

An Excerpt from *The Unfinished Mural*

We sat quietly then. I was emotionally drained from all the talk, and I figured Billy was calculating how he could politely dismiss himself from my damaged presence as quickly as possible. But he didn't leave. Instead he pulled me onto his lap and held me. Slowly my body started to relax. While it had been cleansing to unload all that baggage on someone else, I wondered if I hadn't said too much. It was too soon to bare my soul. He didn't need to hear all my deep dark secrets.

The mood changed, and awareness settled in. I was snuggled up to Billy, intoxicated by the clean smell of him, and hypnotized by his hands that were slowly, but confidently traveling up my back. I closed my eyes when his hand came up and his fingers brushed across my throat. Any thoughts of taking this relationship slow flew out the window when his lips met mine.

I felt a little like a teenager, all fluttery and full of anticipation. How could I have thought I could resist this? Impossible.

"I do have one question," Billy asked, his lips brushing against my ear. I shivered. If he asked to take me up to bed, I would race him up the stairs. I would put aside all the emotional turmoil from the evening, and forget about everything but what I wanted to do with Billy.

"What's your question?" I asked seductively.

"I hope you don't take this the wrong way..." he was whispering, and I was bursting with excitement. It had been nice being treated like a lady when we'd gone out, but a girl had needs, and I was ready to be swept off my feet – literally.

Billy kissed me softly on the lips, staring down at me intensely. Then he pulled his head back just slightly. "Do you like baseball?"

The sexual tension snapped, and I tilted my head back to look at him. "Did you just ask if I like baseball?"

"Yes," he said, looking like a proud child who'd just informed his parents he ate all his green vegetables.

"Why?"

Billy grinned. "I was trying real hard to think of anything that was not sexual, and that was the first thing I came up with."

"Why would you do that?"

"We've only been on the one date. I have morals, you know."

I looked at his face, and though that glint of amusement was ever present in his eyes, he actual looked like he was serious. The laughter bubbled up inside, and when I could hold it in no longer, I burst, dropping my head against his chest, smacking his shoulder playfully as the giggles racked my body. He laughed, too, deep and low, and through the moment of mirth, I felt like I had never been more attracted to him than I was right then.

"So what do you say? Do you want to go to a baseball game with me? You and Noah, sometime?"

I stopped laughing and something must've flashed across my face because Billy crinkled his forehead in confusion.

"What's wrong? What did I say?"

"Nothing." I shook my head.

"Eve," he said softly.

I lowered my eyes, then looked up at him through my eyelashes, almost ashamed for what I was thinking. "I appreciate you spending time with Noah, but I don't want you thinking I'm using you to be a father figure to him or something."

"You're using me for Noah?" There was that teasing twinkle in his eye. "And here I thought you wanted me for my mad power drill skills."

I smiled. "You do wield a mighty powerful cordless drill." He searched my eyes, but I really didn't want anything to spoil the night. I would deal with my insecurities in the privacy of my own head, later on.

I lay my head back down and sighed, feeling utterly content as his arms came around me again. I listened to his breathing and felt his heart beating, idly tracing the outline of the AC/DC logo on his t-shirt. It was just getting dark outside, and the living room was lit only by the streetlights and the headlights from the passing cars. I didn't ever want to move from that spot – it was so comforting.

I began to concentrate on his hands as they started to move up and down my body. He grazed the side of my breast, and like a switch, I was overcome with that hunger that made me forget about everything else. My mouth found his, and he had no trouble catching up to my feverish pace. He shifted so that we were lying on the couch, me writhing underneath his big, strong body, him propped up on one arm to keep his full weight off me. His other hand found the hem of my shirt and pushed it up so his fingers were on my bare skin.

I sat up abruptly, bumping his head. We both laughed nervously, then stopped simultaneously as our eyes met and we realized that the long-awaited time had finally come. In the dark, I could just barely see his expression, so intense, so full of passion, and I didn't think I could wait one more second. And by the look on his face, he was not thinking about baseball anymore. I got up and stood in front of him, whipping off my shirt in one fluid movement. He groaned softly, only making me feel bolder and – if at all possible – even more turned on.

He explored me slowly, touching the outline of my bra, running his hand down my side, across my stomach. I watched him, a part of me thinking I should be embarrassed, but unable to close my eyes or look away. He was so beautiful, and though it didn't seem possible, he had both the look of a little boy on Christmas morning, and of a man who was completely in control.

When I couldn't take it any longer, I climbed on his lap again, straddling him, and a little sound escaped my throat as I felt his erection through his jeans. My hands reached inside his waistband and I fumbled with the buttons, our breathing growing louder and faster the whole time.

That's when I heard footsteps on my front porch.

Thank God Billy's reflexes were just as quick as my own, because by the time Noah had crashed through the front door, my shirt was back on, and Billy was sitting casually on the couch, with a pillow in his lap.

If only we had thought to switch the light on as well.