

# THEIR PARTNERSHIP

THE APPRENTICE, BOOK THREE



LYNN FOREST

BLUSHING BOOKS

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## CHAPTER 1



*A*licia Brighton walked with cautious, halting steps down the wet sidewalk as midnight neared. Not only did the rain and cloudy sky add to the foreboding feel of the poorly lit street, there was heavy fog that would not allow her to see anything further than thirty feet away.

For that matter, she did not know what city she was in, or how she had come to be there. The fog and the architecture made her think that perhaps she could be in London. But there were no nearby voices to be heard, that would have allowed her to detect an accent. And she was frustrated to see that there were no signs of any type indicating location.

All that she could remember was that she was suddenly walking down the street, having no recollection of anything before. There was no memory of her life, and she did not even know her name. She was simply a woman walking down an unfamiliar street, having no knowledge of who or what may have been around her.

The only sounds to be heard were the distant bark of a dog, and an angry man's voice somewhere down the block. But she was not able to make out anything that was being said in anger, not even a hint as to what language was being shouted.

She took a deep breath and began to walk forward in stark fear. She thought that she heard an extra footstep, so she stopped and held her breath. Nothing. Several more steps forward, and another mysterious extra click of a heel on the sidewalk. She halted once again and listened breathlessly. And once again, nothing.

Now, the shouting was gone, and there was no dog barking. Through the fog she could see dim evidence of lights from buildings along the street, but she did not know if any of them would provide a welcome greeting or safety. Another extra step, and another pause in her progress to listen. There was nothing to hear but her own ragged halting breaths.

Before she realized what was happening, she was blocked by three robed women. Not a word was said, but all three gestured to a set of stairs leading to a subterranean level. Although there was silence, she was able to sense their thoughts: "Will you go to him?"

Her heart was racing in anxiety, but still she felt a compulsion to follow. She held her breath and nodded slowly, and in the next moment she was being gently escorted down a concrete stairway. A door opened and clicked closed behind her and her escorts, and she was immediately greeted in the darkness by the aroma of a musty cellar.

She began to feel a compelling sense of being aroused. She found that maddening, because for all that she knew, she was in the presence of no one familiar to her.

Another set of hands tied a cloth around her face, muffling her voice, and then a blindfold was gently placed over her eyes. She was then slowly placed across what felt like a wide table, her arms outstretched and her torso bent at the waist.

A state of panic overwhelmed her. Her sudden muffled sounds of anxiety were of no avail. Her garbled attempts at calling for help took on a more high-pitched tone as she felt shackles being fastened around her wrists, her long, elegant dress folded up onto her back, and her panties lowered.

All of a sudden, she seemed to have been abandoned in her terrifying and vulnerable state. But while she could not speak, and her sight was taken from her, she could at least still hear. And what she heard were slow, methodical footsteps approaching from the front, shuffling footsteps whose cadence betrayed a familiarity.

Suddenly, there were fingertips reaching for her blindfold and removing it, her long brown hair falling freely upon the table upon which she was imprisoned. As her eyes adjusted to the dim light provided by nothing more than a candle in two corners of the room, she was able to see a male figure, commanding in its mere presence standing in front of her, clad in a black robe of some sort, and wearing a mask across the upper half of his face.

The image of the robed figure brought her immediate calm. Suddenly, she felt protected, regardless of how she had been secured and partially disrobed.

The man's hands reached to the mask he wore and pushed it upward, and Alicia gasped to see that the robed, masked figure was no one other than her husband, Donovan. Donovan Brighton... the only familiar element in her surroundings. Now her arousal made sense to her, being in the presence of her lover.

She felt as confused as she was pleased. How had Donovan brought her to this place of mystery? Why could she remember who he was and what they enjoyed together, but nothing before that moment?

He knelt on the floor and reached for something in front of the table, then held up in front of her a flogger of narrow leather strips for her to examine and consider. After a moment, she shook her head slowly back and forth.

The flogger was lowered, and he next held up a paddle, featuring three lines of drilled holes for both psychological and sensory effects. But once again, she shook her head.

The next item that hovered in front of her eyes was a tied bundle of birch branches, tightly compressed into a very

threatening weapon of chastisement. She felt sudden tremors of excitement simply at seeing what was certain to be a stinging tool of discipline in the hands of the one man she always submitted to, the man she yearned to chastise her. That is, if it was indeed Donovan, and not some imposter there to take advantage of her trust.

This time, as a moan of anticipation and a smile escaped her lips, she slowly nodded her approval. The fact that she had never experienced the sensation of a birch bundle being whipped across her bottom caused her pulse to race.

Donovan, or whoever was present and resembling him, came to stand behind her and to her left, and began to draw the bundle of rough branches back and forth across her bare bottom. She turned her head to look backward as the bundle was raised into the air, then came down in a mighty arc toward her bare and defenseless... "Mama... Mama be awake!"

Still half asleep, momentarily confused, and still frightened but mainly aroused by her dream, Alicia sat up as her mind cleared and picked up the laughing toddler who was jumping up and down at her bedside. She picked up little Malcolm and cuddled him, while Donovan laid down on the bed next to her holding the baby, Susan. At least once per week, Donovan attempted to start her day out in such a heartwarming manner, everyone she loved the most, the only ones she really needed, all snuggled together in a way that made her world seem just so right.

The entire family laughed and hugged, and Alicia turned to her husband, her heart full of love and gratitude toward him, "How did I end up over sleeping like this? Are you trying to spoil your wife? If you are, I love it." She glanced down with a wide smile at the laughing children who were rolling around the bed trying to cope with the tickling fingertips of their parents. "I certainly would like to show you exactly how much I appreciate being spoiled like this, but I don't think that's quite possible right now."

Donovan laughed and patted her on the hip. "I will claim a rain check on that, but don't lose that thought. You see, I woke up first, so I turned off the alarm. I know that you got up at least three times during the night to check on Susan when she was crying, so I decided to let you sleep in and get some rest. They have both been fed, and I even managed bath time all by myself, just like an actual, highly trained, responsible, adult parent."

Alicia laughed at his description of himself and finally looked at the clock, and gasped to see that she had spent so much of the Saturday morning in bed. "Oh, Donny... I hope you didn't cancel any appointments or rearrange your work plans just so that I could sleep. I would not want to keep my all-star private investigator from getting his work done."

He leaned over and kissed her, then placed the squirming Susan on her stomach alongside the increasingly sleepy Malcolm who was nearly ready for his morning nap. "The investigations can wait. It is a rare, unplanned weekend day for me. It's kind of unfortunate that weekend days are the most fruitful for surveilling cheating spouses. But that's when people have the free time to go out and get themselves into trouble, and when they kind of let their guard down.

"But for some reason, it has worked out that this is one weekend without my having to be anywhere but with you, my wonderfully hot little wife. And this weekend, you and I are going to have some quiet time.

"In fact, you will be hopefully pleased to know that, after lunch your parents are coming to pick up the kids to spend the rest of the day, tonight and all day tomorrow at their house. And they're not bringing the babies back until after dinner tomorrow evening."

Alicia's response was immediate, "Oh, Donny... I would really feel more relaxed if they could just stay with the Lowery's. Do you really think that little Susan is old enough to be gone overnight?" Nancy and Frank Lowery were a recently retired couple who

helped take care of the farm, and Nancy had served as a housekeeper and babysitter for the Brighton family for decades. Their living quarters were an addition to the house in which Donovan had grown up and he and Alicia lived.

Donovan sighed and grinned, "Of course, Susan can go and spend the night with her grandparents. I think that if we don't let your mother and father take them home overnight soon, they're going to get jealous of the Lowery's."

Alicia displayed a concerned expression, and before she could speak, Donovan had playfully placed his fingers across her lips. "I know that you always feel confident having Nancy watch the kids with their living quarters being right here on the farm. It is a wonderful convenience for all of us.

"You know and I know, Susan is now old enough to spend the night with grandparents that are only barely six miles away. And just wait until our little Malcolm sees the bright blue new sandbox that is awaiting him at their house. These little tykes and their grandparents deserve another chance to spoil each other rotten."

Alicia appeared to be less than convinced. "I know what you are saying is logically correct. And I don't have any hesitation about Malcolm going there overnight. But Susan is so little, and she just got over a cold last week. I'm still nervous about it. Keep talking, Donny, keep trying to convince me."

Even though neither of the children would understand what he was about to say, Donovan nonetheless leaned his lips toward Alicia's ear and whispered, "I think we deserve to spend a weekend lounging around in our pajamas, sipping on wine and nibbling on cheese and crackers while we watch old movies on our new television in our bedroom." He placed his lips right next to her ear and whispered, "Besides, I think that someone we know is long overdue for a good bottom warming."

Alicia arched her eyebrows above a sinister smile. "Someone we know, did you say?"



Donovan nodded with a gleam in his eye. "Someone we know very well."

Alicia chewed on her lower lip, and then winked at her husband. "Someone who deserves a good spanking, or needs a good spanking, or maybe would just enjoy a good spanking?"

Donovan nodded slowly. "We may be thinking of the very same person."

Alicia purred softly, "And if we're thinking about the same person, she may benefit from it happening more than once."

Donovan looked at her with steely eyes above his sly grin. "I will confide to you that I'm talking about my assistant investigator. And I'm happy that she likes to be spanked, because she has the most luscious behind I have ever seen."

Alicia winked at her husband as she hugged their baby girl to her chest. "Then I need to make sure that for the entire weekend he gets full access to it in every way that he desires."

Donovan laughed as he held Malcolm up in the air and made an airplane sound to entertain the little boy. "Sounds like someone intends to show me a good time."

Alicia responded with a mischievous grin, "It's just that I know so many of your favorite things to do when we're alone. You are hardly a difficult man to keep entertained." She looked at him again and grinned. "I guess it's kind of like what mating with a caveman could have been like."

He shook a scolding finger at her. "Now, that was nothing but rude. Though I'm going to put these two little rug rats down for their naps, and while you take a nice relaxing shower, I'm going to prepare you a breakfast that will hardly be justified by your uncalled for slights directed at your emotionally fragile husband."



TWENTY MINUTES LATER, Alicia sat at the breakfast nook in her bathrobe and enjoyed the lavish breakfast her multitasking

husband had managed to prepare for her while also taking care of the babies. His most challenging tasks of the day over, Donovan sat back in his chair and relaxed with a cup of coffee.

Suddenly, Alicia put down her fork and reached across the table and took his hand in hers. "I still think you are spoiling me rotten this weekend. After all, you let me sleep in this morning, do all kinds of things with the babies, have breakfast waiting for me and now you have arranged for my parents to take them for overnight? You are very special."

Donovan nodded, "That does happen to be correct. I am very special." Both of them began to laugh before he resumed, "I also happen to be very horny, and I thought that maybe you are too, and I thought it was time for us to have some time to ourselves. It's not as if we don't have two older couples at our disposal who are chomping at the bit on a daily basis to keep the babies for us. We should take advantage of that more often."

Alicia closed her eyes and murmured as if in a dream state, "Oh, gosh, yes. I don't care how much you love your children; I think that every set of parents needs the time to reconnect with each other. Sometimes you just need some time to talk."

Donovan rested on his elbows, leaned forward and smiled. "To talk of important global matters."

Now, Alicia leaned forward on her elbows. "To consider the future of the American economy."

Donovan leaned his head back and placed his fingertips to his lips as he thought. "To ponder the role of Western civilization in a world of advanced technology."

Alicia lowered her head and looked at him through narrowed eyes. "To consider all of the reasons for you to give me a damned good spanking." Both of them disintegrated into laughter.

Alicia caught her breath and a wistful expression crossed her face. "It's funny, because we haven't been married that long, but having that second child really does complicate things more. Of

course, most of the ways are wonderful. I'm just so happy to have those two great, little babies.

"It's just a fact of life, that everything changes. I mean, it's not as easy for us to do the simple things like just go for a walk. It was one thing to put Malcolm in the stroller, but now there are two of them.

"And you remember when we just had Malcolm, and we wanted to go somewhere, it only took a few minutes to gather everything together and put him in his car seat and we could take off. Now, sometimes it's easier just to put things off instead of bundling up two of them, and wrestling with a double stroller to put in the back of the car."

She began to laugh and shake her head. "You may not believe this, but one thing that I really miss is target practice."

Donovan nodded and grinned, "You were getting to be pretty good with a pistol. I am a little concerned that you may be getting rusty and out of practice, but I know that it's just not as practical for you to walk around armed as it used to be. But don't think for one moment that you're not making great contributions to our business. You may not be going out on much field stuff right now because of the babies, but I still consider you to be my apprentice, as well as my researcher and office manager."

She leaned back and folded her arms. "I will confess that there are times when I kind of daydream about getting back out on cases. Of course, it was a little inconvenient having to have Nancy watch Malcolm for me to go out on a surveillance. After all, you had just started training me to do that for the first time after my abduction." She slinked down in her chair slightly. "My second abduction."

Donovan nodded to her with confidence. "When the children are older, you can really get into stuff outside of our house and the office. But still, between your mother and Nancy, you should be able to get out more and do some things you would like to do. Maybe there's some volunteer work or something you would be interested in."

Alicia frowned, "But it was more fun to do stuff where you got

to carry a revolver. If you volunteer at the library or something like that, I don't think they let you carry a revolver."

Donovan laughed, "I'm certain that you will find some things to do that interest you. But you do need to get out more."

Alicia's face turned pink, "But do you want to know something I miss more than some other things? I always really, really loved it when Nancy would watch Malcolm for a while and we went out to the barn to shoot.

"Even though my mom has carried a gun for a long time, she never really mentioned it, and neither of my parents ever really had an interest in them. And I guess that I always was kind of vulnerable to hearing everybody talk about how evil it was to like guns, and of course, when I went to college, all of my instructors were totally opposed to guns.

"But even as a recreational thing, it was just a lot of fun. I suppose it would be a lot like archery. But after you started teaching me to shoot, I really looked forward to the next time.

"Don't get me wrong, I really got to be fascinated by learning to shoot accurately, and learning the different kinds of guns and how they were alike and different. I must admit, there was especially something about firing a large caliber revolver that is just such a rush for me."

She leaned forward and spoke more softly, "But what I really miss the most, is when we would go out to practice shooting, and the next thing we knew we got distracted. There was something about fooling around out there, making creative use of those hay bales, and that one time with those chains hanging from the ceiling... I'm sure you remember that."

Malcolm nodded and growled appreciatively, "And I'm certain that the horses found it all very entertaining. I know, I sure did. Just having you suspended like that while we... wow."

Her face turned even a darker shade of pink. "It just seems like it's been so long since I've been screwed in the barn."

Donovan pursed his lips and shrugged his shoulders. "I guess

that's a new term for it I haven't heard before. So that's what they're calling it these days?"

Alicia stared at him for a moment, finally sighing loudly and shaking her head in mock disgust before picking up a leftover morsel of scrambled egg and tossing it at him.

She then folded her arms and leaned back in her chair and scowled at him. "Donovan Brighton. You just think that you are so darned funny, now don't you?" She then burst into giggles. "I think it's wonderful that we're both willing to be creative, sort of experimental when it comes to our romance. Let everybody else be mundane in bed. I want for us to live it up."

Donovan reached for her and guided her to rest on his lap. "I think I am very fortunate to be married to a lady who is unpredictable in bed, quite excitable and usually quite eager."

Alicia laughed. "I'm eager unless you've had too much wine and want to fool around. Then it's like I'm trying to control having sex with a jackhammer."

He feigned a hurt look. "That's two brutal comments in ten minutes. You're going to make me cry."

She kissed him and stroked his cheek. "But really, baby, you are a fine craftsman in the bedroom, an artist at bringing forth the female climax. You never fail to make my toes curl."

He waved away the compliment. "You just like me because you think I give a good spanking."

Alicia laughed and reached her arms out in a pleading manner. "That's a major thing for me. Paddle my ass just right and everything else seems to take care of itself."

Donovan shook his head. "You are incorrigible."

Alicia looked down as if ashamed. "Very true, Donny. I suppose that I should be spanked a few times this weekend for saying that."



JUST AS ALICIA and Donovan were done packing the diaper bags for

their children, Ed and Susan Langford pulled up in front of their house. Malcolm watched impatiently through the glass door, waiting for them to get out of the car before he erupted, "Mamaw... Papaw... Mamaw... Papaw... ride... ride."

They waved to him immediately, and then the enthusiastic grandparents walked briskly up the steps to the front door which was already being held open by Donovan, and through which Malcolm had already escaped into his grandfather's arms.

Still somewhat reluctant about the babies leaving the farm for the night, Alicia struggled to convince herself that she was simply being overly cautious. Her mother could see the hint of anxiety in her daughter's face, and walked over to Alicia and gave her a hug. "We won't take them away if you have changed your mind about it all, dear."

Alicia took a deep breath and shook her head back and forth rapidly. "No, no. It's just that Susan has never been away from the farm overnight, and I know that she is old enough to go with her grandparents. I'm just being silly and way too sentimental."

Now, her father walked over and gave her a hug of his own. "Now, Alicia, we understand. But remember, we raised you and took care of you when you were a baby, and you turned out just fine, now didn't you?"

Alicia gave an exaggerated shrug of her shoulders and reached her arms out as if asking a question of the others. Donovan began to laugh at his wife's antics. "Don't blow it now, Ed. Even I'm starting to have second thoughts, now that you asked the question that way."

They all laughed, and then Alicia made the final move indicating acceptance of the arrangements as she handed Ed the favorite stuffed animal of the jabbering Malcolm, and the yawning little Susan went into her grandmother's arms while Donovan picked up the diaper bags and the portable crib to carry out to their vehicle.

After hugs and small talk, and yet another brief session of three other adults assuring Alicia that baby Susan was ready for an

overnight visit, the parents stood in the driveway and watched as the Ford SUV drove slowly away down the long lane toward the highway. Alicia continued to wave long after any of them in the car could see her.

Once the vehicle was out of sight, Alicia laughed and turned toward Donovan and wiped away some final tears. "Okay, okay, I know. I suppose that now I'll be okay. Or at least sort of, I guess."

Donovan put his arm around her and gave her a squeeze. "Something tells me that it won't take more than a few minutes, and you'll find yourself much more relaxed about everything. And each time we do this, it will get easier."

Alicia nodded and looked up at him and smiled. "It's funny, but just the fact that they have left and that is over with, I'm already starting to unwind. Now, I don't have to argue with myself about it anymore."

Donovan gave her another squeeze. "That's right, and every minute that goes by, it will bother you less. So, you just go ahead and keep unwinding."

She looked up at him and winked. "I think we always both kind of like it when I unwind."

Donovan shook his head enthusiastically. "We all know an unwound, relaxed Alicia is a fun Alicia."

She looked at him with wide eyes. "And when Alicia is in the fun mood, who else has a good time?"

He leaned down and growled seductively, "Donovan has a good time." He gave her a pat on the bottom. "Now, Donovan and Alicia have a lot of free time together."

She stood on her tip toes, put her arms around him and kissed him. "Poor, poor, Donovan. His fun parts are going to get all worn out this weekend."

He began nibbling on her ear, and she found herself pressing up against him. "You see, Alicia, you're already getting over it."

She leaned her head against his chest and began to murmur in pleasure, "I guess that all I really need to be thinking about is that

my big strong husband is planning on having his way with me, probably several times."

Donovan began to laugh, then he drew her into his arms, wrapped them around her and gave her a tight hug. "And what are we going to do about that, young lady? That's the second time today you have made it a point that I understand just how ravenous you are feeling."

Alicia displayed a warm smile, and then began to flutter her eyelashes. She reached her arms around him again. "Actually, I've kind of been a bit of a horny mess ever since this morning. Maybe someday I'll tell you about the hot and sexy dream I was having when Malcolm woke me up."

Donovan placed his hands on each of her cheeks and kissed her. "I'm so happy you are the way you are."

Alicia giggled, "The way I am?"

Donovan murmured in her ear, "Frequently horny."

Alicia laughed as she voiced her agreement, "I think we've been lucky in that respect. Some other mothers of young children have told me that their libidos sometimes go over a cliff, maybe out of fatigue."

"I know that we have to catch our opportunities here and there, when and where we can. It makes mommy and daddy alone time like this special."

They joined hands and began to walk toward the house. Right when they reached the front door, Donovan swept her up in his arms, opened the door and carried her inside. The very aroused and enchanted Alicia pointed toward a stairway, "Please, sir. Take me to my bathtub. I need to be soaked and scented."

Donovan pressed his lips to hers as he began to carry her up the stairs. "What else can I do for you, my eager one?"

She squinted as she thought, "Let's see... I have to make my immediate transition from prim and proper mother to the wanton harlot you need and deserve for two days."

He laughed and shook his head as he opened the bathroom



door, gently set her to stand on the floor, then watched in amusement as she tilted her head upward, placed a fingertip to her lips as she considered his question. Finally, her eyebrows arched and she nodded her head. "Just bring me a T-shirt... I don't need anything more than a T-shirt. That will be my uniform of the day, the evening, the overnight and the morning."

Donovan bowed, and began to reach for the door, but he immediately felt her tug at his elbow. She stood on her tip toes and drew him into a long hard kiss. "Just the two of us: all afternoon, all night, all morning. Please, don't let this be a dream. This has to be for real."

Donovan drew her to his chest and stroked her hair. "I promise, this is real."

She nodded toward the waiting bathtub. "I don't often get a chance to take a nice long warm bath."

Donovan replied with a guttural growl, "And what am I going to do with you when your bath is over?"

Alicia leaned up and kissed him once again, then dissolved into giggles, "Why, you're going to give me a very warm, happy and playful, afternoon spanking to celebrate our quiet time together."

Donovan winked at her and leaned down and placed a kiss on her forehead. "But how are we going to spend our evening?"

Alicia tilted her head and winked at him in return. "You are going to spank me good night to end our day right. Of course, that probably will not likely be the last thing we do tonight."

Donovan summoned up a theatrical scowl of confusion. "But what about tomorrow morning? What on earth are we going to do then?"

Alicia placed her hands on her hips and looked at him with a mock expression of frustration. "You're going to give me a fun little good morning spanking to start my day off just right. Because I'm really feeling horny, and we haven't been able to do a lot of loud things with those two, little people around. So, we're going to make up for lost time."

Both of them burst into laughter, as Alicia began to get undressed, and Donovan knelt down by the tub to start her bath water, adjusting the temperature just the way she always liked it. Before he stood, he peppered her bare bottom with kisses and playful, light bites as she squealed in delight.