



Better The Devil You Know
by
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Chapter 1

Every novelist knows that it is the kiss of death to write about window gazing in her opening sentence. Evelyn Erikson, age twenty-seven and current resident of Cherry Tree Cottage on top of Beech Hill, didn't know this. In fact Evelyn knew remarkably little about the nuts and bolts of writing, despite having three books hovering in or around the bestseller list. This day held all the promise that only a young day can, and the unpalatable, cooling coffee was her reason for remaining rooted at the dining table watching that promise unfold.

Jake padded in from the garden and sat in front of her chair demanding attention. He looked uncommonly girly, sitting with his great, big head adorned with lavender blooms and cocked enquiringly to the right. Eve laughed despite her mood.

"You've had your nosy snout in that lavender bush again, haven't you?" She said in a mock reproving voice. "Those bees'll have you and then you'll be sorry."

Jake grinned and chuffed at Eve, he was a clever German Shepherd and he knew the 'Bee' word.

Bees: fat things that don't make sense to a logic seeking dog. They shouldn't be able to fly with that round, furry body and tiny, thin wings. It's not right that they should be able to fly and Jake can't. Hmmm they taste good though and it makes his humans laugh when he pulls funny faces as he tries to eat one. Jake forgets sometimes that he only has one human now. He used to have two. Jake mustn't forget that he only has one human, because Eve gets sad

when he goes round the house looking. But if Jake could find her, and bring her back, then Eve wouldn't be sad anymore. Jake thinks she's in that hole where they saw a mouse last year. That mouse went in the hole in the skirting boards and never came out again. It is all very confusing though when the whole house smells of her. Eve doesn't smell her everywhere like Jake does. Eve would whine all night too if she could smell her all the time and had an itch behind her ear. Bees shouldn't oughta fly like that; it's not right.

Eve put her hand down and stroked the dog's head. The strawberries were almost ripe. *'She would have loved that,'* thought Eve; she would enjoy picking the first strawberries of the season for their tea. It was always quite an occasion apparently. The first ones would be ripe for picking next week, but it wouldn't be the same and Eve doubted that they would taste as sweet without Ellie there to enjoy them with her.

"Oh well Jakey boy, we can't sit here all day can we? I've made a momentous decision while you've been having fun without a care in the world. I'm going to start writing today."

Jake cocked his head again, deciphering the unfamiliar words from the ones he knew. There was no 'dinner' or 'out' in them, but sometimes humans disguised dinner and out so that they sounded like something else.

Eve got up from the table, and before she was even upright Jake was bouncing around like a puppy.

Oh yes, oh yes, this is it. This is the out. Out, out, out. Oh I'm so excited. We're going out. Do the round and round thing. Eve likes the round and round thing. Make Eve smile. Round and round. Round and round. Out. Out.

Out. No Eve that's the study. That's not out, that's Ellie's study. The front door's this way. Eve, Eve. Out. Look I'm wagging, I'm wagging Eve. Out. C'mon Eve, I'll teach you how to catch bees without them getting the ouch thing in you. Eve. Out. Oh sometimes humans are no fun.

Eve walked into Ellie's domain. This wasn't merely Ellie's room this room *was* Ellie. Ellie permeated the walls and infused the very air. Eve hadn't been in here much since... Well, now it was her room and she had to get used to that. Things were different now and she *is* Ellie. It felt strange becoming someone else. Evelyn Erikson had gradually taken the place of Eleanor. As long as Eve was Ellie, Ellie would never be dead.

Lowering herself into the swivel chair she took a deep, calming breath and Jake flopped down beside her. He sighed the sigh of a dog much older than his eight years and rolled his eyes to make his displeasure obvious. Five seconds later his heavy lids gave up the struggle to stay open and he fell asleep.

The computer's sensors had monitored Eve's approach and as she sat down it fired up. Eve envied the computer's ability to come alive within seconds of 'waking'. What the computer could achieve in thirty seconds, she aspired to only after a shower and three cups of strong coffee.

"Good morning Ellie." Said the computer-simulated voice.

"Good morning George," replied Eve. The new name was going to take some growing into.

"It is 8:54 am and the date is the 10th of June Two thousand and forty eight. What can I do for you this morning?" Asked the deep, though rather tinny, tones of the 'sex god in the box.' as they called him.

Eve slumped into the chair. The hairs on her arms began to rise and she was instantly transported back in her mind to another place, another time, another world where every morning an impersonal voice chanted the date and time at her. A place where she was a prisoner contained and controlled, unable even to think for herself. She wanted to run but her legs were leaden. She couldn't do this. She was mad to think that she could just sit here and continue where things had been left off. She raised her head and took some deep breaths. Jake alerted to the change in Eve's mood sat up, whined and cocked his head at his mistress in alarm. She *had* to do this; she owed it not only to herself but also to the only person in the world that she had ever loved. She would do this. She took one more deep inhalation just to check that she was calm and spoke in as reasonable a voice as possible to the computer.

“George, I will be coming in here at roughly this time every morning from now on. I only intend to say this once so I hope your receptors are focused to exactly what I am saying. I like your chirpy ‘Good Morning’ George, really I do. Sometimes yours will be the only voice apart from my own that I will hear in the course of the day. But, listen up my technological friend. If you ever tell me the date and time when I walk into the room again I will pull every single wire from your circuitry and stuff them so far down your memory hole that you will be choking on techno-spaghetti for a month. Do I make myself succinctly and unconditionally understood?”

The computerised voice was bristling with indignation when it replied “Well, there's no need to take that attitude I'm sure, I was only trying to be helpful,” it then lowered its voice to a mumble “Succinctly and unconditionally

understood. Huh anyone would think she's a writer."

Having done for the time being with whinging it raised its voice back to the default volume level "Will that be all for now Miss?"

"Oh George, drop the insulted affront or I'll pinch your emotion chip and use it for a solar token. Oh and remind me George to take a large sub-machine gun and shoot whoever it was who decided to give computers an emotion chip in the first place. It can be highly irritating. Right then George to business. I would like a squeaky clean, new document please. Today is the day I begin the new book."

"But Ellie you are only on chapter seven of 'Who Took The Morning Train' and if I might be so bold as to mention without endangering my delicate circuitry in your present mood, it is desperately in need of a decent edit."

Eve smiled despite herself. Sometimes it was hard to believe that blood and organs formed no part of the make-up of George. "New document please George and then that will be all thank-you."

"Very good Miss," said George in his finest simulation of the dutiful servant. "I'll just meld into the background then until the next time you feel the urgent desire to abuse me. Enjoy Ellie its good to be in service again." George brought up a new word processing document as requested and altered his status. The 'voice activation on stand by' icon appeared in the top right of the monitor screen.

"And George?" Said Eve bringing him back online.

"Yes?" he answered in a perfect long-suffering voice.

"I love you." Said Eve grinning, "Save every five minutes please, George."

"Will do Hun. Oh and you asked me to remind you to take a large sub-machine gun and shoot whoever it was

that gave computers emotion chips.” The screen momentarily went black and flashed with a huge red lips icon. The lips puckered and a large smacking sound crackled from the speakers they were replaced after five seconds with the document waiting to be written.

This time she laughed out loud “Bugger off George and let me work.” The hardware that produced the voice of the computer seemed to know just when she needed cheering up, and she contemplated the white screen still smiling.

Eve took a great lungful of air and began by writing her pen name in the header. ‘Eleanor Erikson’. The next five words produced the title. ‘Better The Devil You Know.’

In the body of the document she began the first sentence of the novel that *had* to be written, that *needed* to be told.

She began with the words.

“Every novelist knows that it is the kiss of death to write about window gazing in their opening sentence...”

Chapter 2

Ellie was tired, her head swam and her feet ached. No she decided 'to swim' was far too energetic a verb, her brain floundered against a tide of incoming exhaustion and she was just plain knackered.

It had been one of those long hard days that everybody moans about on a Wednesday evening. Not close enough to the beginning of the week to be enlivened from the weekend, and too far away from Friday to feel a lie-in in sight. Really of course, in her line of work it didn't matter much what day it was, being entirely her own boss was both a blessing and a curse. Today though she hadn't been working on her latest book, today she had been going five rounds with hospital bureaucracy. She locked the car and wondered who had called, the gate was open slightly and it was her habit to always close it properly.

She was still pondering the identity of the caller as she opened the front door to see a small white envelope on the mat. She winced slightly as she bent to pick it up and then her pain was forgotten as all her attention focused on the unexpected letter and who it might be from. The first thing she noticed was the small neat handwriting, in a style not unlike her own. The other thing that drew her attention was the fact that the letter had no stamps, it had been hand delivered.

Inside was a single sheet of simple white notepaper folded once widthways. Centralised on the paper and in the same handwriting as the envelope, was a single sentence. It said.

Better the devil you know.

Jake whined from behind the kitchen door. He had been locked up since nine-thirty that morning and his plaintive whimper told of the utmost distress.

“Alright big fella, Mum’s home. I’m coming to let you out,” said Ellie in a half-distracted voice.

This only served to make Jake’s plea sound even more urgent. She opened the door to be greeted enthusiastically by a six-stone furball, in the shape of a twelve-month old German shepherd dog. As she struggled to make her way to the back door with the dog leaping round her body and jumping up despite being constantly told that this was not a polite thing to do. Ellie crooned and spoke to him softly. If the dog noticed she seemed to have aged ten years since leaving the house that morning he was too well-mannered, in that respect at least, to let on. He just jumped and wagged and chuffed and preened, happy to know that he was a ‘Good Boy’. Finally Ellie managed to turn the key in the lock with stiff fingers and the dog shot to freedom. He made straight to the lavender bush to shoot a few of those pesky late summer bees with a mighty fine blast of his own special fertiliser.

As she stood watching the dog the phone began to ring. She made her way through to the study where the nearest phone extension was located. The day had taken its toll and Ellie’s footsteps were slow and laboured. She realised for the first time that over the coming months she would need telephone access in every room in the house. So far she had avoided the voice reactor telephones that worked through any building via the computer, but now it seemed she would have little choice but to move along with the newest technology. She picked up the phone on the eleventh ring and the receiver went dead in her hand. Three steps back

towards the kitchen and it demanded her attention with its persistent command once more. This time she caught it on only its second ring.

“Hello?”

After a slight pause she could hear slow rhythmic breathing.

“Hello?” she repeated a little more urgently. Then once again the connection was aborted.

“Bloody hell,” she swore aloud. “Wouldn’t you think they’d have the manners to at least explain if it’s a wrong number?”

While Ellie was making a cup of coffee, feeding the dog and fixing a sandwich for herself, Jake came in from the garden and dropped his rubber ring at her feet. He looked up at her expectantly wagging his tail, totally convinced that she was going to stop everything for an instant game of ‘fetch’. Then he smelled his food and all thoughts of the ring game went out of his mind in an instant. The abandoned toy lay at Ellie’s feet, perfectly positioned to trip her up had she not already seen it. Something else she was going to have to be more aware of in the future. Jake gave two single, curt barks clearly asking for his evening meal to be delivered to his feeding mat right this second. Ellie grinned at the mutt and complied. She patted him lovingly on his head as his nose dropped greedily into the dish.

So often these days Ellie couldn’t be bothered to fix a proper meal for herself in the evenings. Tonight though she was so fatigued and mind-weary that she could barely be bothered to eat at all, even though her growling stomach had been reminding her for the last three hours that it hadn’t been fed since breakfast some ten and a half hours earlier. The soaps would be starting after the early evening news,

normally Ellie's routine meant that her day's work and household chores were finished for the evening by now and she and Jake would curl up together on the sofa while Ellie watched some television to unwind. Tonight the artificial lives of the soap stars held no interest for her. All she could concentrate on were the same three words, in the same order that kept circling round and round her mind in the same direction: Tay-Sachs Disease.

She had come to the conclusion that she deserved ten out of ten for originality, typical writer, always going for the dramatic angle. 'Oh' she thought *'I couldn't have any old common or garden bout of terminal cancer, oh no, I have to go for Tay-bloody-Sachs disease that is not only extremely bloody rare but virtually bloody unheard of in adults. Nice one Eleanor girl, what do you do for an encore?'* If her thoughts had been audible the bitterness and anger would have singed the atmosphere leaving the acrid smell of burning fury in its wake. The test results today had only been for the purpose of formally crossing the T's and dotting the I's. The consultants, of whom it seemed she had many, were already almost certain of the diagnosis of her illness. Ellie had done all her crying in the three weeks previously. She had said her 'Why me's' and pouted at the unfairness of it. But although she had bitterly grieved the loss of her right to the menopause, senility and toothless old age dotage, she had *not* come to terms with her condition. And she had *not* accepted that she was going to die prematurely, and she had not run out of sodding swear words to fit her mood and she was most certainly *not* going to just roll over and play dead quietly.

As Ellie sat pondering, her mind took her past the loved ones she would leave behind. It went beyond the fact that

she had between six months and ten years left to enjoy ‘*all being well.*’ It skimmed over the treatments and alterations her life was going to have to welcome and endure. It took her to a place that she was more and more often scurrying to in an almost obsessive need to make sense of it all. Every time she thought of her illness she focused her thoughts on her writing. The formation of those recurring thoughts was so irrational that she laughed inwardly to herself as she analysed them once again. She felt tears stinging the back of her eyes as she thought of all the words that she wouldn’t have time to write. To date she had six novels in rough synopsis in her mind. Scraps of jotted notes outlining the stories that wanted to be written, characters and plots, twists and one-liners. Six complete beginnings, middles and endings, which may never be read and may never be written. She worried about her final novel, the one that would be left incomplete. The only way to avoid that incomplete book would be to finish the current one while she was fit enough to do so and not begin another. How could she not write? Surely not writing was akin only to not breathing. As the thought that she might one day be too sick to write crept insidiously in amongst all those other thoughts, she shot it through the heart with an arrow and left it dying on the attic floor of her mind. She would *always* be able to write and if she couldn’t then she hoped the end would come blessedly early.

Ellie concentrated on thoughts of her writing because to think of the bigger picture would hurt far too much. She couldn’t let herself think of the day that she would leave Jake, or her long time boyfriend Matthew High or indeed her mother. Those were things that would hurt far too much to think about. So for now until her personal demons forced

her to think those thoughts she would concentrate on how much the loss of her writing would mean. That was good. That was safe. That was very nearly bearable.

So unbearable had been the thought of her mother's anguish that Ellie hadn't been able to tell her about being ill. Her mother still lived in blissful ignorance of the situation. The greatest blight in Esther Erikson's life was the fact that her clematis was smothering the honeysuckle and that smokey bacon was up five pence at Asda. Esther was a law unto herself and lived in a world that Ellie didn't like to intrude on very often. Although Matt knew about the illness she hadn't been completely honest with him about the result date, she hadn't exactly lied to him, but when he mistakenly thought she was at the hospital the day after the date of her appointment, she never bothered to correct him. The guilt she was feeling was an extra weight to bear but Matt's anguish was at times smothering and this day was always going to be difficult enough to get through without having to cope with Matt's pain on top of her own.

The phone rang and as she was sitting right next to the lounge extension she picked it up before it had finished its first ring. Her thoughts must have been guilty of tweaking Matt's concern because lo and behold it was he on the other end of the connection.

"Hello gorgeous. How are you?"

His voice was deep and soft and like a big warm snuggle blanket. She ached anew with the thought of losing him. The joint in her right big toe had begun to throb too but that diminished in intensity compared to hearing Matt's voice and knowing how she was about to destroy his world. Matthew was the eternal optimist and truly believed that although the results were a foregone conclusion, something

would come up at the eleventh hour to prove that Ellie just had bad wind or something.

“Hey Darling. I’m fine, a little tired but okay. What are you up to then?”

On hearing Ellie’s contrived brightness Matt’s voice instantly became heavy with concern.

“I can tell by your voice how tired you are. Do you want me to come over? After all I did as I promised and left you alone to work in peace today. And look what it’s done to you, you sound exhausted.”

“No, no not tonight Matt, remember what we agreed, Tuesdays and Thursdays we do our own thing, so tell me why you are here talking to me when you could be on your third pint with the lads?”

“Because you’ve got fantastic breasts and because the lads don’t kiss me the way you do.”

“So how do they kiss you then?”

“Too much tongue and bristle and not enough lipstick. Why, are you jealous?”

“Madly; I’m going to rip out their throats and play oesophagus guitar.” They both enjoyed the lightweight moment and then Matt’s voice became serious again.

“I love you Eleanor Erikson.”

“I love you too sweetheart, I love you more than you can possibly know.”

“Ellie? There’s something wrong. What is it? What’s the matter?”

‘Damn him and his bloody intuition,’ thought Ellie. She had wanted to delay the moment of destruction for just a few minutes more until she felt braver in herself. She knew well enough that she was a miserable coward for telling him on the phone and not face to face, but she just couldn’t

bear having to see his brick walls of conviction come tumbling down like paper streamers in a Christmas breeze.

“Matty, you’re right love, I do have something to tell you.” She paused not quite knowing how to go on, wanting to run away leaving the phone dangling on its flex. She wanted to flee to the comfort of her soft pillows and bury herself in Jake’s fur until the madness that her world had become righted itself. She just wanted to sleep until a doctor came to say there’d been a terrible mistake, that her records had somehow been mistaken for another lady’s with a similar name. But here was now, and now was here, and she had to tell Matt, the truth.

“I went to the hospital today.”

Matt cut in on her before she could go any further.

“What is it? What’s the matter? God I knew you’d over do it with that bloody book. I knew I shouldn’t have listened to you, if I’d been there...”

“Matt, ssshh let me finish please.” Matt fell silent but she could hear him breathing hard on the other end of the phone. She knew that he was gripping the receiver too tightly and that his knuckles were white with the pressure, she knew he was biting down hard on his bottom lip the way he always did when he was perplexed. She knew that the pressure point in his left temple was pulsing visibly and that if she could just kiss it gently he would let the tension go and relax with a great sigh of release. She wanted to spare him the next sentence, but couldn’t.

“Matty love; I got the test results today.”

“But that’s not until tomorrow. I’m coming with you to the hospital. It’s all a big mistake. Everything’s going to be just fine and I’m booking a table at Clancy’s to celebrate.” His breath broke on the final word into a loud heartbreaking

sob.

“Ellie if you’d just waited until tomorrow everything would have been all right. I know it would.” The last sentence had risen in pitch and held a note of near hysteria to it.

“They came back positive.”

Ellie’s voice had lowered to almost a whisper as though by speaking the hateful sentence so quietly it would lessen its power, that somehow the string of events put into motion by the words would not be triggered.

“No. No. No.” Each ‘no’ was drawn out longer than the last. The small word needed to be stretched to hold all the pain that was coming across the phone connection at her. He was sobbing loudly and could barely speak he was crying so hard.

“I’m on my way.”

“NO!” Ellie almost screamed the word at him. “Matt, no. I’m sorry darling I know how much you are hurting and I wish I could hold you and take the pain away for you, but tonight, just this night, this one night. I need to think about me. Tonight Matt my needs have got to be greater than yours. I’m so tired and I desperately need to sleep. I’ll see you tomorrow I promise and we’ll talk. Book that table at Clancy’s anyway I want to go out. You can buy me the most expensive meal on the menu. Hmmm Steak Dianne with the works. I love you baby.”

Ellie knew that her words had cut into Matt deeply. She didn’t mean to imply that he was selfish and that he put his own needs before Ellie’s. He wasn’t and he didn’t. He just wanted to help and didn’t know how. But she hadn’t the energy to be any more tactful; she just wanted the conversation to end so that she could fall into bed. Despite the devastating news she thought she would sleep without

any problems that night. Matt took a moment to recover and she heard his sobs quietening.

“Gold digger!” He managed with a false little laugh. “You only want me for my money, I know your type. All diamond necklace and deep pockets.”

“Tell you what,” she countered, “Take out some life insurance and then if you die before me I’ll inherit. You’ll have to be fast though.”

“Not funny Ellie. Not funny.” There was no sign of tears in his voice now just a heavy sadness that seemed to have knocked all the life out of his lungs.

“It’s the only way I know how baby. I don’t know what else to do but laugh at the bastard. The disease doesn’t seem so scary when you laugh at it. I need to sleep love. I need to sleep so badly.”

“You go to bed and sleep tight sweetheart. I love you Ellie.”

“I love you too.” Suddenly she couldn’t bear the thought of him hanging up the phone. She didn’t want to be alone. Every second they had together was precious now. Was this the start of the mood swings the doctor told her to expect? She didn’t want to give in to the bone numbing tiredness and fall into a deep sleep in case she never woke up from it. She wouldn’t give in to this evil disease that wanted to rob her of her life. All she wanted at that moment was to feel the strength of Matt’s arms around her. She didn’t want to go to sleep she wanted to make love. She was still alive so far dammit.

“Matty?” she said in a low murmur that he almost missed over the static of the phone.

“Yes love. God Ellie what can I do to help you.”

“Will you come Matty, I can’t bear it. Will you come

now?”

In his haste to get out of the house Matty forgot to say goodbye, without another word the line buzzed its disconnection in her ear. Ellie couldn't help but smile through her tears.

All thoughts of sleep banished from her mind as she went upstairs as fast as her aching body could carry her. While the bath filled she shaved her legs. She didn't have a lot of time before Matt arrived and she wanted to be clean and fresh to seduce him. Only ten minutes earlier she had been totally enervated and the thought of doing *anything* was a thought too tiring, now she was filled with a desperate energy that was borne of fear. *Move or die, move or die, move or die*. She repeated to herself over and over again.

His timing was perfect, she had just stepped out of the bath and was wrapping a large, white, fluffy towel around herself when she heard the door security scanning him for entry. She hastily squirted a light mist of perfume to her neck and wrists and feeling much better after her bath, she ran down the stairs to greet him.

Before he had the opportunity to say a word she wrapped her arms round his neck and kissed him. The passion that suddenly welled up from nowhere took both of them by surprise. What started as a sweet 'Hello' kiss, turned into a wanton need that left them breathless.

Ellie pushed Matt back against the front door. Her hands roamed freely over his body, her mouth ground hungrily on his and her tongue flicked over his top lip and into his warm, minty, mouth. His arms tightened around her slim waist and pulled her into his body. She felt his already stiffening penis drive into her thighs. She moaned into his mouth, not merely giving in to the need flooding through her, but

drawing it savagely from her body and pushing it onto his. The heat from his hands on her back sent shivers of icy sensation prickling the length of her spine and she squirmed into a better position so that his hardness pushed directly into her.

He moaned into her ear in a voice heavy with passion and just a little disappointment. “Ellie we can’t darling, you’re not well enough. You’re tired...your illness?”

“Shhh,” she said her mouth covering his to still the words of illness that she didn’t want to hear. “I’m alive Matty and I want you so much. Make love to me now baby. Right now.”

His hands pressed firmly into her back circling ever lower, until he cupped her buttocks, she felt the pressure of his short nails indenting her flesh as their body’s ground into each other. Without hurting her, he bit on her lip, his teeth grazing the fullness of her mouth as her tongue again sought entry. He took his mouth from hers and dropped his head to take the supple flesh of her neck into his mouth. He sucked hard, stopping just short of bruising her before nuzzling into the cleft between her breasts. He was tormented at being just centimetres from reaching her erect nipple, from being able to feel it between his lips, without losing the pressure of his penis between her legs.

She could barely hear his words for the rasp of his harsh breath coming in gasps between each thrust of him against her. “Jesus Ellie. I want you so much. I need to make love to you too. Let’s go up to bed.”

“I can’t wait that long babe.” She backed her pelvis away from him and the towel dropped to her feet. He groaned at the momentary loss of her. This sudden sensual attack of his senses had been so unexpected that he came to full

arousal far more quickly than ever before. After just two minutes of feeling her against him and sensing a need in her at least as great as his own he was already feeling the sensation of being close to coming. He knew Ellie's body almost as well as his own and her orgasm wasn't far from explosion either. Another minute and they would both have been exploding, and Matt was still fully clothed. He felt like a horny schoolboy. This was something that hadn't happened since the early days of their courtship when they tortured each other with long sessions of heavy petting weeks before they finally made love. Her hands clutched at his belt; her fingers clumsy in their haste to get it undone and release his erection to her. Within seconds his pants were round his ankles and his stiffened penis sprung free. A blast of heat rose from between his legs from the friction they had generated and the smell of him mixed with Lifebuoy soap made her salivate with the need of him.

She dropped to her knees and without the usual nuzzling took him straight into her mouth. He groaned loudly pushing his head back against the support of the door; the pleasure coursed from his groin to his brain and a feeling of sensational dizziness made his head spin. His scrotum contracted and he pulled himself from her before she had finished her first voyage down the length of him.

"No Ellie, I want to be inside you properly. I want to make love to you."

She tried to take him back into her mouth but he put his arms gently under hers and lifted her from the floor. He kissed her once quickly before she grabbed his hand and headed with him for the stairs. It took all Matt's concentration not to trip over his jeans that were still around his ankles and it was easy for Ellie to swivel him round and

push him onto the stairs before he was fully aware of what was happening to him.

His penis jerked involuntarily He never grew tired of the sight of Ellie naked.

Lowering one hand to guide him into her she dropped onto him with a hard thrust. Her juices has been flowing fast since that first kiss and he slid inside her easily but with a force that made him gasp as his foreskin took a second to catch up with the rest of him.

Ellie tensed her pelvic muscles tightly and he felt himself being squeezed by the rippled walls of her vagina. She arched her back and began to ride him with more aggression and force than she had ever used on him before. The treads of the stairs dug into Matt's back and he made a bridge of his body, thrusting his pubic bone into Ellie's female arousal and feeling the extra half-inch of penetration that made her scream out in pleasure.

She was moving on him faster and harder with every energetic thrust. "Fuck me Matt, Fuck me."

Matt felt his passion waning slightly as the unfamiliar words issued from Ellie's lovely mouth. "Fuck me you horny bastard. Harder, harder come on make me scream baby." Sweat was pouring from her body and her breathing was ragged and rasping. "I'm alive and I'm well Matt and I'm going to be the best sex you've ever had."

He felt the last of his erection dwindling inside her. "Whoa Ellie, Ellie, ease up a minute love." She looked at him, her eyes clouded with confusion.

"What's the matter Matty don't you want me anymore?"

"Darlin' I want you more than I've ever wanted you before. The way you proved you still need me back there drove me crazy with a want for you. Ellie you *are* the best

lover I've ever had, you know you are, but that's not because of your sexual prowess, not because of how hard and fast you can ride me, or how dirty you can talk. It's because of the way we feel about each other, it's because I love you Ellie. I don't want to fuck you; I want to make love to you the way we always have. And yes sometimes I like it a little bit rougher than normal, that's fun, that's keeping sex alive. But darling you don't have to prove to me that you are still the best even though you are ill, because even when lovemaking is difficult for us you will still be the best. More than that you will be the *only*."

He wiped the first tears from her cheeks and carried her upstairs. Kicking the door closed with his foot he laid Ellie down on the top of the bed. As she watched him, he took his clothes off and lay beside her. Keeping eye contact with her for as long as possible he stoked her soft body. She lay naked on the bed in front of him and finally he dropped his eyes to her neatly trimmed triangle of soft downy hair. Matt kissed her inner thighs at the very top of her legs, she parted them slightly and he kissed her softly teasing her back into the mood that had been broken. He didn't stay too long there; it was so sweet that very soon he wouldn't be able to stop himself from losing his gentle restraint and devouring between her legs until she writhed in ecstasy. It was important to Matt to re-gain a feeling of sensual lovemaking rather than rampant sex.

He came back to the head of the bed and saw that tears were still rolling down Ellie's cheeks, though her mouth was open and her breathing was hard and excited. He kissed each of the tears away tasting this second of Elle's fluids on his tongue, tasting her love for him. And then he kissed her parted mouth softly. At first she remained immobile the

breath escaping through her lips, enjoying the feel of his mouth on hers. And then she responded, raising her hand to stroke his face and moulding her lips to his. Her hand was so soft and her lips so pliable that Matt felt a new love for her that was stronger than any he'd felt before. A small murmur of want escaped her lips the sound amplifying within his mouth. His hand brushed against her small breast, the nipple was hard and budded as it scraped across his palm. He cupped the breast and kneaded it slowly. It was more than he could stand, despite himself, his kiss became more demanding and this time Ellie took her lead from him. They soul kissed for a long time without any tongues and it felt wonderful for them both.

Matt's erection rubbed against Ellie's outer leg and he ached with the need to feel himself expanding inside her again. Ellie tried to resist him when he pulled her on top of him. She was embarrassed about earlier and wanted him to take the lead.

"You please, Ellie, I want to look at you while we make love, and that's the best view." He smiled at her cheekily and Ellie smiled back, her eyes still wet and shining but the tears stationary on her cheeks and no longer brimming over her lids.

This time they made love slowly, with long languid movements that delighted both of them. Ellie held back waiting for Matt to be ready. Normally she took her orgasms as they came having several to each of Matt's, but this time one was all she needed, She leaned forward and brushed her nipple across Matt's lip until he took it into his mouth. Her movements became shorter, tiny intense motions relying mainly on internal muscle contraction and when they came at the same moment the force of their love and mutual

orgasm gave them both one of the most gratifying moments of their lives that neither one would ever forget.

Ellie sat up and one last tear fell from her eye to mingle with the perspiration on Matt's chest. She smiled almost shyly at him and her grey eyes shimmered with tears that were staying to moisturise her eyes. Matt saw in her a beauty that was something new, something more than the natural beauty that nature blessed her with.

Ellie was five foot six, with soft natural blonde hair, cut into a short bob, she was slender with small breasts that bloomed with perfection. His girlfriend was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

Afterwards Ellie lay in the crook of his arm and when she fell asleep within seconds he didn't have the heart to disturb her. What was a cramped arm compared to what Ellie was going through? He watched her sleeping for a long time and her dreams were pleasant. She never saw Matt crying silently long into the night.

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