

Barely Survived

By

Shelly Douglas

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Chapter 1

Horizon's End

Jackie walked around most of the day in slow motion. Her husband, Joey, along with Daniel and his wife, Christina, had gone for an afternoon sail. She wasn't much for boating; the movement of the ocean never agreed with her. So Jackie agreed to let the three of them bond together out on the high seas. She decided the perfect ending to her relaxing day would be a pre-dinner cocktail on the back porch. But as she sat with a drink in her hand watching the beautiful sunset, she noticed a plume of black smoke rise on the horizon.

It was the first time Jackie and Joey had been invited to vacation with his brother and sister-in-law. Jackie had been good friends with her brother-in-law before he'd married Christina, and he loved to keep her company when Joey traveled on business. Unfortunately, once Christina had come into the family, she wasn't happy to share his attention with anyone. But no matter how much time elapsed in between visits, once they were together again, Jackie and Daniel always picked up right where they left off.

Six years earlier, Daniel and Christina built a gorgeous beach home in Sea Pines Plantation. All one needed to do was drive into their gated-community to realize who had the money in the family. He was a graduate of the prestigious Wharton Business School and possessed a keen instinct for investing. A decade earlier, he and a friend started up an investment firm specializing in options trading. Hilton Head was the ideal location for him to settle, given the abundance of potential wealthy clientel, and Daniel quickly developed a reputation for creating above average results. Over the years, his firm became extremely successful.

Christina and Jackie spent the majority of the week exploring upscale boutiques on the island, while Joey and Daniel played several of the great golf courses. Jackie and Joey were just halfway through their two-week visit on that beautiful, clear night. She heard a knock on the door and figured it was her sailors, returning home after a full day out on the ocean. Tearing her gaze away from the plume of smoke rising from the water, she went to answer the door.

A stranger in uniform met her.

"Mrs. Bonerati?"

"Yes."

“I’m with the US Coast Guard. May I come in?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Mrs. Bonerati, did your husband go sailing this afternoon?”

She nodded. “He went with my brother-in-law and his wife.”

“I’m afraid there’s been an accident. The boat is registered to Daniel Bonerati, is that correct?”

“Daniel is my brother-in-law. What exactly do you mean by an accident?”

“There was an explosion.”

“Oh my God.” She covered her mouth recalling the black smoke rising above the ocean.

“Right now we don’t have much information. After a search of the sight, we found one survivor - the other two are missing.”

She stared at the stranger in horror, unable to ask the obvious question.

“One man survived,” he said quietly.

There was hope in her eyes.

“From his identification, we believe it’s your brother-in-law.”

“I’ll get my things.” As she turned, her eyes filled with tears.

* * *

Five years later

Jackie felt large hands reach under her skirt; a warm thumb gently stroked over her cotton panties as they became moist with her arousal.

“Slide your panties down right now,” the deep, clear voice instructed.

“Should I take them all the way off?”

“Pull them down to your knees, young lady, not further.”

“Yes, sir,” she whispered.

As she slowly slid her cotton underpants down, her skirt was raised in the front. She held onto broad shoulders as the flat of his slick tongue slowly licked her vagina from bottom to top, carefully and gently circling her fleshy knob with a pointy, wet tip.

“You’re so sweet and soft, my love.”

“Oh God, don’t stop ... don’t stop ...” Her clitoris quivered as he sucked and nibbled her silky flesh.

“You know the rules. If you come before I give permission, I will take you over my knee and spank your bare bottom, young lady. I mean it, Jackie ... don’t you dare!”

She grabbed the sides of his head as he suddenly thrust his tongue inside her soaked pussy - fucking her over and over again. Her wobbly knees buckled as an intense orgasm swept over her body.

He caught her in his strong arms and stood her up. “You really could have hung on a little longer.” His head tilted to the side as a crooked smile formed on his lips. “I see no point in pulling up your panties ...”

* * *

“Please fasten your seatbelts as we begin our descent into Hilton Head, South Carolina,” the loud, high-pitched flight attendant’s voice advised over the intercom. “Please return your seats to their upright position and stow all baggage under the seat in front of you.”

With Jackie’s daydream now rudely interrupted, she surreptitiously adjusted an extremely wet thong, smoothed her skirt and turned to stare out the airplane window.

It had been five long years since her husband, Joey, perished in a boating accident. They were married young and no one thought it would last ... especially her family. Growing up with the finer things in life, Jackie was not used to worrying about finances. But she became the wife of a salesman, and contrary to popular opinion, did her best to live on a family budget. Joey was her rock, protector and best friend. Who would have suspected that their marriage thrived in a loving domestic discipline relationship?

They’d raised two sons together. Just weeks before that fateful day, Brian, their oldest, had been married. His new wife, Lynda, was everything one could want in a daughter-in-law; she was intelligent, loving and just about to start her career as a teacher in a flourishing school district. She’d provided a tremendous amount of stability in his life. Their younger son, Bobby, having acquired a degree in finance, was working as a bank examiner in New York City. They’d never had to worry about him; Bobby was an independent thinker that always had a plan. With their kids grown and settled in stable, productive lives, Jackie and Joey had decided the time had come to travel and enjoy their life together.

And then the ocean opened up and swallowed Joey whole.

Five years of investigation into the accident hadn’t produced a single shred of evidence. The cause of the explosion had yet to be determined by the Coast Guard or local police

department. Over the years, Jackie and Daniel both were questioned several times about the circumstances surrounding the incident. In fact, that was the reason for Jackie's trip back to the island. Once again, the police wanted to speak with her, and she hoped there was a possibility that new evidence had surfaced.

The accident not only claimed her husband, Joey, but also Christina, Daniel's wife, as well. Unfortunately, their bodies were never recovered, so in addition to the loss of their loved ones, there were no burials or final goodbyes. Daniel had been the only survivor, and as a result of major back injuries, spent several weeks in the hospital. Even though he worried about being a burden to her, Jackie refused to leave his side and sat vigil every day. A strong bond deepened between them during those weeks, as they continued to console each other in their grieving process. But Daniel needed to heal physically as well as emotionally. Once he was released from the hospital and demonstrated the ability to get around at home with professional help, Jackie flew to Philadelphia to try to repair a life that had suddenly and abruptly been torn apart.

Although they kept in touch by phone, this was Jackie's first trip back to the island since the accident. She was nervous, but at the same time excited to see him again. They had a lot of catching up to do.

She slowly walked down the stairs off the plane and immediately spotted Daniel waiting beyond security. A bright smile appeared across his handsome, tanned face as he waved to bring her closer. There was not a hint of awkwardness when Daniel grabbed her in a big bear hug that lifted her feet off the ground. That wasn't difficult since Jackie was only about 5'2" and weighed 115 pounds compared to Daniel's tall 6'4," 255 pound frame.

"Daniel, please watch your back!" Jackie warned.

"I'm one hundred percent recovered, and my doctor has cleared me for all activities."

They stood apart for a moment and beamed genuine smiles at each other. "My God, you're a sight for sore eyes," Daniel whispered. "It's been way too long since we've seen each other. I've missed you terribly."

Jackie blushed. "I've missed seeing you too. I just couldn't bring myself to travel back down here until now. I'm sure you understand."

He nodded as his smile faded.

"Daniel, why have the police reopened the investigation?"

“We can talk about that later, after you get settled in. I’ve done so many renovations since you were last here that you might not even recognize the place. You’ll have your own separate wing with a lot of privacy. Who knows, maybe you’ll decide to stay longer than you’d planned.”

Jackie playfully punched Daniel in the arm. He always had a way of putting her at ease; she just hoped he wasn’t hiding anything from her. Leaning back onto the headrest as he shut the car door, she closed her eyes and remembered the last night she spent with Joey. Daniel and Christina had gone out to dinner and left them alone in the house ...

Joey stared across the dining room table.

“Are you wearing what I requested?”

“Yes, sir,” Jackie answered in a demure tone.

“Stand beside me, please.”

Jackie rose from her chair and walked around the table. Joey slid his hand underneath the hem of her black satiny dress. Slowly, he ran his fingers along the edge of her thigh-high stockings. Smiling, he nodded in approval. “Good girl. Now take off your clothes.”

She slid one thin strap down her arm and then the other. Gently, Jackie shimmied the dress over her hips, and it fell to the floor in a heap. She stood motionless as Joey’s eyes feasted on her body.

Her instructions had been to wear a black lace bra with matching panties, thigh high stockings and high-heeled shoes. Joey was always very specific in what he expected. Her four-inch heels made her appear much taller than she was.

“Take the bra and panties off, but keep the shoes on. I like you in those sexy shoes.”

Jackie unsnapped the front of her bra and wriggled out of her panties, carefully removing her heels. One leg at a time, she seductively slid her stockings down until she stood totally naked in front of him. With fingers interlocked behind his head, he studied her carefully as she slipped her high heels back on.

“Play with yourself.” His voice was low and gravelly.

Jackie’s pussy tightened as she lightly pinched and twisted her nipple. With the fingertip on her other hand, she located the familiar sweet spot between her legs and softly stroked. A muted moan crossed her lips as a sexual trance took hold of her body, and her fingertips became

juicier as they traveled in a circle around her hard, soaked clit. Without thinking, she slipped two digits into her swollen, wet flesh while her thumb attentively continued rubbing her stiff bud. Jackie was about to ask for permission to come, when Joey interrupted her by patting the table.

“Joey, I was so close,” she whimpered.

“Not yet, baby.” He lifted her bottom onto the table and spread her legs, hungrily eyeing the luscious feast in front of him. Jackie pushed her hips forward as the width of his tongue slowly lapped up the moisture, savoring every slippery inch. Expertly he licked a trail from the clitoris down to her sensitive perineum and back up as she writhed and moaned.

“Please, don’t stop,” she begged.

He stood, shedding his clothes, and in a quick motion repositioned her face down over the table. Joey’s cock stood at full attention, and he fisted himself to make sure it was good and hard.

Jackie shivered with excitement as she felt her husband cascade one of her silk stockings down her back, knowing it would soon be fitted into her mouth like the bit of a horse’s bridle. Never one to disappoint - Joey positioned the stocking, pulled back on it, and gave her bottom a sharp smack before entering from behind. At first his movements were slow and rhythmic, as he tugged harder on the stocking with each thrust inside her. As her head reared back to increase the tension, his thrusts became deeper until with one final lustful drive that bumped her cervix, she backed up against him and shuddered as if a current had run through her. Soft moans were heard from both of them as her knees nearly buckled and his seed flowed like a river.

Finally, he let go of his homemade restraint and Jackie’s hot cheek leaned against the cool cherry wood table. They relaxed and sighed as the semen trickled down her legs, and he became flaccid inside her.

Joey put his mouth close to Jackie’s ear. “You will always be mine,” he whispered.

Daniel had the sunroof of his Mercedes S-Class sedan rolled back, and Jackie happily absorbed the warm ocean air as they made the short drive from the airport to Sea Pines Plantation. In just twenty minutes, they were pulling into his driveway.

The changes in the house structure were immediately apparent as he opened the front door. “Oh my God, you could land a plane in this living room.” Jackie inclined her head toward him and smiled.

“After losing Christina, I wondered whether it might be better to move into a smaller house. But I like this location and want to have visitors, so I decided to make some changes and added a large guest wing to encourage company. I have to admit, I built this with the hopes that you would come see me and was kind of disappointed when you didn’t.”

“I’m sorry, Daniel. I thought we both needed time to grieve.”

“Were you really just afraid of what people might think?”

“I didn’t want to be the subject of gossip at your country club.”

“You always did worry about that kind of nonsense. Jackie, whatever relationship we have is none of anyone’s business. We’ve been good friends for over twenty-five years. I can’t believe that just because we’re both single now and staying in close quarters together ...” he teased.

“I wouldn’t call this close quarters, Daniel.” Jackie grinned and elbowed him. “How big is this place anyway?”

“I may have overdone it, but I suppose when you add it all up – the house is over twenty thousand square feet,” he said with a shrug. “Now let me show you to your room. I can’t wait for you to see it.”

Jackie’s jaw dropped as they continued on a tour through the house.

“Yes, my business has been good. But money can’t replace the hole in my heart for Christina and Joey. I miss them terribly. You know I would give this all up to have them back.”

Tears filled her eyes, and they shared a strong hug. “Take your time getting settled and then we’ll have a drink outside.”

Jackie quickly unpacked and joined Daniel on the back porch. “Did I notice someone working in the kitchen?” she asked without taking her eyes off the ocean view.

“I wasn’t able to take care of this place all by myself, so I hired Sophia four years ago. She does just about everything for me. I couldn’t get along without her.”

As if she overheard their conversation, Sophia came into the room with a bottle of Chardonnay. Introductions were made and two glasses were poured.

“Thank you, Sophia,” Jackie said, smiling.

“I hope you don’t mind, but I thought it might be nice to have Sophia cook for us this evening. That way, we could spend some time on the porch catching up. Sound good?”

“Perfect.” Jackie smoothed her skirt and paused. “Daniel, please tell me what’s going on with the investigation.”

He hesitated for a moment. “The authorities think there may be more to the story than was first believed. They’re not so sure it was an accident, based on some of the remains of the boat they were able to recover. So the case is in new hands, and they’re following up on just about every angle. I suppose that’s why they want to talk with you again.”

“Am I a suspect?” Jackie nervously ran fingers through her short, dark brown hair.

“I don’t think so, but you can’t believe how many times they’ve talked to me over the last couple of months.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

Daniel turned his head slightly. “I didn’t want to worry you. I know that Joey liked to protect you.”

Jackie’s face reddened. “Protect me?”

“He loved you deeply and enjoyed taking care of you.”

Jackie took a big swallow of her wine. “I miss how close we were ... how much he cherished me. I went out with a couple of men in the last year, but couldn’t seem to find the type of connection I need. Everyone I’ve dated has paled in comparison to Joey.”

“I always had the feeling that your marriage was both structured and quite exciting at the same time.” He studied her face and hoped for a reaction that would validate his suspicions.

“Have you started dating? I would think women from the country club would be lined up on your porch by now.” She quickly tried to change the subject.

“I have taken a few women out to dinner. After all, it’s been five years.”

“But, obviously, you haven’t found anyone special. Are you lonely?”

He slowly nodded his head, a wistful smile playing on his lips. He didn’t need to speak. She knew what he was thinking.

* * *

Jackie walked back to her room after dinner and sat on the edge of the bed. Swinging her legs back and forth in a child-like manner, she recalled the night before she and Joey had left for Hilton Head five years ago. He’d just returned home from work and found her typing on the laptop in their bedroom.

“Are you packed, young lady?” He stood in the doorway with his hands on the walls. She peered over her shoulder with guilty eyes. “I put the laundry in the washer kind of late. The first load isn’t out of the dryer, yet.”

He looked at his watch. “Jackie, the way things are going, we’ll be packing until midnight. What were you doing today?”

“I wanted to get my recipe blog posts finished before we leave tomorrow.” She nonchalantly turned back around at her desk knowing she was in trouble.

He shook his head in disbelief. “Have you at least ordered something to be delivered for dinner?”

“I thought we’d call for pizza when you got home.” She picked up her cell phone. “Do you want mushroom or pepperoni?”

Joey took a deep breath and counted to ten. He knew it wasn’t the end of the world that she hadn’t packed or that dinner wasn’t on the table, but they needed to get up early for a long drive the next day. He walked over to her chair and stooped down to be at eye level. “You know I’m going to do all the driving tomorrow and want to be well-rested.” His voice was soft but authoritative as he tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

She lowered her gaze and nodded.

“We have an agreement about things getting done in a timely manner the day before we travel so we can get to bed early. Is that right, sweetie?”

“Yes, sir.”

“It sounds like you spent all your time blogging today, instead of helping us get ready for our trip.”

“I’m really sorry, Joey.”

“I know you don’t like to stand in the corner, but you have been extremely irresponsible today. Since you’re obviously in the mood to act like a child, I’m more than happy to treat you like one.”

She looked up at him with tears forming in her eyes.

“When I come back into this room, your nose will be touching that wall over there and the back flap on your pajama bottoms better be down with your bare behind sticking out. Do you understand, Jacqueline Anne?”

“Yes, sir.”

He tapped her on the nose. "Good. I'm going to order the pizza and will be back in ten minutes."

He left the room and Jackie ran to find her footie pajamas that were stuffed in the bottom drawer. As she dressed, it made her feel younger instantly. The bubble gum pink sleeper was made from a soft velour fabric. As she placed her nose against the wall, it occurred to her that the flap was still fastened. She reached back, but he stopped her abruptly.

"It would be my pleasure to unsnap this flap, kitten." Joey undid the snaps and reached around the front to dip his finger in her moist pussy. "Oh, my little one likes these pajamas, doesn't she?" He pushed the pad of his finger gently into her smooth bottom hole.

A short intake of breath was heard as he surprised her with the internal intrusion.

"Is this clearing up who's the head of our house? You seem a little foggy on the subject today." His finger continued further into her forbidden passage until she spoke.

"It's clear, sir."

"Good. You may stand here for ten more minutes while I make a decision about your punishment."

When ten minutes were up, Joey pulled a smooth lacquered paddle out from under the bed. Engraved on the front was her name, Jacqueline Anne. He had given it to her on their twentieth wedding anniversary. "Come here, young lady." His voice was stern, but there was tenderness in his eyes as he sat on the edge of the bed.

Jackie approached him slowly. The fact that the sleepwear was all one piece, made it easy to walk. After feeling the cool breeze behind her, she was sure it was the only good feature of the damn pajamas.

He hugged her and whispered, "Do you deserve a spanking?"

She nodded as he gently patted her naked bottom.

"Bend over the bed, please." His cock stirred as he watched her get into position. "Separate your legs a little more, young lady." He used the paddle to coax each leg further apart.

Jackie's tush trembled with anticipation as he ran the polished wood over it. With no verbal warning, the first swat was administered. But to her surprise, it was his hand rather than the wood that first made contact with her bare bottom.

“I wanted my palm to be the first thing your naked bum felt.” He swatted both sides twice before speaking again. “You will get four swats of the paddle tonight, and I expect you to be perfectly still and quiet for each one.”

“Yes, sir.” Her lower lip was quivering and large tears began to fall. Jackie counted each smack to herself as he landed the paddle perfectly in the small exposed area of each flaming buttock.

“Good girl.” Joey slid the paddle back under the bed and gathered her up into his arms. He carried her to a nearby chair to cuddle and cradle her close. “I hope you learned a lesson tonight, Jackie. The next time we travel, you need to be better prepared. This wasn’t the way I wanted us to spend our last night at home.” He thumbed the tears from her eyes and tenderly kissed both cheeks.

“I know. I’m really sorry, Joey.” She could feel his hard cock practically bursting out of the zipper underneath her and knew how much control it took on his part not to fuck her from behind as she was bent over the bed. But he was playing the part of her disciplinarian, so sex was out of bounds for the moment. By the end of the night, she would be fair game. It was hard to hide her bright smile at the thought.

Jackie let out a heavy sigh. She never had a chance to be better prepared. It was their last night together at home.

* * *

The next morning, Jackie and Daniel sat on the back porch in silence as they sipped coffee while staring out at the ocean.

“You don’t look like you got much sleep last night. Was it the tight accommodations?” he teased.

“Do I really look that bad?” She playfully adjusted her long, brown bangs.

“You look beautiful as always, just a little stressed. Tomorrow we should take a morning walk on the beach together. I hear exercise is good for that sort of thing.”

“I’m just worried about my appointment with the police this morning. I can’t imagine what they need to see me about. I’ve told them everything I know at least a dozen times. Daniel, maybe I am a suspect since I wasn’t on the boat with all of you. Why else would they need to talk to me?”

Daniel put his cup down. “Jackie, I know this is difficult, but all you need to do is answer their questions honestly.”

“I really just want to put all of this behind me and move on with my life. Are we ever going to be able to get past this terrible tragedy? For God’s sake, it’s been five years.”

“We will, soon. I promise.”

* * *

Two hours later, Jackie and Daniel walked into the front door of the Hilton Head police headquarters. “I’m here to see Detective Andrews. We have an appointment.” Jackie addressed the uniformed police officer sitting behind the protective glass-paneled wall.

“I’ll let him know you’re here,” she responded.

The officer made a quick call and waved for Jackie to enter through the side door. Daniel followed, but the officer quickly put a hand up and motioned for him to stay behind. “The detective wants to see her alone, sir,” the officer said. Daniel nervously stroked the back of his neck and took a seat as Jackie darted her worried eyes in his direction.

Quickly, she was led down a corridor to a large conference room. “Detective Andrews will be with you in a moment,” the officer said quietly as she closed the door. In seconds, a soft-spoken man in his late fifties quickly entered the room and reached out his hand. “It’s nice to meet you, Mrs. Bonerati, I’m Detective Mike Andrews.”

“It’s nice to meet you, too.” She politely took his hand in hers, and they seated themselves side by side at a large conference table.

“I apologize for asking you to come in, but it couldn’t be helped. This investigation is five years old, and normally would be classified as a cold case since we never concluded exactly what happened. Our investigators tried their best, and were just about to walk away when a decision was made to hand it over to the new guy in town. I suppose my background as a retired Coast Guard investigator had something to do with their last-minute decision.” The detective’s dark brown eyes looked at her directly.

“This isn’t the first time I’ve been questioned,” Jackie said. “You must have transcripts from previous statements taken from me. Is there something new I should know about?”

“We were able to secure most of the wreckage from the boat. Fortunately, it wasn’t that far off the coast when it went down, and our dive teams were able to salvage a great deal. It’s taken us some time to put together what we believe to be a pretty accurate sequence of events

that led to the explosion.” He paused and scratched his head. “Unfortunately, it would appear that the blast was not an accident.”

“What do you mean?” His words were clear, but disjointed in her mind.

“We now think that there was an explosion because someone wanted the people on that boat ... dead.”

Her face showed no expression, though her biggest fear was finally realized.

“Mrs. Bonerati, you were the only one in the family not on board that day and, of course, we now have to look at all the possibilities. If I may be frank, there might be someone who could have benefited from the death of one, if not all those aboard. I’m sure you understand.”

“Are you accusing me of having something to do with this? Because if you are...” Jackie stood up, her face flushed with anger.

Detective Andrews calmly gestured with his hand for her to sit. “No, but we’re hoping that you might be able to help us.”

“You think that I might know someone who had a motive to blow up the boat my family was on?” She held on to the table and sat back down.

“We’re just asking you to think about it.”

Jackie was speechless. She gazed past the detective and stared at the wall. “I don’t know what to say. I’ve never wanted to think in those terms.” Her eyes brimmed with tears.

“It certainly wasn’t my intent to upset you, but the status of this inquiry has recently changed from an accident to a homicide investigation. We all just want to get to the bottom of this.” His tone was soft and kind.

Jackie nodded and reached for the box of tissues on the table.

Detective Andrews stood and then handed Jackie his business card. “I won’t take up anymore of your time. Please call me if you think of anything that could be of help.” He put his hand on her shoulder and walked out the door.

Jackie left his office in a daze and tried to retrace her steps down the corridor alone. As she exited the door, Daniel stood waiting for her. “Jackie, you look as though you’ve just seen a ghost.”

“I need a drink.”

“We haven’t even had lunch yet.” Daniel’s lips curved up as he put a friendly arm around her, trying to lighten the mood.

* * *

Daniel parked the car in front of his house and looked over at Jackie who was struggling with her seatbelt.

“Let me help you with that.” Unbuckling her belt, he put his warm hand over her cold one. “You’re trembling, Jackie. Let’s get you inside.”

Once in the house, Daniel seated her at the kitchen table and gave her a quick kiss on the cheek. “Since Sophia has the day off, why don’t I make you something to eat?”

Her shoulders relaxed instantly. “You can cook?”

“Jesus. I am capable of putting a sandwich together. Would you like ham and cheese or peanut butter and jelly?”

“Peanut butter and jelly sounds delicious,” she mocked as her eyes shut tight.

“I think that will be enough out of you, young lady.” There was a gleam in Daniel’s eyes as he quickly prepared her lunch.

Jackie stared down at the sandwich that was neatly cut into four sections, and then focused her light brown eyes on his bright blue ones as he knelt beside her. “Joey and I didn’t have a conventional marriage.”

“I always wondered if you practiced domestic discipline.”

“We did.” Her expression was a mixture of surprise and embarrassment. “I can’t believe you’re familiar with the lifestyle.”

“I’ve done some research on it, but didn’t think it was my place to ask questions about your personal life.” He stood up and stretched his back after kneeling in an uncomfortable position.

“I have a question for you right now. Why didn’t you give me a heads-up before my meeting with Detective Andrews?”

“I’m sorry, I tried to prepare you for what the detective had to say, but he specifically asked that I not give you details.” He pulled out a chair next to her and sat down.

“The detective was, obviously, anxious to see my reaction.”

“Jackie, they’ve been questioning me all along because they seem to think that I was the target of the explosion, with Christina and Joey being collateral damage. But since I’ve been talking to them, I can’t come up with anyone that would have wanted to hurt me – let alone kill me. Detective Andrews theorizes that either someone could have benefited by my death

financially or somehow I had a disgruntled client who wanted to exact revenge. I admit not everything I've done professionally has worked out, but the vast majority of clients have done quite well by me." Daniel paused for a moment. "I do have some rather hefty insurance policies, but the beneficiary is the corporation and not any one individual. As far as my personal wealth - Joey and Christina were named in my will, and they were both on that boat. So I'm as much in the dark as everyone else."

"I'm not really hungry, Daniel," Jackie said in a small voice, moving the plate away.

"Come on, just eat a little bit." Daniel picked up the sandwich and encouraged her to take a bite.

"Will you share with me?"

"I would be happy to." They shared the single sandwich in silence and then he suggested that she should lie down for a while.

Once in her room, she unbuttoned her blouse and lowered herself onto the bed. Like so many other times over the past several years, she felt the immediate need to relieve her mounting stress. Jackie's left hand made contact with her breast and she lightly flicked her nipple, hardening it through the satin bra. Instantly, she began searching her mind for an old erotic daydream. But instead of Joey, Daniel came into focus. Her right hand automatically moved under the tight leggings and rested just above an elastic panty line, but not for long. Slender fingertips slowly wandered outside the cotton crotch, and images of Daniel lightly kissing her lips suddenly flashed into her mind. Without even thinking, her pointer finger and thumb went into motion, tweaking the taut nipple harder and harder, as her fingers wasted no time pulling the wet cotton aside. She slid her finger up and down her slick entrance and furiously circled her swollen, hard flesh. Finally, with an abrupt force, her hips lifted off the bed and she trembled with an orgasmic tremor. Slowly her body's tension released and settled back down on the sheets. Her heart was beating fast, but the stress was magically gone. This works every time, she thought to herself.

As her breathing returned to normal, she buttoned her long shirt. Looking up, she was startled by a large figure in the doorway. Daniel had a strong face with a defined, slightly pointed chin and a sturdy jaw line that seemed to be clenched at that moment. He comfortably leaned on the doorpost with his arms crossed.

"How long have you been standing there?"

His cornflower blue eyes burned a hole into her golden brown ones.

“Jesus. I guess I have my answer.” Her cheeks flushed bright red.

“You know better,” he said softly, not taking his eyes off her.

“You are not my husband,” she retorted.

“That’s true.” He patiently waited to see where the conversation was headed.

“Is this a classic case of your house and your rules?”

“We can keep the same ones you’ve always had, young lady.” He paused. “That is, if you still want them.”

A chill raced through her body. She was too unnerved to speak.

“Is this what you want, Jackie? Is this what you’re looking for?”

She slowly nodded.

He smiled, turned and walked away.

* * *

Daniel returned to his office and sat down in a large, leather swivel chair. Switching on the computer, he heard a noise behind him and turned around. Jackie was standing in the doorway.

“Don’t you think we should talk about this?” Her lips formed an anxious smile as she nervously twirled her short hair.

“I’d love to, but it would be nice if you came closer.” He motioned with a curving finger for her to stand by his side.

She inhaled a deep breath and blew it out before slowly walking across the large room. “We’ve known each other for a long time ...”

He playfully checked his watch. “It’s been over twenty-five years.”

“People will talk ...”

“And what will they say, Jackie? That a widow and widower for the last five years, who’ve been friends for a quarter of a century, want to be together? We’ve always enjoyed each other’s company. Why should we continue to be lonely? I think even ‘Dear Abby’ would agree with me.”

She laughed. “You think, or you know?”

“I searched ‘dating after the death of a spouse’ on the Internet,” he admitted with a sheepish look on his handsome face.

“You didn’t.”

He nodded.

“And what did you find?” she asked with a tilt of her head.

“That there isn’t a set time the grieving spouse needs to wait to start dating. What’s most important is being ready.”

She moved closer to him, and he gently pulled her onto his lap. “I’m too old to play games, Jackie, and I never liked the dating process. Not even when I was younger. The bar scene always seemed like a meat market to me.”

“I shudder to think who I’d be matched up with on an Internet dating site.” They both laughed as she comfortably relaxed the back of her head into his warm, burly neck.

“Now, let’s talk about the house rules, Mrs. Bonerati.”

“Jesus, is it creepy that we have the same last name?” She squeezed her eyes shut and grinned.

He hugged her in a silent response.

She turned around to face him. “How much could you really know about the principles of domestic discipline? I’m assuming you and Christina never practiced.”

He shook his head. “I’ve always been interested in the lifestyle, but she didn’t care for the idea.” His voice was soft and sincere.

A thunderbolt sharply ran from her mind straight to her tender pussy.

He squeezed her tight and gently kissed her forehead. “Let’s go out to dinner tomorrow night. It can be our first official date. I’ve been studying the subject of DD, and I’m willing to bet that all the rules you had when you were married to Joey will still be appropriate.”

“Imagine, a busy man like you researching the standards of domestic discipline,” she joked. “By the way, Joey had a hard rule against that little ‘self pleasuring’ moment of mine that you stumbled on earlier because he felt like I was depriving him of something.”

“As I said before, the special code you lived by will be perfectly acceptable to me. Of course, a verbal agreement from you wouldn’t hurt.”

“Okay.” Her voice was low-pitched as she slid off his lap and headed toward the door.

“Oh, and one more thing.”

She stopped and turned to face him.

“The next time I catch your fingers wandering, guess what will happen?”

“You’re going to make me say it, aren’t you?” A lovely shade of red crept up her neck.
He nodded and smiled.

“I will be spanked,” she said softly, turned and walked out of the room as a grin emerged across her face.