

*Such a pretty boy...
Break his face!*

*a 'sex-thriller' by
Jo-Anne
Wiley*

CRUDE

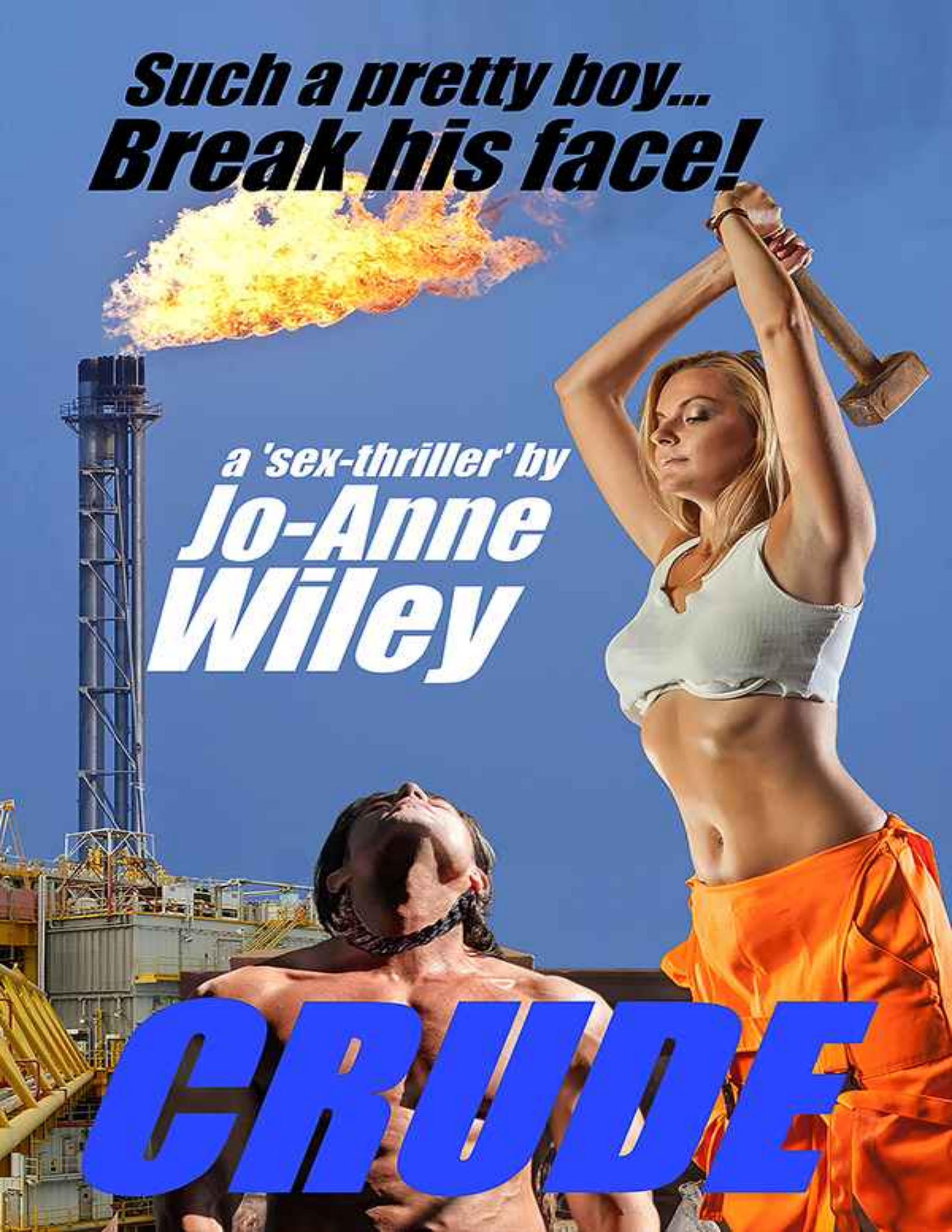


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Crude
by

Jo-Anne Wiley

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Don't

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Meat-Locker

Joker's Mistress

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Jazzed

...by a Thread

Author's Note:

The physical setting for Crude (as in crude oil), is an offshore drilling platform located in the Sea of Cortez, bounded on the east by mainland Mexico and the Baja Peninsula on the west.

As such, I have peppered the narrative with terms and phrases which are unique to the petroleum industry thus adding color and authenticity. But I took care none of these terms would hamper your enjoyment of the story. Staging is a dock for a boat, a bulkhead is simply a wall, and if you don't know what a combustion stack is, you need only look to the book's cover.

I am not a big fan of the overuse of dirty words in my books. But a bunch of juiced-up oil rig rats would not come off sounding like alumnae from Miss Marple's Finishing School for Young Socialites. So-o-o...

As always, thank you for your support and if you enjoy the book, please consider giving it a short review. Also, special thank you to Toni Kelley for her specialized help.

Jo-Anne Wiley

Prologue:

"Take these," he said, passing her the scissors, "and just get on with it." He was flustered. "For christ-sake, what's the big deal anyway?"

"But it's my hair," she cried, looking at his thinning crown. "How could you possibly understand?"

"I understand success and money- lots of money. More money than you could ever spend in a lifetime. God, don't you realize how lucky you are- that Mark wants to sleep with you? So suck it up. Here, take this, a can of shaving cream. After your hair, get into the tub and start with the razor."

"I have to shave everything?" The woman stood barefoot in her bathrobe.

He studied the slope of her breast beneath the terrycloth. He had exploited that long sleek body many times, especially when she was younger and most vulnerable, but

there was no denying the squeeze he felt in his anus and he couldn't help but envy his business associate who would reap the benefits of her quivering flesh during the coming night. "Yes. Every hair. Shave your arms, legs and breasts. And between your thighs- your pubis. And your ass, especially."

The woman studied the razor she held in her hand. "My ass? This is how you speak to a respectably married woman?"

"Married?" he scoffed. "And where is the well-respected Professor Millsinger this week? I'll tell you. He's on a field trip, visiting some jungle ruins with a dozen nubile coeds in tow. Did you check to see if your husband packed his condoms? But look on the bright side- you've got the whole weekend to be holed-up with that slutty girlfriend you found."

"I told you. That's over..."

"Yeah, yeah- 'til some new slut comes along. Now, no more stalling. Get yourself into a hot tub of water. Once you've soaked, lather up and start shaving. I'll be waiting in the hall." And he stormed out, slamming the door closed behind him.

She took a last look in the mirror. Her hair was long and thick and she had lovingly tended to it for a lifetime. She took up a hank at the side of her head, opened the scissors and slid the blades next to her scalp. She turned away, couldn't watch, and made the cut.

Tears flooded her eyelashes and she cut again and again, throwing the strands of hair defiantly onto the bathroom floor until she was ankle deep.

When the last of it lay piled about her feet, she picked up the razor and stepped toward the bathtub.

On the opposite side of the door, he listened intently as the water roared from the faucet. A moment later, he heard her loosen the knot and the rustle of her robe as it slipped from her shoulders. There was the thrilling thud of soft

terrycloth landing on the tiles followed by the sound of skin squeaking on wet porcelain. He moved closer to the door to listen to the hot water moving in her cupped hands as she touched herself. The vision of her shaving her thighs and vagina roved wildly in his smarmy imagination.

Then with a start, he realized she hadn't followed him to the door; she hadn't locked it.

He tried the knob. Christ...

It turned easily in his hand and with a grim smile he stepped into the swirl of steam. He saw a wet, tawny body, sleek with small but nicely pointed breasts. She had beseeching nipples. Her hips were narrow and her legs, long and slim.

He heard her gasp. "Please. Oh please, Uncle. You can't. Not again..."

Chapter One

Cat Baloo shifted her butt-cheeks as the seat beneath her ass tilted, lifting her feet from the floor. She was reminded of the time she had been evacuated out of Iraq. That had been on a navy transporter and the pilot had been more concerned about not getting his tail feathers smoked than he was about the comfort of his passengers. Once the wheels left the asphalt, it was straight skyward like a shuttle launch, before the towel-heads could get a bead on his aircraft with a ground-to-air missile.

And here Cat was, once again, on a demented roller coaster ride. Only this time it was in a friggin' boat.

Cat wasn't her real name, of course. She was Kylie Baldwin. But the navy boys had changed that. Even before being deployed to the Persian Gulf as an underwater demolition specialist, someone had started calling her Cat Baloo and the name had stuck.

She braced her feet as the crew-boat crested on the curl of a wave and did a dizzying wallow before plunging down the backside of the thirty foot comber. God, such fun...

Cat looked across the aisle. Alison was sitting by the opposite porthole. Her pale features were tinged with a distinct greenish pallor. Cat elbowed Tyson in the seat beside her and pointed with her chin. Tyson looked up from where she had been picking at a piece of dead skin which was reluctant to give up its hold alongside of her thumbnail and followed Cat's gaze.

Tyson balked. "Christ. If she tosses her cookies the stench will get them all started. There'll be puke rolling in the aisles."

Cat leaned back and balled her eyes with knotted fists. "Thanks for the visual. We'll never make the oil rig by nightfall and couldn't land if we did. We're in for a long fuckin' night." She unscrewed a mickey of Jack Daniel's. "Might as well get pissed."

Tyson looked past Cat and out the porthole. "Blowing a full gale, I reckon. Next best thing to a hurricane."

The crew-boat did another plunge and a pitiful groan from across the aisle drew their attention. "Bet you ten bucks," Cat smirked, "she up-chucks on the next wave." Cat passed the corn-whiskey across.

"A sucker's bet." Tyson took a long swallow from the bottle. "I'll keep my money, thank you very much. And look—here comes the Mick to check on her."

They watched Mickey Dalton, the Managerial Supervisor, second in command and responsible for the crew's female contingent, hand over hand herself along the steeply tilted deck like she was hanging from a jungle gym. She hesitated by the seat opposite, waiting for the boat to pause at the top of a wave, before letting go and dropping down beside Alison. "How you making out, kiddo?" Mickey took a look at the girl's color and realized the question ranked, in the grand scheme of things, as one of her most stupidest.

Alison was leaning forward against the seat restraint and holding her stomach in folded arms. "I swear to Christ this is my last deployment. Fuckin' oil rigs. I don't care how good the money is. I'm so done with this shit." The boat angled up the next wave and did its sideways dip before careening down. The hull hit the bottom of the trough with a jolt and Alison watched solid green water rush past, outside her porthole. "Fuckin' boat's a submarine." She pressed her cheek against the cool glass.

Mickey tried to sound sympathetic. "Latest weather forecast has things easing around midnight."

Moisture formed in Alison's eyes. "Lord. I should live so long..."

"You want more ginger ale?"

Alison belched. "I've swilled enough ginger ale to float this friggin' canoe. It just makes me wanna piss. And the smell in the head makes me wanna puke. I can't decide

whether to sit down or kneel over, not that there's room in there to do either. Designed by a fucking guy, I'll bet."

The boat did another wild gyration and Alison dry heaved. "Oh shit," she swore again, trying to hold things in place.

Mickey's eyes widened and she readied herself to get outta the way. "Damn, I want Amy to look at you. You need fluids and if you can't drink them, Amy can set you up with a drip. You'll feel better."

Alison waved Mickey off. "Only if there's arsenic in the bag."

"You hold tight a minute. I'll get Amy."

Mickey made her way forward. The crew-boat was built like an eighty-foot cigar- long and narrow. With a center aisle and seating for two each side, the boat could transport a crew of thirty. And because standing headroom was deemed an unnecessary luxury, not to mention an expense, there wasn't a deck house. Mickey, hunched over, scanned her crew of ten women, searching out others who were succumbing to the turbulent seas. It didn't look good. She noted half her team appeared listless and a couple of them were sagging in their restraints.

Seated ahead of the women, the men seemed to be fairing better; toughened wildcatters with guts of iron, she thought grimly. Mickey found Amy, the company nurse, passing out handfuls of Gravol.

"How's everyone holding up?" Mickey asked.

Amy pushed sweaty curls from her eyes and ignored Mickey's question. "How much longer?"

Mickey exhaled. "No change 'til the morning, I'm afraid. It's a slow moving cold front with winds pegged at a steady fifty knots. The Sea of Cortez is shelving here, quite shallow in fact. That's why we're getting the violent wave action."

"Not 'til the morning..." Amy's voice trailed hopelessly. "I don't know if I'll make it."

"You're not well?"

“Not a hundred percent but the work helps; keeps me distracted. I might be okay as long as I can keep my mind off my stomach.”

Mickey squeezed Amy’s shoulder. “Hang tough. We need you.” Mickey got a weak smile in return. “I want you to look at Alison,” Mickey continued. “She needs fluids and I think it’s time she had an IV.”

“She still holding things down?”

“Just.”

Amy passed Mickey a couple of tablets. “Gravol. Preventative medicine. Take ‘em while I go get my kit.”

Amy dropped down beside Alison and Mickey leaned in to watch. “Christ, hon, you look like shit.”

Alison rolled bloodshot eyes up. “I needed a doctor to tell me that?”

“I’m not a doctor.”

Alison’s stomach heaved. “I could use a good mortician. Know of one?” She took a deep breath to try to hold the vomit at bay but with the hatches dogged down, the air in the compartment was hot and stale, like it had no oxygen in it. And as an added incentive, it smelled like dirty gym socks. Alison’s stomach revolted a second time.

Amy pulled a stethoscope from her case. “C’mon, let’s have a listen,” she said, pressing the instrument to Alison’s neck. Once she had counted against her watch, she unbuttoned the cuff of Alison’s jumpsuit and pushed the sleeve up. “Just check your blood pressure.” And she pumped the bulb on the monitor.

“How much time do I got left?”

Amy packed her instruments away. “You’ll live but I’m giving you a shot and then we’ll get you started on an IV drip with saline and vitamin B.”

“And that’ll help?”

“Sure. You’ll be dancing in no time. I’ll put you in charge of handing out the Gravol. Now hold tight, I gotta find a vein.”

Mickey watched as Amy set up the IV, loaded a hypodermic and inserted the needle into Alison's forearm.

"Ow-o-o! Fuckin' Christ, that hurt."

Amy downed the plunger. "For a radio operator you certainly have a mouth."

Alison didn't answer. Her eyes fluttered momentarily and her head abruptly slumped to her chest.

Amy reached for Alison's seat restraint. "There. Help me get her feet up," she said to Mickey. "Get her onto her side across both seats, fetal position. If she throws up in her sleep, she won't choke."

Mickey reached for Alison's ankles. "She's asleep?"

"She'd better be. I hit her with enough Valium to bring down a horse."

"Hello ladies..."

Mickey looked up and her heart rate spiked.

Jocko had angled his anvil-broad shoulders through the wheelhouse door and was making his way along the aisle toward her. "I've just been in touch with Mark DeVillier at head office," Jocko chuckled to himself. "Mark says to tell you ladies he's charging for the extended yachting expedition. He has to cover the cost of fuel."

No one laughed.

If anyone had fuel to spare it was Mark DeVillier, owner and CEO of Pentoxx Petroleum and the reference to a yachting expedition fell humorless on nauseated senses.

Jocko scanned his crew and he spotted Mickey hunched over Alison's legs. He moved forward, expertly taking the gyrating deck in loosely placed strides. Mickey had issues but, admiring the hard edge of his profile, she had to admit, Jocko looked damned nice.

Jocko, his neck bent beneath the overhead, pierced deeply into her eyes. "Mickey. I saw your name on the roster. I'm pleased to have you alongside."

Mickey wasn't sure how she should handle him, or the situation. They had history. "Good to know you're in the

wheelhouse of this demented metal coffin." Her response was glib.

He looked about the compartment once again. "Yeah. Wild ride fer-sure." His eyes dropped to Alison's prostrate body. "Seasick?"

"No- not anymore. Comatose."

"Comatose?"

"Yeah. The nurse pumped her full of Valium and has her on an intravenous drip."

"Hmm. Who's our nurse this trip out?"

Mickey reached to smooth Alison's damp hair. "Amy."

"Thank Christ for that. She's the best we got. She'll earn her keep before sun-up, guaranteed. You got a minute? A word in private, if I may."

Mickey was suddenly aware they had an audience. The sight of Jocko's rugged features, the thick blond hair and beard, had attracted the attention of the women, even the sick ones were listening closely.

"A word in private? Sure," Mickey responded loud enough for everyone to hear. "If I'm not back in ten minutes, someone fetch a bucket of cold water."

"Very funny," he grabbed her arm and steered Mickey toward the rear of the boat's compartment where they would be separated from the rest of the crew by ten rows of vacant seats. "Here," he said, pointing to the last row.

"Very romantic," Mickey commented, eyeing the toilet compartment. "So how's Mrs Jocko?" Her words were barbed but she complied, taking the outside seat next to the porthole.

Jocko dropped down beside her. "Very understanding," he answered her question. "As long as I bring home the bacon."

Mickey scoffed. "The last time I saw your bacon, kiddo, it was wrapped in latex."

Chapter Two

Jocko let out an exasperated hiss. "Well you weren't on the fuckin' pill, were you? I did it to protect you."

"How very gallant of you. And when we pulled up to the dock in Galveston you didn't even have the decency to say thanks for the hump."

"My friggin' wife was waiting for me. What did you expect me to do? Wave to her and say 'Just a sec sweetie. This woman wants a goodbye fuck.' That would have gone over in a big way."

Mickey felt her insides start to crumble. Damn, she realized- she still had something left for this lug bolt. She looked out the porthole like an actress who had forgotten her lines and was requesting a prompt. "It just seemed so-so damned cold," she heard herself say. "I know for you I was just an easy score but I got feelings, you know?" Mickey realized the tears had welled up and she swore at herself. She was not going to cry.

His voice softened. "Look, I know. It was just bad timing. Nothing against you, my fault entirely. Yeah, you were easy the first time and I took advantage. I admit that. But then you started dropping by my compartment. We had a few laughs and I got to know you; I developed my own feelings for our relationship. I'm not made outta stone."

Mickey knew he was lying. She had been coming off a bad marriage; was lonely and vulnerable. And Jocko knew it, too. He assailed her at a party on one of the Galveston offshore oil rigs, someone's birthday she remembered. She'd had a drink or two, gone outside for a smoke and was surprised to find Jocko had singled her out; had followed her onto the gantry. Before she knew what was happening, her boss had her backed into a railing and her jumpsuit was tangled about her knees. Without a word of regard for her feelings, Jocko had fucked her.

It had been a good old-fashioned backseat fuck. No words of endearment. No kissing. No promises. He just

jammed his cock in, fucked her hard, and left her with a smear on the inside of her thigh. If she had screamed, she could have claimed it was rape.

But she hadn't screamed. Mickey went to bed and, lying on her side, she had cupped herself between the legs and wondered if he would come back for more. And when he didn't, she made it painfully obvious she was interested. Mickey stopped by his compartment late one night and knocked. When he opened the door he found her standing barefoot in her jumpsuit. The jumpsuit was open to the waist and she was naked beneath.

The touch of his fingertips on her right breast pried Mickey from her moldy memories. He was massaging in full round strokes with a squeeze to complement the finish of each rotation. "Feel nice?" he asked.

It felt like he was kneading-out a pound of bread dough but before Mickey could answer, he moved on, to Stage Two: that would be pinching the nipple.

She ignored the intrusion and looked forward into the crew compartment. "How come so many women this trip out?"

Jocko mumbled something incoherent. He was squeezing her breast harder now, trying to get the nipple to lift under the coarse denim.

"I mean we never leave the dock with ten women," Mickey pressed. "Maybe four: company cook, domestic, nurse and maybe a radio operator. But never ten."

Jocko dragged his hand up and tugged open the button at the vee of her neck. "We got two female explosive specialists this time out; recruited from the Navy."

"Female explosive experts? There's a twist."

"Yeah. Cat and Tyson. But don't discount them. They were stationed in the Persian Gulf. Story goes they were deployed from a navy sub to neutralize Iraqi mines in the Strait of Hormuz. The sub was detected and survived a

torpedo attack but the Captain had to make a run for it. He was faced with the choice of abandoning two divers or losing his entire crew of seventy-five."

"Shit."

"Yeah. When Tyson and Cat returned to the *rendezvous*, no submarine. They surfaced and using a dive compass, swam all the way to Kuwait. Eighteen miles, most of it at night. They landed on some beach, found an after-hours bar and, still dressed in dive suits, split a case of beer and a bottle of whiskey. At four in the morning when the bar owner finally demanded they leave, they borrowed a phone to call the American Consulate to come pick them up and to pay for the booze.

Mickey smirked. "You're joking, right?"

Jocko shrugged. "I'm just telling yuh- that's the story I got. You can take it up with them if you think I'm shittin' you." Jocko ran the side of his thumb along the soft lushness of her throat. "Then we got both a ship's engineer and an electrician," he continued, "Babbs and Sparky, both women. That's also unusual. So, along with Rosa the cook and Precious the domestic, the crew is equally divided, men to women. Just the way it worked out, I guess."

"Precious? Funny name for a girl."

Jocko shrugged. "Girl is about the term for it. She's eighteen going on twelve. Just look at her."

Mickey saw a youngster who looked as if she would've been more at home on a school bus rather than in a crew-boat filled with a bunch of sweaty wildcatters.

"You better keep an eye on her," Jocko continued. "She's inexperienced and some of the boys would love to change that for her. You let me know if you hear of any shit going down."

"Christ, your hand is fuckin' freezing," Mickey complained. Jocko had slipped his fingers inside the cup of her bra and now held her by the left breast.

"I'd forgotten how tender your tits are."

Mickey was still looking forward into the crew compartment. How tender my tits are? she almost laughed out loud. The guy certainly had a charming way with words. "You get anything further on the weather?"

Jocko trapped a stout nipple under his thumb and twiddled it like he was coaxing a joystick, which in a crude sense, he was. At least Mickey thought so, though joy was not exactly the word she would have chosen.

"The last advisory had the front passing overhead at sunrise. Might take another six hours for it to blow itself out," he answered.

"Six hours. That'll be noon tomorrow. I hope I can hold things together that long."

Jocko diverted his eyes momentarily to a surveillance camera mounted in the overhead; one of four cameras onboard the boat. But this one was made obvious by a glowing green LED bulb and as Jocko watched, the lens rotated; zooming in for a tighter shot.

Sitting at his desk in the private penthouse office atop the Pentoxx Petroleum Tower located in the Skyline District of downtown Houston, Texas, Mark DeVillier watched his computer screen. He keyed up the recorder to preserve the images of Jocko with his hand stuffed into the front of Mickey's jumpsuit. Nice piece of tail, he thought. Good skin. Too bad really, but with luck, the scarring will not be extensive.

He crowded the screen to see better and whispered into his headset. "C'mon Jocko. Let's have a look at it for christ-sake. Pull out the meat."

Jocko used his free hand to discretely adjust the ear bud, then looked up at the camera and nodded perceptively. He slipped two more buttons loose. "I know you'll find this hard to believe, Mickey, but I've missed you."

Mickey didn't say a word. And she didn't flinch when he reached across and pushed her bra strap free of her left shoulder and let it slide down her arm. He squirmed at the

sight of the black lace cup bulging with rubbery goodness. Jocko slipped his hand back in and taking the weight of her breast in his palm, he pried the pale orb out into the open.

In Houston, Mark DeVillier groaned under his breath and fine-tuned the camera controls.

Her soft breast was lovely- the skin pure and blemish free. The areola was large, the size of a cookie, and not the store-bought kind but the cookies mother used to make: fat and round and the color of dark milk chocolate. And the nipple Jocko held between thumb and forefinger, he rolled like a fine cigar.

Mark DeVillier squeezed the front of his suit trousers and looked beyond the computer screen to the wall opposite. It was covered with mounted photographs. Of naked women. Dozens of them.

Each frame contained two photos: the woman with her long luxurious hair still intact and a mirror image of the same woman after she had been shaved. It was a bragging wall like no other and his business associates loved it.

He smiled without humor and turned to a computer screen opposite. He saw a grid map of the Sea of Cortez, bounded by the Baja Peninsula on the left and mainland Mexico on the right. A flashing cursor marked the position of his crew-boat. "Christ," Mark hissed, "fuckin' storm." His boat was miles off course and barely making headway against the steep seas.

He picked up his phone. "Needleman? I'm assuming by now, the renovations are complete. Has the crew been assembled?" He listened a moment. "And the medical personnel? ...Good. I plan to fly down tomorrow. I'll be taking the corporate jet and I'll get the pilot to radio ahead. Be sure my car is clean and waiting. Yes... see to it. As soon as I inspect the installations onboard the yacht we'll set out to sea. No screw-ups this time, understand? The Hibernia was a disaster." He hung up and opened a fresh pack of sanitary napkins.

Mark DeVillier returned his full attention to the images relayed from the crew-boat and, with a catch in his breath, found Jocko had freed Mickey's opposite breast. The pair of sloped tits buoyed beautifully as Mickey shifted in her seat. "God she's got a nice rack," he whispered into the headset. "A pair of bobbily twins all set to party. And look at the size of her nipples," he laughed. "They look like a set of pegs at a game of ring-toss." He watched Jocko smile. "And you say you've been fucking her?" Jocko nodded at the camera. "Lucky bastard," Mark continued. "Well I hope you don't mind sharing. I fly outta here tomorrow and should see you the day after, provided this storm abates. Make sure she's photographed before I arrive, shaved clean and knows what's expected of her. Got it?"

Jocko nodded once again.

"Good. Now, when you arrive at the oil rig you'll find a small boat tied up to the staging and a helmsman waiting to ferry you and the girl across to the yacht. The helmsman is expendable and I don't want him to survive the crossing. Understood?"

Jocko nodded again and held Mickey's tits up to the camera lens. She looked sullen and subservient, staring into the middle distance and not making the slightest movement- accepting Jocko's advances like a dull witted cow, without protest nor complaint.

The camera's LED turned from green to red.

Chapter Three

Once Jocko had creased her nipple back one last time and given her a final squeeze, Mickey was free to adjust her bra straps and shovel her breasts back into the cups. She pulled things into place and buttoned up the front of her jumpsuit. She wasn't proud of herself, though she knew some of her crew would be happy to trade places with her. Mickey rested her hands on her knees and, studying her fingers, all she could think was once again she had proved to him how easy she was. Jocko need only snap his fingers and she was ready to crawl right back into bed with him. Wife or not.

Mickey felt like a deflated beach toy. "I better check in on Alison. If she vomits in her sleep, Amy says she could choke."

Jocko pulled himself vertical. "Yeah. And I left Butch at the wheel. He's pretty good at the helm but still, I'd rather be there. You wanna go forward? The next weather advisory is due and we can check on our position."

Mickey nodded listlessly. "Sure, I guess. I'll follow you."

Mickey had neglected to do up the top button of her jump suit, a small detail which didn't escape the sharp eye of demolition specialist, Tyson Templar. "She's looking a might flushed," Tyson smiled into Cat's face. "Must have been a good meeting."

Cat watched Jocko as Mickey dutifully placed a hand on Alison's forehead. "He doesn't punch any of my buttons but I can see how Mickey might enjoy getting her twat unfolded. He's probably built like a bull. Son of a bitch, look- he's taking her forward."

The two looked on with interest as Jocko held the bulkhead door open so Mickey could step up into the wheelhouse.

Tyson smiled. "That's the trouble with these crew-boats; no privacy. Watch now. If Butch leaves the wheelhouse, we'll

know for sure Jocko has her up there alone and bent over the console with her underpants down.”

“Good luck fucking standing-up in this storm.”

Tyson laughed. “They’ll manage.”

Cat pointed along the center aisle. “Who’s the new bit of fluff?”

She was young. Too young to be onboard with a boatload of gritty wildcatters. She sat prim and proper on an inside seat next to Rosa, the expedition’s cook.

“That must be the new domestic. I hear it’s her first trip out. Boy, did she pick a doozie.”

Cat eyed the girl carefully. “She seems to be holding up rather well, actually. Pretty girl. Heard what she’s called?”

“Yeah, but don’t laugh. It’s Precious.”

“You shittin’ me?”

“Nope. Saw it on the roster. Precious.”

Cat sat back and licked her lips. “Nice little titties.”

“Hey. You’re not supposed to be looking at anyone’s tits but mine.”

Cat shrugged. “Variety,” and she looked again. “You’re nice but she’s young. And quite delectable, don’t you think?”

“I was young once,” Tyson shot back.

“Never mind, bitch. We’ll share. Get her before she has her first period.”

Inside the wheelhouse, Jocko adjusted the frequency of the single side-band radio transceiver. “Be a minute or two before the update. You meet Butch?”

Mickey was reminded of Brutus from a Popeye cartoon. The man behind the wheel was grossly overweight and his black beard was dirty and patchy. “No. We’ve never met.” She extended a hand. “Mickey Dalton.”

The man was focused on the windscreen. “Just a sec...”

The boat came up on the crest of a wave and the height gave Mickey a view through the forward windscreen, unimpeded, all the way to the horizon. She went pale.

Ridges of thirty foot waves, as far as the eye could see, were marching endlessly down on the small vessel that held her life in its crux. The wind was blowing so hard it whipped the spume from the tops of the waves, driving it horizontally against the glass with a sound like hailstones.

The boat teeter-tottered on a crest, seemed to hesitate, then lost equilibrium. Butch paused, waiting for the rudder to regain its grip on the heaving sea. When the boat fell into the trough, he jumped to spin the wheel to correct the boat's trajectory down. Mickey realized it was a guessing game. Butch had no clue as to how the boat would react to the descent until the sea made up his mind for him. Then he had to be quick to react to keep the boat from broaching and tumbling onto its side and over turning.

"Sorry?" he said as the boat, now under his control, tobogganed down the backside of the wave. "Didn't catch the name." He looked up and grinned.

"Mickey," she repeated. "I don't believe we've met. You been with Pentoxx long?"

Butch returned his eyes to where the windscreen wipers were madly dashing away the spray. "Yeah. A few years now, but Pentoxx had me out in California; was workin' rigs in the Santa Barbara Channel. You been working the Gulf of Mexico, outta New Orleans?"

"Galveston, actually. Now this."

Butch tightened his grip on the wheel. "Hold onto something, sweetie. We're gonna hit."

The boat nose-dived into the bottom of the trough. And with a jolt that could loosen teeth, they were suddenly underwater, the translucent green submerging the windscreen.

Mickey stumbled forward and tried to catch herself with hands extended toward the control console. Butch got a hand up and Mickey was shocked to feel his fingers close on a breast. She would have lashed out at him but she was too busy holding on.

Butch wasn't shy about giving her an extra squeeze before returning his hand to the ship's wheel. "Nice," he laughed.

The boat started to lift again and Mickey gathered herself. She experienced a rush of indignation and looked to where Jocko was fiddling with the radio controls. If he'd seen anything, Jocko was content to ignore it so, reluctantly, Mickey elected to say nothing. It wasn't the first time a rigger had copped a feel at her expense and in all likelihood, it wouldn't be the last. She had learned long ago, you live with rude fingers groping in your ass or about your breasts or resign yourself to a desk job; working in a cubical in some dreary city, wearing pantyhose and making eighteen thousand a year. Your only hope of a promotion being the outside chance the boss might notice your legs and ask you work late one night.

"Fucker. Come on..." Jocko swore at the radio and toggled a switch. "The battery's dead. I'll go aft to the electrical panel and switch over. Be back in a second." And he darted out the wheelhouse door leaving Mickey alone to deal with Butch.

Butch tossed his head. "Take Jocko's seat. That way you won't fall on your keister."

Jocko stepped into the crew compartment, closed the door to the wheelhouse and found an empty seat. He got comfortable with a magazine.

"Now that's interesting," Cat remarked. "He's left her alone with Butch. She's fucking both of them?"

Tyson was watching Jocko flip pages. "The randy slut." She turned to Cat. "I wonder if she's doin' both of them, like together, at the same time, I mean?"

"Like a group fuck? Maybe, I guess, when she's got a bed big enough for all three of 'em to fit," Cat laughed. "You got any beer left?"

Tyson rummaged in a duffel bag by her feet. "Yeah. Got 'em wrapped in towels. Should still be cold."

“Nothing goes together better than bourbon and beer,” Cat looked across at Precious, “except maybe tongue and pretty little titties.”

Tyson popped the top off a long neck. “You can’t fool me, girl. You’re thinking of sticking your tongue someplace further south than titties.”

Up forward Mickey watched out the windscreen as the crew-boat slammed into a solid wall of green. The boat shuddered and the wheelhouse submerged for a long moment, lifted, and then seemed to shake off the cascade of foam. Mickey wondered how much longer the glass in the windscreen could stand the strain.

“Son of a bitch,” Butch swore, spinning the wheel. “Good thing this steering is power assisted. I’d be wrung out in fifteen minutes of this shit.”

“Auto-helm not working?”

Butch shifted his haunches in the pilot seat. “Auto-helm can’t anticipate the waves and would be overwhelmed. You makin’ out okay?”

“So far. Guess I got a good stomach.”

Butch looked across and gave her a dirty grin. “And a great body. Ah- Jocko says you’re quite fuckable...”

Mick thought someone had dropped a block of ice onto her chest. “Christ. Jocko said that? About me?”

Butch, still grinning, shrugged. “Naw. I think what he actually said was you are a decent comfortable fuck.”

“How nice of him, to share out that information.” Mickey worked her tongue against the sour taste in her mouth.

Chapter Four

Butch ran his eyes along Mickey's body. "Not many secrets on an offshore oil rig sweetie and, well let's face it-you do a very nice job of filling out the front of that jumpsuit."

"You should know. You just helped yourself to a fast handful of it."

Butch laughed again. A dirty sound that had Mickey looking around for Jocko. "Hey. You should be proud," Butch said. "Not many women look as good as you in one of those monkey suits."

Well, Mickey had to admit, Butch had that part right. The jumpsuits provided to the women could not be considered any kind of elegant attire. They were made of heavy orange canvas, orange being the Pentoxx corporate color, and buttoned up the front from waist to neck. The overalls were far from sexy but at least an attempt had been made to match the cut to the shape a woman's body. Some of the women tried to soften the look by adding a silk scarf or a bit of jewelry about the neck. Some of the younger girls even dared to leave the jumpsuits unbuttoned, displaying a colorful blouse or tank top underneath. Other's favored what the men wore: orange bib-style overalls with a work-shirt.

"I'm sure you haven't missed Jill," Mickey shot back. "I don't notice any wrinkles spoiling the cut at the front of her jumpsuit."

"The dive tech?" Butch frowned to consider. "She's a friggin' cock teaser."

The venom in his voice told Mickey right away it was his cock that had been teased and when Butch had made his move, Jill had rejected him. And probably not in kind way.

"Wonder what happened to Jocko?" Mickey tried to ease the conversation to less volatile ground. It didn't work.

"Jill probably followed him into the electrical closet. Dangled her tits in his face and asked him to show off his muscle. So how about it?"

Mickey turned her eyes up. "How about what?"

"You. Dangling your tits in my face. A little show of appreciation for all the work I'm doin' behind this wheel."

Mickey's jaw dropped slack. "You're not serious..."

"Sure I am. You got a nice rack and I bet you like to show 'em off. Jocko says you fuck, so what's the big deal?"

"But..."

"Sorry I can't spare the time right now, to give you the decent fucking you deserve but you could pull your tits out and lay a hand-job on me. When we get off this roller coaster, I'll make it up to you. Really, I'd be happy to."

Mickey couldn't believe what she was hearing. "I better leave." And she struggled to get out of the seat. She was reaching for the door handle when he pressed in from behind. He had dared to flip the switch to the auto-helm and with the boat steering itself, he made a grab for her shoulders.

"Don't," Mickey cried as he spun her around and backed her into the wheelhouse bulkhead. Abruptly his hands were everywhere- on her breasts, cupping her ass and up between her legs. He was popping her buttons when the crew-boat veered off the top of a wave and began to tumble.

Butch pulled his hands out from the front of her jumpsuit and made a grab for the ship's wheel. "Holy fuck..."

Mickey used the moment to jam her breasts back into her bra and without looking toward the boat's helm station, she twisted out the wheelhouse door.

"Fuck," Tyson commented as Mickey stormed by, "she didn't even bother to button up."

Jocko looked up from his magazine, his eyes wide. Mickey raced past and gave him an icy stare that would have frozen hell solid. She found a seat in the back and angrily did up her jumpsuit. Maybe she should take Alison's lead, she thought. Get the hell out. Quit the rigs. She had the money.

She was thirty-eight years old, the product of two failed marriages- hers and her parents, childless, lived in a dumpy apartment she hardly ever got to use and she was subjected to the sexual whims of the men with whom she worked. Mickey had made good money in the oil business and through judicious saving and a modest inheritance, she had accumulated close to a million dollars, all of it invested in dependable mutual funds. Did she really need this job? Did she really need to put up with Jocko and his buddies?

Mickey leaned forward and buried her face in her hands. No, she decided. No she didn't.

When Mickey roused herself from sleep she instantly sensed the seas had moderated. She looked out her porthole, saw stars, and the moonlight was reflecting off the backs of dark brooding waves. Her watch told her it was four-fifteen in the morning and she inhaled the aroma of rich coffee.

God- coffee!

Mickey struggled to her feet. She was unsteady; stiff and sore from sleeping in the boat-seat. Mickey first checked on the light snoring-sound which came from Alison, then made her way forward to the tiny galley compartment, following the fragrance of the freshly-ground brew.

"Morning, skip, take a load off." Babbs, the ship's engineer, pointed to a seat before reaching for a styrofoam cup. "Coffee's hot and strong. Black, or with a shot of black-strap?"

Mickey smiled gratefully. "Black. Save the rum for my second cup." And she watched Babbs pour.

Babbs was a compact woman, a little on the stocky side with unruly reddish blond hair which she wore tucked behind the ears and hacked off short above the collar. She and Mickey had spent years with Pentox; had worked together many times on many rigs and Mickey counted Babbs as a good friend and a first-class mate.