

shadowland

by
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2004

CHAPTER ONE

The setting sun pulsed red where ocean and sky bled into one as the rider slowed the big bike and turned off the narrow, winding highway onto the overlook. She brought the motorcycle to a halt along the shoulder, well away from the few cars whose occupants had stopped to watch night eclipse day. With a long leg planted on either side of the heavy machine for support, she cut the engine, pulled off her helmet, and absently ran a hand through her dark, wavy hair as she stared out over the water. The rocky coastline far below, battered by plumes of angry surf, lay cast in half-shadows as the dying sun slipped away, leaving darkness in its wake. The steady rhythm of the waves breaking against the base of the cliff was unexpectedly soothing in a wild, untamed way. *Odd, how something so violent can be so calming.*

She loved to ride this stretch of coastal highway, even though it was often crowded with sightseeing tourists who slowed the Harley's progress. The road was demanding, and she could lose herself for miles in the steady drone of the engine and the hypnotic ribbon of macadam sliding beneath her headlights. While her conscious mind was occupied with the mechanics of driving, her unconscious thoughts came to the forefront, and often the solution emerged to some problem that she hadn't even been aware was bothering her. When she'd described the phenomenon once to a friend, she'd been told it was a form of meditation. Maybe it was. She didn't question the process; she rarely questioned the workings of her own mind, allowing instinct to guide her instead.

Tonight had been different. She hadn't lost herself in the challenge of maneuvering the twenty-mile ride filled with tight, tortuous turns, nor had she discovered the source of the simmering unrest that had plagued her for weeks. Always most comfortable

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with action, she found her present introspection unsatisfying and frustrating. Sighing softly, she reached into the left inside pocket of her leather jacket for her cigarettes. She fingered one out of the pack and held it lightly between her lips while she fished the black and gold lighter from the right front pocket of her tight black leather pants. The tiny flare of flame lit her features for an instant as she touched it to the tip of the cigarette. A chiseled profile, square chin, and straight, slightly high nose were highlighted briefly by the flickering orange glow. As the lighter snapped shut, the image disappeared, and her figure became a long, lean silhouette against the deepening sky.

Kyle Kirk hunched her shoulders slightly against the cold wind blowing in from the sea and focused her gaze on the shifting shoreline where land and sea struggled endlessly for dominance in a war never won. With the roar of the surf so constant it verged on silence, all she could hear were her own questioning thoughts.

What the hell am I doing out here tonight? And where am I going?

It had been many weeks since she'd last made a Friday night journey into the city, seeking company in one club or another. She went for the comfort of women, for the irresistible sight and sound of them. For the mystery and wonder of them. More often than not, she returned home alone in the still, dark hours before dawn, her soul inexplicably soothed by the memories that clung to her during the long ride home. Sometimes, when she needed more than memories, she unlocked the second helmet she always carried on the side of her Harley and brought a woman home to fill the emptiness in both her body and her spirit for a few hours on either side of morning.

Tonight, she hadn't intended to go out at all, but as soon as she went into the house from her workshop, she had set about getting ready to go out again. Without considering her destination, she'd showered and donned a crisply ironed white shirt and black leather pants that encased her muscled thighs like soft, warm flesh. She tucked a slim leather wallet, contoured to her form from years of use, into her right rear pocket with her license and enough cash to last the weekend. A fresh pack of cigarettes went into the left inside pocket of her favorite leather jacket and the lighter into her pants.

She pulled on the jacket and zipped it partway up as she headed through the kitchen. It was as she switched on the floodlights subtly tucked under the eaves of the house and carport that she realized she was setting out for the city. Still, she had driven twenty miles before she had allowed herself to think about why.

For the last few days she'd been unsettled and short-tempered, and as she thought about it, she admitted that she hadn't been herself for weeks. It wasn't the solitude of her life that disturbed her—she'd grown used to that in the five years since her last serious relationship had ended. She had several good friends, which was more than most people could say, and work that she enjoyed. Her sex life was as fulfilling as she needed it to be. Not constant, perhaps, but she could have had more if she'd cared to. She didn't. Recently, though, she'd become aware of an uneasy sense of dissatisfaction, as much emotional as physical, that threatened to disrupt the comfortable routine of her life. And what made it so frustrating was that she couldn't define just what she wanted, or needed, or lacked.

Kyle took a last drag from her cigarette and dropped the butt near the toe of her boot. Carefully she dug a little hole in the gravel of the turnoff and pushed the bit of trash into it. With her heavy black boot, she meticulously covered it with a small mound of stones and tamped it down flat again. Satisfied that no trace remained, she pulled her left leg up onto the curved tank of her black bike and rested her chin on her knee.

As she sat, darkness slowly lowered a veil between her and the cars steadily streaming along behind on the highway. She slid her hand into her jacket pocket and removed a small folded square of paper. There wasn't enough moonlight yet to read by, and she didn't bother opening it. She already knew what it said.

**Leathers - Where women hold the power
719 S. Van Nye**

The chain of events, so un-noteworthy at the time, that brought her to this place on this night had begun with a magazine she'd picked up as an afterthought in a women's bookstore where

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she'd gone in search of the newest novel from her favorite author. Disappointed to discover that the book was still on order, she'd grabbed a few magazines at random rather than return home empty-handed. Once at home, stretched out in front of the fireplace with a brandy, she'd looked through her purchases. The cover of the second magazine immediately caught her attention.

A woman, her bare back boldly scripted with a black Celtic tattoo between her shoulder blades, knelt with her forehead pressed to the thigh of another woman, who stood above her with legs spread wide and arms akimbo. A black leather vest, all the standing woman wore above tight leather pants, barely covered small, firm breasts. The faint swell of a phallus nestled in the curve of her thigh just millimeters from the supplicant's cheek brought Kyle up short. As she stared at the image, her blood had raced hot, and a knot of arousal had fisted in her stomach. She'd imagined the feel of smooth leather, softened by the heat of flesh, sliding against her face, had seen herself press her lips to the subtle bulge restrained against a muscled thigh, had heard the distant groan of approval and need. Stunned by the unexpected beat of desire between her thighs and the first sweet rush of lust, wet and hard, she'd opened the cover with shaking hands to the first article. Quickly she discovered that the short stories, essays, and poems contained some of the most graphic erotica she had ever read. All of it, in one way or another, explored issues involving sexual power, and she'd been instantly captivated. She was no stranger to the allure of love between women. But those glimpses of the dark edges of desire had left her aroused and almost insatiably curious, as if she'd caught a glint of long-lost treasure only to have it quickly disappear. She'd read the magazine cover to cover and a few days later had gone back to the bookstore to pick up the two previous issues.

And then she'd found the story that wouldn't let her go.

The Edge of Trust. She'd read it enough times that she knew every word.

“Keep your eyes on me.”

Silently, she swallowed and stared straight ahead at her lover, who was seated in the large leather chair ten feet

in front of her. She had to look down slightly, not only because of her height, but because she was standing on a raised platform. She was also completely naked.

Her lover, on the other hand, looked totally at ease in a turquoise silk shirt that was almost the same lustrous color as her eyes. The fact that it was unbuttoned its entire length and she was wearing nothing else appeared not to faze her. She reclined slightly in the depths of the soft cushions, her arms outstretched along the curved arms of the chair, her legs parted only enough to reveal a faint hint of dusty gold.

Her lover waited until she met her gaze, until she was in her power, before she spoke again.

“Restrain her.”

Not knowing what to expect, she tried to keep breathing, to concentrate on the reassurance in her lover’s face, as another woman she couldn’t quite see moved quickly around her in the semidarkness. In a moment she found herself spread-eagled, arms and legs held out by wide, soft leather shackles attached to short chains which ran somewhere beyond her vision. A padded pole was at her back. Her lover was all she could see. When she shifted slightly, the chains grew taut. She was exposed, helpless. Her lover’s eyes were hot. She shivered almost imperceptibly with a combination of fear and the beginnings of arousal.

“She has a beautiful body, doesn’t she?” her lover remarked almost clinically. “Run your hands over her—see for yourself.”

Just as the stranger smoothed a hand over her torso and belly, she watched her lover flick the shirt off her chest and slide her fingers lovingly over her own breasts. Seeing her lover’s nipples stiffen, her stomach muscles twitched, first

in surprise, then with quick jerks of excitement.

She didn't look at the stranger who touched her; only her lover mattered. She knew what that long taut body—that smooth, hot skin—felt like beneath her hands, and her clitoris stiffened at the sight of her lover sensuously circling her breasts, then stroking slowly down to her navel, hips lifting slightly to greet the touch. The bound woman leaned forward, unconsciously offering herself, all the while imagining *her* hands claiming her lover.

Then her lover smiled, eyes dreamy but voice commanding. “Now her nipples.”

“Oh!” she cried softly as fingers grasped, then twisted—first one, then the other. Her hips convulsed as the sensation shot ruthlessly between her legs. Moisture began to seep between her thighs. “Lover?” she questioned uncertainly, voice unsteady, as her body responded to the stranger's manipulations. *I can't help it. It's making me wet.*

“Squeeze harder,” her lover instructed huskily, both hands palming her breasts, pushing them together, fingers tugging the reddened nubs.

The captive groaned, fire curling in the pit of her stomach, streaking along her spine.

“Kneel in front of her,” her lover ordered, dropping one hand between her legs and trailing her fingers up and down the sensitive skin of her inner thighs. “Work on her legs, but don't go near her clit.”

Moaning steadily now as hands kneaded the muscles in her buttocks and thighs, the bound woman arched her back, unable to contain the pleasure. Her clitoris throbbed painfully, sharply demanding attention. Quivering, mesmerized by the sight of her lover slipping slick folds

of swollen flesh lazily between her fingers, she thrust mindlessly against the chains that held her prisoner. She heard her lover cry out softly, saw trembling fingers brush against the base of the exposed clitoris, and felt her own body clench deep inside. *Stroke yourself, lover. Do it, you know you want to, do it, do it—*

She sobbed, hips jerking in the air, desperate for her lover's touch. The tantalizing whisper of approaching orgasm fluttered through her belly when a finger explored lightly between her legs, sending showers of fire bursting from her clitoris into her pelvis. If she pushed forward just a little that finger would touch her hard enough to make her come. She didn't know she was whimpering as she fought against the leather and steel.

"Please," she begged, her clitoris twitching ceaselessly and the promise of relief so near. She twisted impotently in the restraints, watching through heavy lids as her lover spread her legs further, resting her knees over the wide leather arms to expose her desire. "Please."

"Stroke her," her lover demanded hoarsely, doing the same to herself. "Be careful with her. She'll come if you stay on it too long. And I *don't* want her to come!"

Helplessly, she struggled to focus on her lover, but she was rapidly losing all control. She didn't care who was touching her any longer, as long as the touch didn't stop. If she didn't come soon she was going to implode. "No more," she begged. "I can't stand it—oh, yes—touch me there—harder—"

"You are not to come without permission," her lover gasped, her fingers a blur as they slid rapidly up and down her clitoris.

Too late—I'm gonna come. Gotta come. The captive merely

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grunted, jerking desperately against the fingers that tormented her.

“Work her faster, squeeze her,” her lover managed, breathing unevenly through clenched teeth, twisting on the chair, legs outstretched and rigid. “She loves that.”

“Lover, oh...she’s making me come.” She panted, stomach hard, ready to explode. “Oh, can I—”

“Lick her!”

She wailed as the warm, soft tongue ran the length of her, ending with one long, firm caress along her clitoris. With the last ounce of strength she possessed, she sought her lover’s face through eyes nearly blind with need. “Please... oh please...is it all right?”

“Yes, baby—yess—” her lover screamed, tugging her clitoris frantically. “Oh, baby, I’m coming.”

As her mind went white, the stranger reached up, grasped her hips, and sucked her all the way into her mouth. With hands clenched into fists beyond the restraining cuffs, the bound woman jammed herself against the stranger’s face. Head thrown back, the tendons in her neck standing out in tight cords, she shouted as the wrenching spasms tore her apart.

For an instant, the only sounds were those of their joint release reverberating throughout the room. Then, there was but the whisper of soft sobbing.

“Get her down,” her lover gasped weakly.

When the captive collapsed to her knees, shattered by more than pleasure, her lover was there to shelter her in waiting arms.

Kyle drew a long, shaky breath and contemplated another cigarette. She laughed softly and jammed her hands into the pockets of her motorcycle jacket. *Not even my orgasm and I want a cigarette. Lousy time to be trying to quit.*

The story had gotten to her. Still got to her. It wasn't just the sex, which had blistered her mind and still made her want to come just remembering. It was the unexpected fusion of love and dominance, trust and submission, that had twisted and tantalized her previously unquestioned vision of emotional connection. It confused and excited her. She wasn't even sure which called to her more, the control or the relinquishing of it. Sometimes when she came, she imagined herself the bound woman. Other times, she climaxed as she saw herself in that leather chair, ordering a stranger to pleasure her lover while she masturbated.

Christ, if I keep this up, I'll never be able to ride this bike. I'm out here so I won't have to keep thinking about it.

Carefully, with hands that shook as much as when she'd turned the first page of that first magazine, Kyle unfolded the small rectangle of paper and peered at it. The sky above was obsidian, punctured by stars and streaked with moonlight. She held up the paper and turned it in the silvery light, but she couldn't see the words. Just as carefully, she refolded it and stowed it in her jacket again. As she kick started the powerful engine and muscled the bike around to face the highway, she repeated the address from memory one more time.