

Her Private Investigator

The Apprentice - Book Two

By

Lynn Forest

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Chapter 1

Alicia Brighton was doing as she had been explicitly instructed: after tensely waiting for the designated moment to arrive, she had stepped out of the farm house and began walking to the horse stable so that she would report there just at the precise stroke of midnight. Her steps on the gravel beneath her bare feet did not make a sound. The slight breeze brought just a hint of a chill to her nearly naked and petite body.

She approached the stable in anticipation, dread and a yearning curiosity for both the pain and erotic sensations she knew would soon be provided by her skilled and loving husband. She trusted this man who awaited her, the man to whom she had chosen to submit, to correct her, and most of all love and protect her.

He knew her better than she knew herself, and he would not discipline her beyond her boundaries. At the same time, he would do so in a way that he would make her churn with desire, leaving them even more closely bonded as they would later lay side-by-side in each other's embrace reflecting on all that had occurred.

Alicia swayed slowly inside the door to the stable, hesitating for a moment to allow her eyes to adjust to the dim light. Now she began her slow but deliberate walk through the candlelit marbled stable, the Arabian horses standing silently, almost at attention as she glided past each stall.

Her bare feet were padding quietly on the cool smooth alabaster colored floor causing even more chills to go up her spine. She was clad only in a sheer, short yellow satin chemise, such a mere and delightful wisp of fabric, so very light that one would expect the gravity of the moon to pull it from her and send it floating away.

She could detect the lavender scent of her long, soft wavy brown hair as her steps slowed. Her movements became more cautious and hesitant the closer she came to their assigned meeting place, where she would feel the sting of the riding crop for the first time in her life, but also the quivering waves of arousal that she knew was inevitable in its wake. It was how she was wired, and the man who had unwittingly unleashed that in her awaited her.

Finally, she halted, for in the flickering, dancing light, ten strides ahead she could see him, the shirtless figure of her husband, Donovan Brighton. His muscular chest and hard abdomen were gleaming in the darting candlelight, and just the sight of him that way caused Alicia's state of arousal to soar.

Her breath caught as he stepped forward, and she could see in the darkness the silhouette of the promised riding crop held tightly in his grip. They stepped toward each other several more times until he could reach out and place his hand on her shoulder. It was the touch that she felt every day, but still a touch that made her quiver with desire and her legs to feel weak.

They leaned together and shared a deep lingering kiss, and then he turned her sideways to him. His actions caused the blood in her veins to run cold, for she knew that this long anticipated and feared event was finally under way. She knew that she was going to be disciplined, and she knew with what. All beyond that was a mystery to her.

Her eyes darted quickly at her surroundings. There was no bench or stool for her to be placed across. Having been summoned to appear at midnight in the stable, she thought that perhaps

she would be told to bend over a saddle. But her positioning for receiving her strokes with the crop would be much more simple and basic than that.

With his left hand, Donovan firmly pressed the crop against her waist, and the mere touch of it against her made her begin to shudder. Then, he placed his right hand between her shoulders and began to slowly press her down to bend forward.

As she began to lean forward in the short weightless chemise, she felt more vulnerable with each inch as she gauged her slow bending by gliding her fingertips down the front of her legs. Her fingertips came to a stop at her knees, but she felt him pressing harder, and she continued until her fingertips were at the top of her ankles. But he continued to press down on her back. Complying with the pressure with which he was forcing her down, she continued until her fingertips were resting at the tips of her toes.

He slowly drew the crop from in front of her waist, and Alicia felt both her anxiety and anticipation rise as the cool night air elevated her awareness of her partial nakedness. And her arousal began to spiral once again in knowing that this man, that she loved and craved each day, was looking at her that way.

She sucked in her breath as she felt the supple leather covered crop suddenly being stroked softly and sensuously back and forth across her always sensitive bottom. The gentle stroking motions were both a warning that the biting strokes of the crop were soon to be applied, and a reinforcement of the pleasure and excitement she would feel, especially after it was done and Donovan would go to work on her and all of her helpless senses.

The crop was conducting its erotic play against a bottom that was now bare from bending so far over in the short garment. She closed her eyes and murmured in anticipation when she felt the smooth and menacing riding crop glide down the backs of her thighs, then began to tremble as it returned, but this time gently gliding up the insides of her legs. She gasped when the tip of it moved slowly upward and through the crack of her bottom, before it was stroked back and forth across the lower portion of her bottom cheeks.

Her husband was concentrating the teasing motions of the crop just above the tops of her thighs, and she knew that she would not be sitting comfortably until at least the following evening. At the same time, having that portion of her bottom set on fire had always been the most tantalizing and erotic to her.

Suddenly the teasing movements stopped, just as she thought that these preliminary antics may bring her to the climax that was building inside of her, she squeezed her eyes closed and clenched her teeth. She felt the crop move away, followed seconds later by the sound of a “*swwwisshhh*” a tortuous second before she felt...

“*Waaagggghhhhh...*” Alicia bolted upright on the bed, bumping into her nightstand and knocking over the alarm clock and nursery monitor speaker in her startled revelry from a nap that had ended all too abruptly, especially while she was so highly aroused. After a couple of seconds, in her state of sleep deprivation and unresolved yearning from such a memorable dream, she stumbled into a small room serving as a nursery next to the one where she and her husband slept. She could have used another thirty minutes of slumber to catch up.

The room in which she had been sleeping was the very same bedroom in which she and Donovan had unexpectedly, but happily, created the immediate focus of her love and attention. Little Malcolm was now ten months old and absolutely cherished and adored by his doting parents.

It just so happened that little Malcolm Edward Brighton had been conceived about ten minutes after Alicia had been very soundly and painfully paddled by her husband, Donovan, while across his knees on the same bed from which she had just been roused. The fact that the paddling

had left Alicia unexpectedly crazy with desire for the man who had administered it, just added to her list of unintended life consequences.

It had not been the last time her husband had warmed her bottom, but it was the last of the two times it had been done for a serious, disciplinary reason, rather than in a playful manner. Alicia had been stunned and surprised to find that having her shapely bottom paddled, whether for real or for the sake of foreplay, had become such a robust turn on for her. In any case, it was something she did not ever wish to abandon.

For that matter, it would happen more often if it were not for concern that the sound of something solid being cracked across her fleshy behind would wake the baby. And she doubted that if a paddling was interrupted, she could go sooth and quiet the child back to sleep, then go back across her husband's knees and pick up where they had left off. It just didn't work that way.

She further shocked herself by realizing that she wanted her husband to feel that it was his responsibility to discipline her in such a manner when her failure of judgment brought about peril. Although she was twenty-two when they met, and a recent college graduate, deep inside of her she knew that she needed guidance and discipline.

All her life, she had been told by her parents and her teachers that she was so intelligent that she could accomplish anything she wanted to, if only she could contain her tendency to act on impulse. She had always been too quick to dismiss words of caution and to disregard and challenge rules she did not agree with. As a result, she had been often grounded at home, and a frequent occupant of detention rooms at school.

One thing that she came to realize immediately upon meeting Donovan was that his own judgment was rock solid and dependable. Of course, he had spent a career as a police officer, and had served in the military before that.

There were probably times when an impulsive failure of judgment could have possibly cost him his life. He felt the same could be true in the field of private investigation, and that was why he had been so adamant, unyielding, and stern regarding Alicia's involvement.

At the same time, she had a natural instinct for putting information and data into a helpful package and drawing conclusions from it. That may have been part of the reason that they were such a good match. In addition to the immediate physical attraction between them, their strengths and weaknesses complemented each other's. And one primary example was Donovan's judgment, when it came to staying safe, was Alicia's point of weakness.

While Donovan seemed to sense when hazard was at hand, Alicia could stumble right into it. And although the young wife considered herself to be a modern, capable and intelligent woman, they had both come to accept that one old-fashioned form of discipline best drove a point home with Alicia. The fact that it ended up making her feel so darned horny was just an unexpected bonus that they were both quite grateful for.

And although the once divorced Donovan was just over twenty years older than she and he held some very traditional points of view, spanking a woman in an ongoing relationship was not something that had really ever occurred to him. Even though the first time he had encountered Alicia, she was a mouthy and sassy eighteen-year-old passenger in a car he had pulled over for suspicion of driving while intoxicated. When he let Alicia and her best friend, Monica who was driving, go on their way without an actual arrest, he had admitted to himself that nothing would have pleased him more than to have sent them away with their cute backsides ablaze.

Both of them found it more than ironic that it was Monica who had been abducted along with Alicia. In fact, it was Monica who had talked Alicia into going out on the town in direct

contradiction to his instructions, for he didn't want Alicia to encounter members of the drug ring that he and local cops were closing in on.

Alicia and Monica may not have gotten their bottoms paddled years before when Donovan had pulled them over, but after they were rescued, Monica came to visit them and talk about what had taken place. And before she left, Monica had been escorted by Donovan into his office, and as Alicia stood outside the door and listened in fascination, Donovan's large and solid hand landed several dozen sizzling swats to the seat of Monica's slacks.

And then, Alicia and Donovan went upstairs to his bedroom, and her bare bottom was set ablaze with a large wooden clothes brush. And, of course, the result of the aftermath was little Malcolm.

Alicia did not waste her time researching why she had found being paddled so arousing and downright intriguing. She would not have been that interested in psychological essays, or anatomical articles on the role of nerve endings in the enjoyment of being spanked.

She had no concern for reading theories on self-esteem, suppressed childhood memories or the psychology of power exchanges. Regardless of why, Alicia had to acknowledge and accept that she needed to be kept in line and disciplined by her husband. She also simply craved at times to be spanked for the mere pleasure and arousal it provided.

Most of all, she loved it most when the loud and rather unnerving crack of his large, solid hand on her tender and bare bottom was part of their romantic play, in spite of the soreness and sting that were involved. Or, perhaps it was because of it.

During such play times, she would sometimes send a signal to Donovan that it was time to turn up the heat. Typically, her vehicle for that would be a humorous and smart-alecky, attitude-drenched insult to his spanking skills.

How she so loved it when she reached the point where she was feeling that her tolerance for the sting was approaching the end of her coping level. And when she still declined to signal to her husband that it was time to back off, her exhilaration and arousal only heightened.

But on the two occasions she had her bottom worked over for failing to adhere to his words of caution, the pain had been much more intense. When she had started working for Donovan, and had only been working for a few days, she managed to get herself into trouble with him.

She found herself across his knees, her skirt shuffled up onto her back while he soundly smacked her during the course of a scolding admonishment. But that had also been the first day that they had embraced and kissed. Alicia found out, right then and there, that something had changed in her life. And she really did not want for that to be the last time she would feel such sensations, or find her heart and abdomen aflutter in such a scenario.

Of course, over the past several months, bedroom play had been a rare commodity. Between their work in the field of private investigation, new mother fatigue, and the baby's tendency to wake frequently, even brief romantic encounters had not been plentiful.

They had to be satisfied with stealing a "quickie" when possible. Fortunately for them, they found out immediately and to their delight that such a brief encounter not only tended to completely satisfied Donovan's needs, Alicia had turned out to be very responsive and quick to climax.

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Rushing through the door of the adjoining room, she felt her heart dance with happiness as she picked up the baby, whom immediately began to quiet simply by being cuddled by his mother. However, the child was startled by the raspy buzz of the doorbell as he always was to Alicia's despair, and the crying resumed. Just as the young mother and her baby had begun to descend the

stairs, the door opened slowly and a familiar and welcome female voice called out, “Alicia! It’s your Mom.”

The woman who had entered the house was older than Alicia, but resembled her beautiful daughter very closely as she reached out to take hold of the crying baby. “Now, now, let Grandma Susan see just what the problem is here.”

Alicia leaned toward her mother and kissed her on the cheek. “Dad couldn’t come along? Even on a Sunday afternoon? Put a guilt trip on him. Tell him that Malcolm was looking around and asking where his Grandpa was. I think that might work.”

Susan laughed. “I just may give that a try, after all. Poor Ed wanted to come along so bad, because he talks about little Malcolm all of the time and he can’t stand to go three days without seeing him. But he had to get that pesky and boring inventory done in that darned old store of ours. It’s days like this that I wish we had regular jobs with normal hours.”

Susan Langford looked around. “Is Donovan at home?”

Alicia laughed as they strolled into the living room to rest on the sofa, the baby having gone back to sleep in his grandmother’s welcoming arms as was typical. “That husband of mine is just as bad as Dad when it comes to work. Right now, he’s out watching the movements of a philandering husband somewhere on the north side of Columbus. Seems that that he often has to stay out rather late with a case like that. But, he gets a solid and secure contract and the fees are pretty nice to go along with his police pension. I must say, it makes us financially comfortable enough for me to just stay at home with Malcolm and help with the business.”

Susan suddenly seemed preoccupied. “Speaking of the business... I hope I’m seeing things right now.” The older woman pointed toward Alicia’s hip, then leaned closer to get a better look.

Suddenly, Alicia’s mother displayed an expression of alarm. “Sweetheart... I... I can’t believe you’re walking around with a... oh, please, please tell me that’s an oversized cell phone in that holster on your belt and not a gun.”

Alicia put up both hands in a defensive posture. “It’s okay, Mom. Everything is fine. It’s just that when somebody is being released from prison that Donny helped to put away, or if we’re working on a case that’s a little... you know... I mean...”

Her mother’s eyes grew wide with concern. “So you really are all in with this business? To the point that you have to be armed in your own home?”

Alicia nodded and shrugged. “It’s not like it’s that way all the time, Mom. It’s an interesting line of work. I must admit that it has surprised me, but I’ve found out that I really enjoy helping with the investigations. And my paralegal education fits right in. I mean, I have to have a grasp of the court system, concepts of legal liability and what things are and are not criminal offenses. It couldn’t have worked out any better.”

“But sweetheart, here you are... you’re walking around the house, holding your baby and carrying a gun?”

Alicia began to laugh once again. “This is coming from a woman who carries that ugly little pink pistol in her purse? It’s just a precaution, Mom, just like you always say about the one you carry. You always said that you had a gun on you just in case something unexpected happened.

“There is a guy who was just released from prison after three years. A guy Donny busted for forgery of a couple of payroll checks. He is a bit of a character, a little erratic and unpredictable and capable of being volatile, so Donny just told me to be a little extra cautious right now. But we have a really sophisticated security system here around the house. It’s just not visible to anyone who arrives here. But it’s there. I can even show you the surveillance tape of you arriving today.

“Anyway, a lot of what we work on are cases of infidelity. Donny could pretty much keep busy on that part of the work alone. He gets quite a few jobs from well-off people who live in the cities, because people wouldn’t recognize him.

“Then there are always the more intriguing fraud and embezzlement cases. And it’s just reality, Mom, that some of the people that Donny comes in contact with can be a bit unhappy with his involvement, past or present. People can get testy over money or relationships, of course. But he does everything he can to insulate me from any risks. He is a very careful and protective man.

“For that matter, Donny is very adamant that I adhere to what are some very strict limits he puts on my involvement. Not only that, most of what I do is done over the phone and on the internet. On most days, the biggest risk that I face is getting a parking ticket while downtown going through the county records offices for information on a case.

“Plus, remember that Frank and Nancy Lowery are usually either in the other part of the house or somewhere on the grounds. Frank always has a six-gun on his hip in a holster, and I know Nancy keeps a shotgun handy. Of course, lately they’ve been gone a lot making those trips to Kentucky to buy and sell horses for Donny.”

Her mother closed her eyes and shook her head back and forth. “But just knowing that there may be cases where there could be some blowback... I don’t want anything to happen to you, sweetheart... or this little fellow.”

“But Mom, the spouse of any police officer must have to deal with the same anxieties and make the same adjustments. People can’t make all of their important life decisions based upon avoiding risk.”

“But Alicia, sweetheart, I just have to be concerned about you and your family. I don’t want your father to know how deeply you’re getting into this investigation work.”

Alicia patted the holster at her side. “Donny has taught me to shoot pretty well, and he takes me out a couple of times a week for practice. And in a few weeks he’s going to start teaching me some martial arts. He has a black belt in karate, and he used to teach classes on the side.”

Alicia saw the continuing expressions of concern on her mother’s face. “Mom, maybe I shouldn’t be telling you all of these things, but I just want you to fully understand that we’re being very, very careful. Like I said, Donny sets strict limits on what I can and can’t do, and I’d better follow his instructions or else I’ll get another good pad... uhm... oh, boy... I didn’t mean to say... oh, my... yikes.”

Susan looked at her mortified daughter whose face was now crimson from the embarrassment. Still holding the sleeping baby, she reached her other arm around Alicia and gave her a reassuring squeeze. “I’m not going to mention this to your overprotective father, but just let me say this, Alicia, if you and Donny are in agreement about doing that, then more power to you. After all, it’s really no one’s business but yours.”

Alicia hesitated, her face dark pink. “I guess I’m kind of surprised that you’re not kind of upset that I let that slip.”

Susan patted her daughter’s knee reassuringly. “If the prospect of getting your behind walloped will make you more careful, then as far as I’m concerned, he can just give you a few extra hard whacks for me whenever that happens.”

Alicia lowered her head and laughed as her face turned an even deeper shade of red. “I’m not certain I’m going to pass that little suggestion on to him.”

A teasing grin appeared on Susan’s face as she watched her daughter’s cheeks once again turn red. “And for that matter, you can tell Donny that if it will help keep you safe and out of

trouble, I would happily buy him the paddle of his choice off the internet. And it wouldn't even have to wait until your birthday for me to get you such a gift."

Alicia finally began to laugh and her face once again blushed. "Thanks, Mom, but Donny does quite well enough with his hand or a wooden brush that I was quite rudely introduced to after I was kidnapped. In fact, I found out the hard way that he can give a very convincing paddling with a brush like that. I don't think he needs to have a paddle around. I'm afraid he may be tempted to hang it on the bedroom wall so he can get to it quickly in case of an emergency. Take my word for it, Mom, Donovan knows how to give a good paddling."

Susan laughed and reached back and rubbed the back of her skirt. "So did your grandparents, on occasion. I guess that's why I don't feel any aversion to it, even though you are an adult." She arched her eyes and sighed. "And if your father would have allowed it, you would have known earlier in life what that felt like after some of your more impulsive acts. In fact, I can think of several occasions where that would have been more than appropriate, but I would've insisted on doing the job myself.

"But your father was always such a soft touch when it came to you. I still think to this day that if things were the way they were back when I was in school, you would have found out many years ago what it felt like to be spanked with a wooden paddle."

Alicia nodded slowly and looked down. "I understand. I think it probably would have cleared up some problems in my behavior."

The older woman closed her eyes and leaned backward, the dozing infant still in her arms. "Please, if you can at all avoid it, just don't let your father see you carrying that gun around the house."

Alicia sighed. "I'll do my best. Dad has had enough things to adjust to when it comes to me. I didn't want to upset either of you. Things just sort of happened. I know that everything in my life changed so quickly, and I can understand why the two of you were so concerned."

Her mother reached over and placed her hand on Alicia's shoulder. "It will just take him some time. A father feels a need to protect his daughter, no matter her age. Watching national news broadcasts of his daughter being released after being kidnapped and nearly murdered was a lot for him... both of us... to handle. We had never been so frightened in our lives.

"Then, telling us that you were moving in with a man you had only known for a few days..."

Alicia shrugged and grinned. "But you and Dad had known him for a long, long time. You told me what a great guy he was and you were right. I know it was quick, but it seemed that after a few days together well, it seemed that we had known each other for a long time. It's hard for me to explain. But Mom, I think the results speak for themselves."

Her mother then looked at Alicia with an expression of disapproval that was obviously theatrical. "I can't argue with that. But then you immediately go and get pregnant."

Alicia reached over and stroked the thin, soft hair on the baby's head. "And look who we have in the family now. And Mom, I have no regrets about any of it. It all happened so suddenly that day. I can't believe that we both got so carried away in the moment that we didn't use anything. Donovan confessed to me that it was really out of character for him, since he's always lecturing me about being careful. And then he says how if we had been cautious, we wouldn't have our little Malcolm."

Her mother smiled and nodded as she looked at the baby. "And none of our lives will ever be the same again. And you know how much your father and I love being grandparents. Funny how life turns out. So, just as long as you are happy."

Alicia smiled and her eyes glistened. “We all know that none of this was planned... it was hardly the way I envisioned my life in my twenties. I was just going to party and find a job.

“I just assumed that, slowly and surely, I would find the right man. It all happened right away. I guess that fate was working overtime. My life is so much more fulfilling than if I was out in that mindless dating scene. Now I guess I understand why I always kind of envied some of my old classmates who married younger.”

Susan shook her head. “And there you were, right out of college and you meet up with a retired cop. As much as your father and I like Donovan, that was another matter of concern for us... the age thing, I mean. And he had been married before for ten years.”

Alicia laughed. “Of course, since he was a police officer he was able to retire earlier than most people. It’s not like I married an elderly man. And I could not be happier. Donny and I seem to have been meant for each other. And of course, having this little fellow... I couldn’t have asked for more. And Mom, all of our lives could get a little more interesting at any time now. I’m not on the pill anymore, so...”

Her mother smiled at hearing that tidbit of news, and then leaned down and softly kissed her grandchild on his forehead. “Rest assured, Alicia, your father and I are very happy for you. But he keeps saying he wonders how things will be for you when you’re forty and you have a husband in his early sixties.”

Alicia began to giggle. “Then he’ll just have to start taking the special little pills in the evening. I think we will get by just fine in that regard.”

Her mother shook her head and laughed. “Oh, something tells me you will, indeed. And I must say, he seems to be a good husband to you and a wonderful father to little Malcolm, here.”

Alicia turned sideways and curled up on the sofa. “He’s the best I could ever have hoped for. Ever since Malcolm developed colic last week, Donny has insisted on taking turns getting out of bed at night to go in and try to get him back to sleep. Two nights ago, he didn’t get home from a surveillance job until well after midnight, but the next morning when I woke up, he wasn’t in bed.

“I got up to check on Malcolm, because the monitor was missing. I walked into the nursery, and there was Donny in the rocker holding Malcolm, both of them asleep. He had taken the monitor with him, so I would get some more rest. That’s the kind of considerate and caring father and husband he is.

“And sometimes, he will insist on staying here with Malcolm while I go out for a while. Maybe he just wants me to go out and relax and do some shopping, and sometimes he’ll stay here while I go out and do some legwork on a case. And it is not at all unusual for him to change his plans so that I can have some time to myself. Mom, he’s the real deal. I’m a very lucky woman. And we’re very deeply in love. I guess that we fell hard and fast. Kind of like in an old movie.”

Alicia’s eyes began to fill with tears of happiness. “He loves to put Malcolm to bed whenever he has the chance. And he sings lullabies, and nothing else puts the little fellow to sleep as quickly as one of Donovan’s bedtime songs. Something tells me that the two of them are going to be quite a team, full of adventure and mischief. I think that life in our family is going to be very entertaining and interesting, if not quite rowdy.”

“I’ll be sure to tell your father about all that you’ve just said. It’s taken a while, but I think he has finally gotten over seeing Donny as the older man who got his daughter pregnant.” Both of them began to laugh.

Her mother glanced toward the other side of the room where several pieces of old furniture were sitting. “I see that you and Donovan are really getting into this thing with antiques. How in the world do you find any time at all to mess with it?”

Alicia shrugged. “We just kind of grab a little time here and there as we can. Donovan really enjoys putting on a new finish after I have stripped it down to the bare wood. He says that he finds it to be a good way to wind down when he’s getting kind of stressed over a case.”

Alicia pointed to a small table. “That little end piece came from Connecticut. I have to be really careful when I work on removing the finish, because we think it’s from the late 1700’s. When Donovan told me he wanted to refinish antique stuff, I never would have guessed that I would have enjoyed it so much too. I think it really takes his mind off of work. We’re going to do a lot more of it when he really retires. Right now we’re just learning.”

Her mother laughed and shook her head. “My dear, you have proven to be so full of surprises. You seem to have all sorts of talents.”

Alicia laughed and slapped her mother playfully on her knee. “That’s just what Donovan was telling me the other night... oh, boy.” Suddenly her face was a deep red. “Can I get you some coffee or something, Mom?”

The older woman was laughing at Alicia’s reaction to her own comment. “That’s all right, sweetheart, just getting to hold little Malcolm here is the only treat I need.” Her mother playfully tapped Alicia on the nose. “And as soon as you feel all right with your father and I keeping this little fellow overnight we would like to give the two of you a break. After all, he is ten months old. And then you and your husband can have some nice quiet time alone together. After all, how else am I possibly going to get that second grandchild we all want so badly?”

Alicia placed her hand on her mother’s shoulder and smiled softly. “Okay, Mom. We’ll take you up on that. Maybe even this week if it works out with Donny. And if you give us some time together, if I don’t get pregnant right away, I can assure you that it won’t be for a lack of effort.”

Susan began to laugh as her own face turned pink. “That’s the spirit, sweetheart. Have a good, fun romantic time, and just try everything you can think of to expand your family.”