

Chapter 1

Lynda was fussing with the hors d'oeuvres for the tenth time, checking the flowers and decorations with more than her usual pre-entertaining nerves. But then this was no ordinary party. Months ago she had promised herself that somehow she would find a way back to the living but surely there had to be a better way than this! At least Sean, her seventeen-year-old son, was safely away at his friend Paul's house for the next several hours. She still wasn't sure how she had been talked into hosting this event. It was the third glass of wine that had done her in. Clearly three glasses of wine was past her limit because it was after that, that she had made the smart ass comment to the girls, "What exactly is an adult toy anyway?" Now here she was, despite being celibate since her husband's death over two years ago, hosting a pleasure party of all things. The girls had better damn well show up and not leave her alone with all that 'stuff', she thought. At the very least it would make good material for one of her bodice ripper novels. She'd never imagined beginning a new career as a romance novelist in her forties but this was probably the only good thing that came from David's death, the financial freedom to pursue her dream of writing. The pain of losing David was only bearable because miraculously Sean had escaped from the car

accident unscathed. Channeling all that pain, all the lost dreams into her writing and knowing her son would live a long healthy life kept her going.

Lingerie, lotions and toys—some of which she wasn't sure she wanted to understand—filled her living room. Madonna's VH-2 collection was thumping in the background and she was surrounded by honey dust and handcuffs and that pink bumpy vibrating ring thing. She wondered yet again, how did this happen to me.

"David, this is all your fault," she muttered to herself.

Heather, the minister's wife, almost spit out her wine as she laughed. "Really, Lynda, David's been gone two years. I don't think you can blame hosting a pleasure party at your house on poor David, God rest his soul."

"Well, it certainly can't be my fault, can it? Besides, what exactly is clitoral stimulant anyway?" The little white bottle in her hand was promising almost-forgotten pleasures.

Rachel, the British expatriate educator for the evening, explained. It was amazing to Lynda how nothing sounded dirty in an English accent. Heather grabbed the test bottle out of Lynda's hands and headed to the bathroom.

"Let's see if this stuff really works," she said.

The ladies all laughed in wonder. "I think we should've advertised this as a way to get new parishioners," Charlotte said.

"The Episcopal Church wants you!" said Diane.

"Wants you!" cackled Shelly, Lynda's best friend.

"Wants you to be really happy!" Lynda added. "More wine, anyone?"

As several glasses rose into the air, Heather returned. "Oooh, it's like Icy Hot!"

"All right, girls," Rachel said as she returned to business. She had her products to sell after all. "Now, vibrators have come a long way in recent years."

Several of Lynda's friends nodded knowingly. Lynda said, "I feel like a virgin. I might as well be one. It's been two years since David died and only now am I buying my first vibrator."

"This one was quite popular; see how many directions it moves in," Rachel continued. "This is a good model for ummm ..."

"Marital replacement therapy," said soon-to-be-divorced Shelly.

"Um, quite. Here, Lynda, hold this for a moment, will you, while I get some

other models.” Rachel searched in one of her big black bags of pleasure while she continued talking. “It is quite pretty. It’s pink. It’s got a bunny with ears that wiggle, the top few inches rotate around 360° and vibrate, and there are those beads for extra width.”

Lynda smiled. “This has possibilities. Hey, I wonder what this button does? Oh my gosh, the whole thing is a vibrating orgasm machine.”

Hoots of laughter filled Lynda’s house as her jaw dropped and her eyes widened. “What do you think, girls, should I get me one of these?”

Click.

“That was the front door closing, right?” she said.

Everyone quickly looked down at their toes; their shoulders shaking with barely contained laughter as Lynda turned around to face her 6’2” 17-year-old son. He towered over her little 5’4” body, looking at the big pink bunny vibrator humming in her hand.

He closed his blue-gray eyes tightly and said, “I don’t want to know.”

Lynda’s face felt hot to the touch. “Okay, we’ll talk later.”

“Hope not,” he said, as he politely raced to his room.

Lynda sank into the nearest seat, vibrator still humming. “I think I’ll have another glass of wine now.”

A few hours later, as Lynda finished cleaning up the last of the dishes from her inaugural Pleasure Party, she looked around her home—the home that she and David had loved so much. This was the home that they bought art for together, the home that they brought Sean home from the hospital to, the home that they lived, loved, fought, and made up in. It was her home now—hers and Sean’s, but really it was hers. The only thing she’d changed was the new bedroom set she’d bought herself a couple of months ago. She’d always wanted a big four-poster bed and she loved having girly sheets and shams and comforters on it. She loved filling her bedroom with the fresh scent of lavender.

“Oh, quit stalling,” she said to herself as she wrung the dishtowel in her hands for the tenth time. She squared her shoulders and with a final sigh, mounted a half flight of stairs in her split-level home to Sean’s room.

She knocked on his door.

“Is dinner ready yet? I’m starved,” Sean said as he opened the door, not quite meeting his mother’s eye.

“No. You were supposed to be at Paul’s for dinner, remember? But you can scavenge in the kitchen later.”

“Something came up with his girlfriend and he bailed on me,” Sean said.

Lynda paused. “We should talk.”

Sean shifted his weight from side to side, his eyes darting around, searching for escape. Finding none, he began to retreat. “Really,” he blurted, “Mom, it’s okay. I mean, I tried not to think about it—hard not to, but I mean I guess it’s okay for you to ... Well, I don’t know what exactly, but that’s good too. I mean I’ll respect your privacy ...” He backed into his bed and slumped down on it.

Lynda walked into his room and pulled his desk chair out and sat on it, facing her son.

“I’m glad you’ll respect my privacy, but at the same time I want you to be okay with the fact that I need it.” She took a deep breath and forced herself to look into her son’s eyes, David’s eyes. “You know I will always love your dad ...”

“Mom, really, you don’t have to do this, it’s cool.” His eyes begged her to stop.

“But he’s dead. And, well, I’m not. And I have to find a way to live a full life. You’re almost grown, almost gone, and I don’t want to be alone forever. I liked being married. I liked being a woman.”

“Oh God.” Sean looked around in desperation.

Lynda sighed. “I don’t want to be numb inside, and an important part of me almost died with your father. I’m trying to figure out how to bring it back to life. I may even want to start dating soon.”

“Dating? Dating I can handle, I think.” He paused. “Yeah, I can handle that. I mean, Dad would want you to be happy, but you better make sure you are treated well or I’ll have something to say about it.”

“I should hope so.” She paused. “No one could ever replace your dad, you know.”

“I know.”

Lynda got up and turned to leave.

“Mom?”

“Yeah?”

“Was Reverend John’s wife really here?”

“Yup!”

Sean got up to go to the kitchen.

“Do girls really ... um ... do ... that?”

“Do what exactly?” Lynda smiled.

“Um, you know ... take care of things themselves?”

“Some do, more should. Heaven knows it takes most men long enough to learn how a woman works, if they ever do.” Lynda laughed to herself seeing Sean’s stunned silence. She smiled as she went to the kitchen to feed her ever-hungry son. Things would really be okay after all.