” she whispered faintly. Looking up at Reese, she added wryly, “Some date night, huh? Sorry.”

“You’re forgiven.” Reese leaned in for a kiss. “Relax a minute. I’ll be right back.”

Tory closed her eyes, and when she jerked awake a few moments later, there was a tray table beside her with a glass of wine and a sandwich. Suddenly, she was ravenous.

“Oh, yes,” she breathed, casting a grateful glance at the woman who leaned against the deck rail a few feet away. Moonlight and the soft glow from the kitchen behind them illuminated Reese’s strikingly beautiful Black Irish coloring and sculpted features. Sandwich nearly forgotten, Tory had to swallow around the fist of desire in her throat before she could speak. “Thanks.”

“My pleasure.” Reese watched Tory consume the late meal, trying not to let her worry show. As the town’s only year-round doctor, Tory worked long hours and was always on call, and she often forgot to eat or didn’t get enough sleep. “Better?” she asked when Tory set her glass down with a satisfied groan.

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“Almost?”

Reese raised an eyebrow. “Something else?”

“Uh-huh.” Tory held out a hand, and Reese moved to take it. Tory tugged her lover down onto the lounge chair beside her, turning so that they rested face to face. Threading her arms around Reese’s waist, she pressed close, pushing one thigh between Reese’s. “This.”

It began with just a kiss—a kiss to say *welcome home*, a kiss to say *I missed you*, a kiss to say *I love you*. It became something more urgent as flesh met flesh and passions stirred. Tory worked her hand between them and pulled the T-shirt from Reese’s jeans, resting her palm on the curve of rib as it arched above Reese’s taut stomach. She ran her nails lightly down the center of Reese’s abdomen, smiling against Reese’s lips as muscles flickered.

Reese kissed her way from Tory’s mouth along the line of her jaw to the smooth skin of her neck, biting lightly until she drew soft cries from her lover’s throat. Their hearts pounded, beating a familiar rhythm that echoed in each other’s blood as they explored one another with mouths and lips and demanding hands.

“Love,” Reese gasped as she felt Tory’s fingers slip down the front of her jeans. She didn’t remember opening her fly, but one of them must have. “Careful there. I’ve waited all day.”

“And your point is...?” Tory murmured thickly, pushing lower, finding heat, as she leaned up on the other arm so she could watch Reese’s face. “I’ve been waiting all day, too. Now, I’m done waiting.”

“Ah, God...you know I’ll go fast if you touch me like that.”

“I’m not worried.” Tory’s fingers found the hardness she sought, and as she pressed steadily, Reese moaned. “You’re always good for more than one.”

Through a haze of want, Tory watched; she loved to see Reese like this—growing so still under her hands, body arched slightly, head tilted back, pupils wide and dark. After all this time, Tory knew just how to touch her to keep her on the edge, knew the telltale flutter of her lids, the stutter of breath in her chest, the faint cry barely uttered. She knew and she held Reese there on the brink, moving her fingers slowly, carefully, one gentle stroke after another.

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“Tory...love,” Reese whispered as the pleasure escaped the confines of the places Tory touched and cascaded outward to burn through her blood and roll down her legs, muscles clenching with the force of nerves and vessels turning to fire. She pressed her forehead to Tory’s shoulder and shuddered helplessly, lost and forever found.

As many times as she had watched Reese surrender to her touch, Tory was never prepared for the beauty of it. Awestruck, humbled beyond words, she bit her lip to keep from falling with her, wanting to remember each precious second. But she couldn’t keep from thrusting against Reese’s thigh, her body having long since moved beyond her control. Trying desperately to ignore the pressure building between her legs, she clung to her lover, gasping.

Dimly, Reese heard Tory’s ragged breathing against her ear, and even as she continued to shiver with the last ripples of release, she reached for her. “I want to be inside you.”

“Yes.” Tory lifted her hips, helping Reese push her slacks down. “Yes. Yes.”

It was quick, because she was so close. One second, Reese was gliding over her, opening her, and then she was inside her, owning her. Tory cried out once, sharply, and then she was coming. Over and over and over, she closed around Reese’s fingers, each spasm knifing through her with a terrible wonder. When she could make a sound, she could find no words. She simply turned her sweat-damp face to Reese’s chest and hung on.



The chill roused Tory from her unintentional slumber. The night was very dark around them, and the wind from the water was sharp and crisp. In the distance, the foghorn off Long Point echoed plaintively. Tory stirred, running her fingers over Reese’s chest.

“Hey, Sheriff.”

“Mmm?”

“Bedtime.”

Reese stretched languidly, settling Tory closer against her, nestling her face in the soft hair. “Do we have to?”

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“It will be freezing out here in a few hours.”

“Okay,” Reese conceded, but when she moved to get up, Tory suddenly held her tighter. Surprised by the fierce grip, she asked, “What’s wrong, Tor?”

“Nothing.” Tory shook her head and fiddled with the button on Reese’s jeans, uncharacteristically uncertain. “You know I’ll be thirty-nine in November.”

“Uh-huh.” Reese waited.

Tory took a deep breath. “I was thinking it’s time for us to have a baby.” She began to worry when Reese was quiet for a very long time. Maybe her timing was lousy. Maybe two years wasn’t long enough. Or maybe she didn’t know Reese as well as she thought she did. “Reese?”

“You know,” Reese said softly, her voice husky and low. “Five minutes ago, I would have said that life couldn’t get any better.” She kissed Tory, gentle as a promise. “It’s so nice to be wrong.”

Tory closed her eyes and pressed her face to Reese’s neck, sighing softly as strong, sure arms tightened around her. After all this time, she had expected the passion to lessen and the fires to cool. For the first time, she truly allowed herself to believe that they never would.

December, Provincetown, MA

Reese reached for another folder and shook some of the tension out of her shoulders. She’d been hunched over her desk for over an hour filling out requisition forms for equipment that needed to be replaced as well as completing paperwork on an early-morning domestic disturbance complaint. At the outset of winter, Provincetown was deathly quiet. The small community on the very tip of Cape Cod had been a thriving fishing village a hundred years before, and some of the inhabitants still worked the boats that ventured out into the Atlantic every day. But the primary source of income for many was tourism. And tourism was decidedly seasonal.

The three thousand or so year-round inhabitants were pretty well dug in for the winter, with most of the shops and even the

small Cinema Arts Theatre in the center of town having closed for the off-season. The number of law enforcement personnel had been trimmed down to the bare minimum, too, which meant that Reese was one of only a handful of full-time officers available. She didn't mind the long shifts, but things were so damn slow that any kind of call was a welcome break in the mind-numbing routine. The thirty minutes it had taken her earlier that morning to calm down an irate housewife who had discovered that her husband had sold her prized antique porcelain chamber pot to pay off a poker debt had been a relief from the obligatory desk work.

When the front door opened, admitting a gust of cold air, she looked up, grateful for the diversion. Sheriff Nelson Parker walked in. A burly man in his late forties, he approached six feet and was carrying a few extra pounds around his middle. His dark hair was still thick without a trace of gray, and his eyes were the color of a winter sky.

"Hey, Chief."

"Morning, Reese." Nelson brushed a light dusting of snow from the shoulders of his red and black checked hunting jacket and then shrugged it off. He hooked the jacket over a coat tree and put his Stetson on an adjoining shelf. "Anything happening?"

"Not much," Reese said with resignation. She was working twelve-hour shifts with another officer, seven to seven, and two other pairs split the evening and night hours. "A couple of minor calls, but nothing serious. Night shift had nothing to report."

"Well," he settled behind his desk, "that's about right for this time of year. Remember when you first started, I warned you about how dull this place can be in the winter."

"I remember." Reese glanced out the window at the slate-colored sky and then shifted her gaze inside. "You were right then, and nothing's changed since."

The sheriff's department main office was a single large room. There was a tiny seating area separated by a wooden railing from the small collection of desks and chairs where the officers and clerical staff sat. Behind Reese, a door led to the rear of the building to two small holding cells, which almost never saw any use.

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“Summertime makes up for it, though. Plus, it’s so beautiful here, even now, that I don’t mind the quiet.” Reese stretched and sighed. “Most of the time.”

“There is something awfully pretty about the dunes in the winter.” Nelson reached for his own stack of paperwork. “Have you heard from Bri lately?”

Surprised, Reese shook her head. “Not since Thanksgiving when she and Caroline were here. Why?”

“No reason,” Nelson said nonchalantly. He was mildly embarrassed to admit that his daughter had not phoned him in several weeks and had failed to return his calls when he had tried her number in Manhattan. Sometimes it bothered him that Brianna and Reese were close in a way that he and his daughter were not. He knew that Bri confided in his second in command in a way that she rarely did with him. And he knew why. As hard as he had tried, he couldn’t really understand what life was like for her.

In truth, he supposed their closeness made sense, since Bri and Reese were practically cut from the same mold—stubborn and strong and brave. Hell, they even looked alike—both dark-haired with wild blue eyes, almost too handsome for women. But there was something in Bri’s eyes that he’d never seen in Reese’s. There was a simmering anger that had begun in Bri’s early teens and hadn’t abated even when she went away to school. Maybe the rage had been further fueled by the events of two summers before. Thinking about that summer, something he tried not to do, he unconsciously winced.

“Nelson? You sure everything’s okay?”

“Yeah, I’m sure.” He cleared his throat. “You know how twenty-year-olds are. They don’t think much about calling home.”

“Right.” Reese nodded, although she didn’t really know what he meant. When she’d been twenty, she’d been in college, too, but she’d also been in the Naval ROTC, on track to be a marine officer. Raised by a career marine officer, she’d never imagined any other future—that’s what her father *expected* her to be and what she expected of herself. She hadn’t had the kind of youth many had; she’d certainly never had a lover, male or female, when she was Bri’s age. “If I hear from her, I’ll tell her to report in.”

Reese knew there was more on his mind, but she hesitated to inquire. She and her boss were friends, but she and his daughter shared a special bond that had been forged shortly after Reese had come to Provincetown. Bri had been a wild teenager at the time, and she and Reese had developed a friendship when Reese began training her in the martial arts. The connection had grown as Bri gradually adopted Reese as not only her mentor, but as her role model.

“No. Forget it,” Nelson said with a wave of his hand. With the other, he searched in his desk drawer for a roll of Tums and, finding a loose one, popped it into his mouth. “She’ll just figure I’m checking up on her.”

“Aren’t you?” Reese asked with a laugh.

After a second, Nelson’s somber expression faded. “Yeah, I suppose.”

At that moment, the door opened yet again, and a middle-aged woman entered carrying a shopping bag in one arm. Of average height, she wore her wavy gray hair tied back with a multicolored scarf and sported a knit suit beneath a long down coat. After removing her outerwear, she rummaged in the bag and set a box of donuts by Nelson’s elbow.

“God, I can’t wait till this winter is over.”

“You’ve got quite a wait there, Gladys.” Nelson smiled at the sheriff’s department office manager. Fishing a sugared donut from the box, he added, “Thanks.”

“Yes, well, I can always hope.” She smiled at both of the officers as she wended her way between the desks toward the large workstation in one corner with the room’s only computer. During her day shift, she monitored the local and regional police activity, relayed messages to the officers in the field, and performed whatever computer checks needed to be done quickly.

“How’s that lovely partner of yours, Reese?” Gladys settled herself at her station. “I haven’t seen much of her lately.”

“Uh, fine.” Reese blushed. Even after two years, she couldn’t quite get used to the easy familiarity of the small town’s local inhabitants. Everyone seemed to know everyone else’s business and didn’t mind asking for the information if they didn’t. “Tory is working in Boston today.”

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“Is she still flying over there three days a week?”

“Yep.” Reese nodded. “She doesn’t need to keep the clinic open here full-time during the winter, and she likes doing the emergency room shifts. She says it keeps her current with the newest techniques.”

“Well, she oughta jump at the chance to take it easy,” Nelson remarked. “The summer is always busy enough for two or three doctors.”

“True enough.” Reese thought about tourist season and the incredible changes it wrought on the town almost overnight. From Memorial Day weekend until after Labor Day, the population swelled tenfold with an enormous influx of day travelers and vacationers. Tory was continually busy providing emergency medical care, often working eighteen-hour days for the entire four months. Reese had yet to convince her to hire a temporary physician associate to help out. *Maybe by summer, if—*

The ringing of the phone interrupted her musings, and Reese picked it up on the second ring. “Sheriff’s department, Conlon.”

“Honey?”

“Tor?” Reese’s heart started pounding double-time. It was rare for Tory to call her at work, particularly when staffing a shift at the Boston City Hospital emergency room. “What’s the matter?”

“Nothing,” Tory assured hastily. “I just need you to come to Boston.”

“Now?”

Tory laughed, and the sound stirred a small fire in Reese’s depths.

“How about late this afternoon?” Tory clarified.

“Uh...my shift isn’t up until seven.” Reese hesitated, glancing at the other occupants in the room as she lowered her voice. “Is it, you know, time?”

“That’s what my thermometer says. I’ve talked to Wendy, and she can see us at six.”

Reese could sense that both Nelson and Gladys were watching yet pretending not to. She curled over the phone as if that would make some difference. “I’ll get someone to fill in for me.”

“Is everyone listening?”

“Uh-huh.”

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"It's okay to tell them, you know. It's not like we'll be able to keep it a secret."

"Isn't it...well...bad luck or something to talk about it before?"

Tory laughed again, and the heat in her voice was almost palpable over the phone line. "Do you know how much I love you?"

"Cut it out," Reese said in a husky murmur. "I'm supposed to be working here."

"Yeah, well...your services are required elsewhere. Get your butt on a plane, Sheriff."

"I'll be there soon."

When she hung up, both Nelson and Gladys were frankly staring.

"I need to take the afternoon off," Reese said abruptly.

"Sure." Nelson was clearly surprised at the unusual request. "Gladys can call Smith or Lyons to come in. God knows, they both owe you time."

"Thanks." Reese stood and walked to the coat tree beside the door. She shrugged into her green nylon flight jacket and pulled her brimmed uniform cap down over her eyes in a familiar gesture.

"Is everything okay?" Gladys knew that Nelson wouldn't pry even though he was obviously dying to know what was going on, too.

"Yes. Perfect." Reese opened the door, stepped through, and then stuck her head back in. "I just need to get to Boston so Tory and I can make a baby."

Grinning, she closed the door on the explosion of surprised questions.



"You made it! Great." Wendy Deutsch greeted Reese and Tory in her waiting room. With light blond hair and lashes and a slight but athletic build, she looked young enough to be a med student. She wasn't, though; she was the head of the reproductive medicine division at Boston Hospital and one of Tory's best friends from medical school. "Are you two all set?"

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Tory, suddenly and inexplicably frightened, turned to Reese, searching the handsome face as she reached for her hand. *Reese... honey? Of course we're ready, right? We've talked about it—about how it would change our lives, about how it would shape our future, about what would be hard and what would be wonderful. Because this is it; now is the tim—*

"I love you, Victoria King," Reese murmured, her entire being focused on Tory. "I will always love you."

And that was the ultimate truth, and the ultimate answer.

"Yes," Tory stated firmly, entwining her fingers with Reese's and smiling into her eyes. "We're ready."

"Come on back, then." Wendy led the way into a dimly lit room.

There was a beige carpet on the floor, which struck Tory as odd. She was used to the harsh lights and institutional tiles of examining rooms. And the air was warm, with a hint of vanilla teasing at the edges of her awareness. *Nothing cold, nothing sterile, nothing clinical about it.*

"You both get settled, and I'll be right back." With that, Wendy left them alone.

Slowly, Tory undressed. Reese took each garment and folded it carefully, placing the clothes on a small table against one wall. She bundled Tory into a white terrycloth robe that had been left for her.

"Cold, love?" Reese asked gently.

"No, I'm fine." Tory eased up onto the table, glad that the surface was covered with a soft cotton sheet.

Reese covered her with another sheet, then pulled a chair close to the head of the table and sat down. She threaded the fingers of one hand into Tory's hair and took Tory's hand with the other. Tory turned her head so that their faces were only inches apart.

"Are you sure this won't hurt?" Reese was unable to hide her concern. *You mean everything to me.*

"Yes, I'm sure. I won't feel anything."

There was a knock on the door. "Okay to come in?"

The two women smiled, and Tory called, "Yes, we're ready."

Tory continued to look into Reese's eyes, listening with only part of her mind to the doctor quietly arranging a tray. When

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Wendy softly instructed her to slide down and lift her legs into the supports, she complied without breaking the eye contact. She felt only Reese's hand, strong and warm, enclosing hers.

After a moment, Wendy murmured, "Here we go."

Reese touched her forehead to Tory's, and together they whispered, "I love you."