

CHAPTER 1



Cameron walked in his front door and immediately stepped on a cracker that turned to dust under his boot. Looking around the living room he frowned. Another weekend of cleaning up a week's worth of mess.

“Where are the kids?”

“With my mother, they’re spending the night,” Tara replied without looking up as she sat on the couch painting her toenails.

Still standing in the entrance way he watched her. She was pretty, he’d give her that, and she took good care of herself. Tara’s hair was up on her head in a ponytail, her long blonde curls spilling onto her shoulders. Beautifully tanned legs courtesy of the tanning salon and his paycheck sprawled out as she capped the bottle of polish and flopped back on the couch. Beneath her frayed blue-jean short shorts he had no doubt her pussy was as naked and smooth as a baby’s bottom, also courtesy of his wallet, even though he hadn’t actually touched that wondrous part of her body in at least three weeks. Tara was always tired. Looking around the house he couldn’t imagine why.

“What’s for dinner?” he asked quietly.

“Oh, I don’t know. I thought we’d go out,” she replied, wiggling her toes.

She didn’t look at him, hadn’t looked at him once since he came through the door. Sadly he recalled a time when she’d flown into his arms the minute he came home. Things had changed, and not for the better.

“I’m going to take a shower,” he stated walking through the room, stepping over toys and discarded sippy cups.

“Okay, I’ll get changed,” she replied happily as she jumped up from the couch. “Georgia says there’s a new Chinese Restaurant over in Glendale.”

Cameron didn’t reply. He had no intention of going out for dinner. Last night they’d had pizza. The night before he’d picked up burgers and fries on his way home. As he walked down the hall he tried to remember the last meal Tara had actually cooked, the last time they’d sat down at the dining room table and eaten a dinner like a normal family. He couldn’t recall.

In the shower he washed the day’s sweat from his muscular body. Cam didn’t get out as soon as he was done. Instead he placed one strong arm against the shower wall, leaned forward and let the warm water cascade over him.

All day long he’d been wrestling with his conscience. Tara’s mother coming to get the kids was no accident. He’d called her and asked her to take them, and not just for the night. Per their agreement the kids wouldn’t be home until after dinner on Sunday night.

Marge hadn’t asked any questions after Cam told her he and Tara had some marital issues to work out. Her silence on the other end of the phone lasted a few moments. Finally she sighed.

“I understand, Cameron. Truthfully, I’m surprised it’s taken you this long.”

“I’ve tried to be fair, Mom, cut her some slack, before it’s...” he replied.

“Before it’s too late?” she suggested.

“Exactly.”

“To tell you the truth, Cam, Dad is sick of me coming home exhausted. I love Tara with all my heart but if I don’t stop, and he’s made it clear in no uncertain terms, I’ll be in the same boat my daughter’s in right now. I’m too old for that crap.”

Cameron laughed.

“You don’t look a day over forty,” he insisted, “and according to Dad no woman is ever too old.”

“Ah, I see you’ve been talking this over with my husband.”

“I have, after stewing about it for months,” Cam admitted. “Hey, while I’ve got you on the phone, how do I get the grape juice out of Carly’s carpet?”

“You can try seltzer, but I’m not making any promises,” Marge answered. “Cam, don’t be too hard on her, okay?” she requested softly.

“I’ll only go as far as I have to,” he promised. “It may not work at all. I suppose she could show up at your door with her suitcase sometime this weekend, but I hope not.”

“I hope not too. Dad will have a fit. You do still love her?” she asked hesitantly.

“With all my heart,” Cameron answered softly before he hung up.



NOW IT WAS time to turn that love into action.

Turning off the water, he stepped out and found the last clean towel to dry off with. Instinctively he reached for his razor, but decided to let it go. A little dark stubble wouldn’t make a bit of difference. He had no plans to leave the house.

Pulling on boxers and a pair of worn jeans he walked barefoot out of the master bathroom and into the bedroom. The bed was unmade. Clothes spilled out of the hamper onto the floor and the top

of the dresser was cluttered with various make-up items. Tara was leaning close to the mirror wearing a short, flirty skirt, heeled sandals and a top that bared one shoulder as she applied more mascara.

“I wouldn’t put any more mascara on if I were you,” he suggested as he sat on the bed. His hands were clasped between his spread knees.

“Why not?” she asked, eyes big, mouth open as she concentrated on making her lashes darker. “Come on, put on a shirt. I’m starving.”

“So am I.”

Finally she capped the slim tube and tossed it into the morass of cosmetics. Turning she looked at him, leaned back against the dresser and crossed her arms over her chest.

“Okay, I can sense a lecture coming on. What’s wrong this time? My skirt’s too short? I didn’t get a stain out of your fatigues? Or maybe you’re just looking for an argument. You do that you know. Come home and find fault with everything I didn’t do.”

“What *did* you do today, Tara?” he asked calmly.

“Nothing, not a damn thing you would think was important anyway. Mom picked up the kids early and I went tanning. Then I came home and did my hair. Georgia called and we went shopping where I bought this cute little outfit and then I came home. I thought about cleaning, but decided I’d be all sweaty afterward so I left it. I wanted to look pretty for you tonight, what with the kids being gone and all,” she insisted defensively as her chin tipped up.

“You do look pretty, you are pretty, but there’s an old expression, ‘pretty is as pretty does’.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” she demanded.

“It means you can look pretty on the outside, but it doesn’t count for much if inside you’re spoiled and selfish.”

“And that’s what you think of me, that I’m spoiled and selfish?” she gasped out.

Cameron smiled for the first time.

“Spoiled doesn’t even begin to cover it. As far as selfish, what else am I supposed to think when every weekend I end up doing all the chores you ignored during the week?”

“I suppose you think I’m not a good mother?” she accused bitterly.

“You’re a pretty good mother. You love Carly and Trey. I’ve never doubted that, but I shudder to think how they would be living if not for me and your mother.”

“Then why are you still with me?” she demanded, incensed. “Why don’t you just divorce me and get it over with if I’m such a horrible person?”

“Because I still love you,” he stated gently.

Tara snorted and rolled her eyes.

“I still love the sweet young thing that used to rush to my arms the moment I walked in the door. I remember the way you’d wrap your legs around my waist and nibble on my neck. I loved how excited you would get, taking my hand and dragging me to the table because you’d just tried out a new recipe, and the way you always made sure my uniform was perfect before I walked out the door in the morning. Then you’d smother my face with kisses leaving lipstick all over me,” he finished sadly.

“That was before. Things are different now.”

“What’s different?” he asked with genuine curiosity.

“For one thing I’m not a ‘sweet young thing’ anymore. Now I have stretch marks, which you gave me by the way,” she accused pointing a long painted nail at him. “In case you failed to notice, being pretty takes a lot more work these days. Besides that, there are the kids. They make huge messes and I get tired of cleaning up after them.”

“That’s your job, baby. You don’t work outside the house. That’s the agreement we made before you ever got pregnant with Trey. I

make the money and you keep the home fires burning. It's an arrangement a lot of military families have."

"I know, but it doesn't work anymore, at least not for me. I never expected you to be gone so long the last time you got deployed," she admitted. "I guess I just got out of the habit of trying to please you."

"I've been stateside for nearly a year. When do you think you might get back in the habit?"

"Never as long as you're going to continue being critical and grumpy all the time," she sassed. "I might also point out you're not the man you used to be either."

"In what way?"

"In a lot of ways. You don't pay attention to me anymore, not what I do or what I wear. You just come home and start grumbling and cleaning. Sure you play with the kids, but you almost never play with me," she continued with a pout.

"What else?"

"Well, to be perfectly honest, I used to be a little bit afraid of you."

"Afraid of me?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes," she replied, her face flaming. "I didn't want to make you mad at me. You could be pretty stern in those days. You were big and tough and while I liked messing with you trying to get a rise out of you, I knew the boundaries."

"And you don't know the boundaries anymore? You can't tell when you've pushed them, when I've had enough?"

"No, there aren't any and if there are I'm the one who makes them," she nearly hissed before spinning back toward the mirror. "Now get dressed so we can go out. I said I'm starving."

"Tara, come here," he said quietly.

"No, I'm not finished."

"I think you are. Come here."

Slapping her lipstick down on the dresser she stomped over to him, crossed her arms and began tapping her foot in agitation.

“What?”

Cameron pulled her arms apart and took her hands, turning them up and kissing each palm in turn but not releasing her.

“If you think a few kisses are going to solve our problems, you’d better think again,” she sneered.

“No, it’s not kisses that are going to work this time but I do have a solution,” he answered smoothly as he tugged her closer. “I’m going to spank you.”

“Excuse me?”

He watched the shock on her face as her blue eyes widened. A flush crept up her neck to her cheeks and she tried to pull away. It was ridiculously easy to control her and he guided her over his knees and wrapped one arm around her waist holding her in place.

“I said I’m going to spank you. In fact, I believe there will be quite a few spankings in your future,” he informed her as he lifted her skirt and hooked a finger in the top of her panties pulling them down to her knees.”

“You can’t be serious,” she yelled. “You haven’t spanked me in years. Not since we were first married.”

“Apparently that’s an oversight on my part, baby. One I intend to correct. I learned early on how stubborn and sassy you could be and if I recall smacking your bottom worked pretty well back in the day. I should have been smart enough to put two and two together. I should have realized you needed me to step up and take a firm stand with you. I’m sorry about that.”

“You’re going to be *sorry* if you lay one hand on me,” she screamed, glaring at him over her shoulder and beginning to kick her feet.

He trapped her legs under his. She was going nowhere.

“No, my only regret will be that we lost our way in the first place. I’m sorry I didn’t hold you accountable when you first started

slipping. I let my disappointment and anger get in the way when I should have been dealing with the issues instead of trying to ignore them. I almost let it destroy us.”

“Seems to me you’re trying to destroy us now,” she insisted, still wiggling even though she had no chance of escaping his hold.

His hand cupped her bottom lovingly and he shook his head. He’d been a fool. This weekend would either make or break their marriage.

“Let me ask you something before I get started. Do you still love me, Tara?”

“Of course I love you, you moron,” she cried. “Would I be here if I didn’t?”

“Then we have a chance,” he sighed in relief, patting her gently.

“You have a chance of seeing God if you don’t stop this nonsense and let me up right now!”

Cameron laughed, full out.

“I’m pretty sure I won’t see God this weekend, but I’m hoping for a small slice of heaven, or a few trips to paradise.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Here’s my plan,” he said, stroking her cheeks. “I’m going to spank you long and hard. It’s going to remind you why you were a little bit afraid of me. Knowing additional ones are coming if you don’t behave I figure you’ll also be quite eager to please me. I can’t wait for that part.”

“Dream on,” Tara snorted.

Cam ignored her.

“Once your sweet bottom is red and hot I’ll continue smacking it until I believe you’re suitably contrite. When I’m convinced your tears of remorse are genuine I will comfort you and reassure you of my love.”

“Yeah, right,” she hissed in derision.

Cam smacked her bottom, hard.

“Then, once you’ve calmed down I’m going to strip off the rest

of your clothes and put you in that pretty little sheer apron you used to wear and..."

"I don't even know where that is!"

"I do. As I was saying, I plan to enjoy the sight of your lovely breasts and well-tended bottom as you move around the kitchen making our dinner. Plus it will give me no hindrances to smacking you simply because I have neglected that part of your anatomy for years and I can."

"You're insane."

"During dinner and later we will talk about where our marriage derailed and how to get it back on track. I have numerous ideas, but I'm interested in what you have to say as well."

"I say get me a ticket to Reno," she shot back.

Cam slapped her bottom crisply and smiled when she squealed.

"After that we will get ready for an early bedtime. If you've been an obedient little wife I will fuck you, slow, hard and deeply until you beg me to let you come."

Tara sighed and shivered over his lap.

"However, if you've been difficult I will spank you again, just as seriously as I'm going to now before I fuck you. I may even let you come."

"Oh God," Tara wailed.

"Baby, I'm afraid he can't help you now. Love, honor and obey and all that."

Raising his hand Cameron began the job he'd abandoned years ago. He would not make that mistake ever again.