



Spiders

Rosalyn Wraight

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Lesbian Adventure Club: Book 9

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A Don't Waste Daylight Publication

Chapter 1

What the hell?

“Oh, for Christ’s sake!”

“Holy shit! Holy frickin’ shit!”

Claudia shoved the car into park, and we just stared at it.

It was a Lesbian Adventure Club weekend. Those were generally good things, splendid things, but when our hostesses were none other than Holly and Laura, apprehension tended to overwhelm the usual excitement. Sitting in front of their house on a subzero January morning, I realized not one iota of that apprehension had been wasted. Oh, hell no.

With my jaw hanging, I looked to Claudia and found her in the same state of shock. My head turned back to the front of their house just to see it once more. I figured that maybe if I blinked it would not be there upon the eyelid grand opening. Three times, I tried. Three times, I failed.

“Maybe it’s not as bad as it seems,” Claudia offered.

“Maybe it’s exactly as bad as it seems,” I countered.

You know that big-ass hill in big-ass California with those big-ass letters? Well, remove the big-ass hill, make everything white with snow, and have those big-ass letters spell “HollyWould.” Seriously, big-ass letters in front of Evil Dick and Evil-er Chick’s house spelled “HollyWould.” We were about to enter frickin’ HollyWould!

Jesus, what would Holly do? My brain ran rampant with a bazillion things that Holly would do. The list of the things that I would/could do that Holly would do most likely could have fit on a matchbook, owned by an itty-bitty worker ant who smoked too much. Holly lacked inhibitions; I had the word tattooed on my ass, next to “chickenshit” and “big talker.” *Holy frickin’ shit!*

“We’re overreacting,” Claudia reasoned. “Maybe it’s something quite simple. ... Movies, maybe. Maybe it’s a movie theme. But, whatever it is and no matter what happens, I love you. We stick together.”

I nodded, but it lacked confidence.

At her insistence and with the reminder that we were already late, we exited our car and fearfully slunk to the front step. Instantly, the door whipped open, and there stood Laura. She did not—no way in hell—lack confidence. She possessed an excess; it oozed all over, and she still had more. It animated her smirk; it gave sinisterness to her mighty guffaw.

“Welcome to HollyWould!” she bellowed. “Please, please come in.” *Said the spider to the frickin’ fly.* “Here, let me take your jackets, and then you can go get changed.”

“Changed?”

“Changed into what?”

“Your weekend apparel,” she clarified. She slapped a garment onto each of our stomachs. *Ouch!* “You’ll be wearing these fashion statements all weekend. And this time *everyone* will keep her pants on, unless, of course, we tell you otherwise.”

Again, shock overtook us. We stared at what we held: orange frickin’ jumpsuits! Where it should have read, “Ledder County Jail,” yep, you guessed it: *HollyWould*.

“I’ll be your warden, matron, bull, jailer, keeper, screw—whatever your synonym roll prefers to call it.” She pointed to the hall and said, “Grab a room and get changed. Separate rooms! No touchy-feely this time.”

Like dazed yet indignant idiots, we complied, handing off jackets and beginning the perp walk. But Holly suddenly appeared in our path, hugging and kissing the both of us. And that was something Holly would do: be happy to see us, give us an overdose of affection—no matter what the screw said or did. I took a much needed dose, and then Claudia and I continued down the hall.

I whisper-yelled, “Is that what they’re doing, honey? Paying us back for what they missed out on last time?”

She merely shrugged. Then she stopped in front of the spare bedroom, grabbed the doorknob, and said, “This is our room, honey. Remember? Wanna fool around?”

Jesus, what would Kate do? “Always,” I answered and clutched her hand.

“Sutter! Kitterman! You’re two seconds from house arrest!”

I toot sweet let go of Claudia’s hand and made a dash into the room across the hall.

What the hell had we gotten into this time? We had been there a total of three minutes, and already we neared house arrest. Visions of cavity searches gave me the heebie-jeebies. I shook my head briskly, stripped to don the far-too-short orange jumpsuit, and hurried to find my main squeeze and the other inmates. Perhaps there was strength in numbers ... or at least the potential to riot. *Jesus!*

I met up with Claudia in the hall, and hand-in-hand, we hurried to the living room that teemed with fidgety orange bodies. No one seemed happy or even relaxed. Rolling eyes and grimaces were exchanged like money and toiletries in a prison commissary.

Ginny's arms crossed tightly over her chest. "Just let her try and lock me up," she forewarned.

"What the hell are they up to anyway?" Claudia asked, but no one could provide an answer to that little mystery.

Holly called, "Come on, you guys. Let's have breakfast before we get started. I'll pour coffee. Help yourselves to everything."

Coffee! Donuts! Strawberries! Bagels! Bacon! Cookies! Mushroom omelets! Etceteras! Etceteras! I had never heard a good thing about jail food, but this spread proved vastly different. I could've lived quite contentedly on this bread and water, and I was sure three squares meant pats of cream cheese I slathered on a sesame bagel. I ate and slugged as if I hadn't had nourishment in a week.

We were smiling, at least. It felt good. It felt normal. Maybe we *had* overreacted.

Sated, I had just happily rubbed my overfilled belly when Claudia slapped a copy of the *Tribune* on the island. My eyes nearly popped out of my head like smoldering toast from a small kitchen appliance.

"Who the hell reads the *Tribune*? Why isn't this the *Journal*? I write for the *Journal* not the *Tribune*! Who is the traitor?"

"That's not what I wanted to show you," she said, tempering my tantrum. She stabbed the paper a hundred times.

I looked, and my smoldering-toast eyes ungracefully landed on the green granite. "'Road Swill files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.'" *Holy frickin' shit!* What the hell would I do without the second love of my life? "We have to do something, honey! Let's go buy a lot of coffee."

"Sorry, honey. No can do. Our tanker is in the shop."

"Maybe we could borrow Denny's pickup—seventeen times. We have to do something! ... Why would somebody who loves me read the *Tribune*?" But, I'd have to work on that brainteaser at a later date...

The Lesbian Adventure Club cattle call came, and we were herded into the living room.

Our hostesses stood before us, and Holly's elbows jutted out from her hips. After looking at each individual, she said, "Last time you were at our house for a meeting, you were very bad girls." She judgmentally cleared her throat and looked at each of us again. "We all know nobody kept their pants on except Laura and me, but you did something much, much worse, chickies. You didn't trust us. You didn't follow the rules. We were in charge, and you were supposed to respect that. But you didn't! No, you kidnapped

my babe of a cop. You tried to take over!”

Um... Okay, yeah, we did. Even then, I knew it was wrong not to go along with whatever they had planned, but something was strange that weekend. No, everything was strange that weekend. But yeah, even in the midst of blistering shame, I knew I'd do the very same again if Claudia proved just as amorous as she had that weekend. Did that make me a bad DWD or just a DWD? *Shit!*

Laura smugly advised, “This time, we have laws and penalties. Any violations, any non-compliance will result in house arrest.”

Janice dared a laugh. “I should be afraid to ask. What does house arrest mean?”

We all nodded in support of her very brave question.

“Solitary confinement,” Laura replied. She evilly laughed and added, “With me.”

“With *you*?”

“It's not very solitary if it's with you.”

“No kidding.”

“And like how does this qualify as adventure and not misadventure?”

“If you follow the rules and participate in the activities, it will be fun. Break the rules, it's a misadventure of your own making.”

“It will be fun, chickies! We'll only be doing things I would do. How could that not be fun?” She smiled in a way that made it appear as though she was certain we all wanted to walk in her platform shoes.

Shit, I could trip and fall off flats. Shit, I had tripped and fallen off flats! This was not good.

“And exactly how do we win?”

“Yeah, how do we win this thing?”

“Yeah, how do we get the big-boobed bimbo babe?”

Laura's evil smile shone blackly. “It's HollyWould; therefore, Holly would decide that. If Holly would give her to you, she's yours. You win. Simple as that.”

All eyes mandatorily shot to Holly.

Laura gravely said, “But we need to have a little discussion about the bimbo babe.”

All eyes mandatorily shot to the screw.

“It seems one of you has been overzealous in your fondling of her.”

All eyes mandatorily shot to each other.

“What the hell does that mean?”

“One of you has been flicking her too hard.”

“*What?*”

“*What?*”

“I don’t flick her that hard!”

“I don’t either.”

“I think I only flicked her once, but I never fondled her. I don’t think.”

“You did it, Janice.”

“Flick you! I did not.”

“Laura! Laura!” Ginny yelled a thousand times above the din. When we finally quieted, she asked, “Laura, what exactly does that mean?”

The screw ducked into the kitchen and returned with our trophy girl. She set her on a low bookcase, and we watched her bobble. She looked good to me. If truth be told, she seemed rather happy there, jiggling and joggling her stuff for us.

“Just wait until she stops,” Laura instructed.

And we did. Most patiently, we waited. And then, we all knew what the hell she meant. Her right boob slowed and returned to its original, voluptuous position. The left boob, however, took its damn sweet time and never quite completed its perky journey. No, see, the mammoth nipple on the left boob pointed downward, to where her foot would have been if she weren’t so skankily proportioned. It drooped, flopped, dangled, sagged, hung, lolled like a pendulum, a big-ass thumbs-down. *Holy shit!* The big-boobed bimbo babe had lost the slink in her notoriously slinky left boob!

Collectively, we gasped in utter disbelief. I don’t think anyone exhaled for thirty-five solid minutes. Finally...

“Oh my God!”

“Holy frickin’ shit!”

“Oh my good God!”

“Jesus!”

“Jesus Mary Joseph!”

“For Christ’s sake!”

But, I knew—shrewd reporter I was—it only *sounded* like a religious conversion. If truth be told again, it was definitely not a spiritual reformation at the sight of bimbo babe’s sudden deformation. To state it otherwise would be the nonsensical dissemination of utter misinformation. No, for this DWD congregation, it was total devastation at the mind-numbing realization that our dearly beloved fixation had lost her deserved reputation for most slutty gyration. *Damn.*

“Maybe we could tape her!”

“But then she won’t bobble anymore!”

“Maybe we could glue her!”

“But then she won’t bobble anymore!”

“Shit, she looks like me! Maybe it’s not so bad.”

“It is. Trust me. It is so bad.”

“A bra! Can we get her a bra?”

“But then she won’t bobble anymore!”

Maggie raised her hands, and while the seas did not part, she did secure our attention. “I’ll take her back to where we got her. Maybe they can tighten her spring or something.”

“A boob job?”

All eyes mandatorily shot to Maggie and then each other.

“Isn’t that—”

“Demeaning?”

“Dignifying that top-model bullshit mindset?”

“Perfection ain’t all it’s cracked up to be.”

“We wouldn’t force any one of us to go ... if ... if we looked like that. Would we?”

“She’s still the big-boobed bimbo babe! We still love her!”

“It gives her character!”

“Yeah, it’s not like she’s disfigured or anything.”

“Yeah, and if you just kind of cock your head a bit, why she looks almost as good as she ever did.”

On cue, we all cocked our heads. She did look okay ... at least until Laura gave her a flick. Then, what we scrutinized proved anything but womanly. Claudia probably knew some sis-boom-bah cheer to accompany what the bimbo babe could suddenly do with her boobs.

“Oh my God!”

“Whoa!”

“Crap! Let’s try the tape idea.”

“I think I’d want a boob job—no matter how demeaning—if I could throw my boob over my shoulder like that.”

Laura drummed her fingers on the bookcase, and we all shifted our cocked heads to her. “Doesn’t anybody want to know who did this to her?”

We uncocked our heads, and all eyes mandatorily shot glares of suspicion, then disgust, then terror, then sublime denial.

“No!” times eight equaled one loud thing.

“We don’t want to think who the flicker is.”

“It couldn’t possibly be one of us.”

“Let’s just say we all simply wore her out. I’d wager we could be a little wearing on people.”

“On people, maybe, but boobs?”

Maggie tried again, “Just let me take her back. Maybe there’s a warranty or something, and they’ll fix her.”

“A warranty?”

“Guaranteed to stay perky or your money back?”

“That’s disgusting!”

“I’d have been returned a long time ago.”

“Maggie, if you think makeup is dishonest, how is having your spring tightened any better?”

“Yeah, shit happens.”

“Gravity happens.”

“No, I say we keep her the way she is. She just looks ... more human... more womanly.”

“And we don’t want some guy touching her and *saying* he’s fixing her.”

“She probably doesn’t either.”

“I know I wouldn’t.”

“Nope, flaws and all, she’s still our big-boobed bimbo babe.”

“She’s family!”

“A sister!”

“No matter what!”

“Yeah!” times eight equaled an even louder thing.

We were preparing to high five, but we stopped when we saw Laura shaking her head at us.

“For shit’s sake, you’re a strange group,” she said, but then she cracked a smile. “But this is HollyWould, and Holly would approve.”

Holly smiled. “I do approve ... as long as it never, ever happens to me.”

Laura quickly put her arm around her and kissed her. “That would never happen in HollyWould, Hol.” She kissed her again and then turned back to us. “Now, about the laws.”

Janice elbowed Alison and said, “I bet the first one is the Law of Gravity.”

Laughter times ten equaled one humungous, uncontrollable thing. But damn, it felt good.

Chapter 2

The screw ducked into the kitchen again, this time returning with a huge sheet of paper. “It’s really quite simple,” she said, and I figured I was not the only one to doubt that. She tacked the sheet to the wall and explained, “Bottom line is that if Holly would do it, it’s probably acceptable.”

“*Probably?* That’s not very specific for a law, Detective McCallister.”

“What the hell is this anyway? Is Holly princess for a day?”

“Every day,” Laura said, and she and Holly started laughing and swiftly moved onto kissy-face activities.

“Hell, if Holly would kissy-face, it’s probably acceptable for us to do it, huh?”

“I say we go for it!”

“Yeah!”

Partner seized partner, and overdramatic smacks and mmm’s filled the room. Then, laughter erupted. And just when I thought maybe the weekend would not be so bad, an ear-piercing, head-exploding whistle sounded. We looked to the screw standing there, a referee’s whistle on a white cord being whipped in a circle with her index finger.

“Did anybody read the laws?” she haughtily inquired. “I suggest you read number six.”

All eyes darted to the dreaded list.

1. Trust your hostesses.
2. Listen to Holly.
3. Obey Laura.
4. Participate in all activities.
5. Do not take over.
6. Do not make your own rules.
7. Do not kidnap.
8. Do not take your pants off, unless instructed to do so.

9. Keep complaining to a minimum.
10. Remember we love you.

“Any questions?” Laura asked, still whipping her whistle.

We looked to each other, and it became obvious that if anyone had any questions they were not going to be audible ones. Simultaneously, we shook our heads.

“Fine, then. Let’s get started, shall we?”

Holly’s face lit up with delight. “We’re going to have so much fun, you guys! Of all the rules, just remember the first one and the last one. Trust us. Know we love you. If you do that, the rest will take care of themselves.”

Okay, that made sense to me. On the all-important levels, I did trust them. It was on the not-so-important levels where they made me nervous as hell.

Holly led us to the back door, opened it, and gestured for us to head into the January frigidness. Despite the lung-sticking bitterness, it felt damn good, freeing in a way. I closed my eyes and drew it in deeply.

“For Pete’s sake, Holly, what the heck did you do to your studio?”

My eyes snapped open to look. *Holy shit!* Blotches of paint covered nearly the entire building. Either that or the mushrooms in those omelets were of the magic variety.

“My paintball gun,” she explained. “Pretty cool, huh? My whole studio looks like an artist’s palette! As it should.”

Laura entered the throng and handed off the paintball gun to Holly. “Be careful,” she said to all of us. “It’s below zero, and that just might freeze the paint into actual bullets.”

With fear in our eyes, we looked at each other.

“What exactly are we going to shoot, Holly?”

“I don’t think we should be shooting each other with frozen paintballs.”

“Not each other! My studio!” Holly exclaimed. “I have everybody who goes in there add a little to it. It’s like a cover charge.” She aimed the gun at the studio and instructed, “Everybody take a turn. Just be careful of my windows.”

A split second later, she released a blotch barrage. Her ammo kind of steamed on impact, began to dribble, and then froze to a complete standstill. With a smile of utter satisfaction, she handed the gun to Ginny and made a beeline for her studio’s door.

Ginny riddled the snow more than the building, passed the gun to Kris, and made her own dash on the shoveled path.

Through the line it went until that gun finally landed in my hands. For some odd reason, I liked the feel of it. I remembered shooting one

at Maggie's Capture the Flag maps, but they were mere feet away. I had never gotten the chance to aim into the great beyond and pull the tinting trigger.

Just as I prepared to raise it, Laura stopped me and filled its hopper.

"Get it good, Sutter," she ordered. "Holly would be happy."

I readied. I aimed. I fired. And in so doing, I received a sudden intimacy with the term "going ballistic." While I knew I would not feel the same about a real gun with real bullets, there was something very liberating about launching blobs of paint, leaving my mark on an unsuspecting world.

Pleased with myself and the whole experience, I handed the gun to Laura, who promptly headed back into the house with it.

As I waited for her, I looked to Holly's studio. It was a strange building, even without the blotches of paint, and in many ways, I found my reporter self at a loss when trying to describe it. It looked like a house that had been cut in half at its peak, with one tall side and one short. It sat at an angle on the property, begging the morning sun and shunning the afternoon. Windows took up most of the tall wall. If you stood with the building's angle, you could see in, and if you didn't, it shut itself off as though it contained a secret. Tall, short, welcoming, standoffish, open, sequestering: it was a contradiction, as though it even clashed with itself.

I had only been in there a few times over the years. It made me nervous in ways that were inexplicable to me. It seemed as though I walked into a church, a spiritual place that mandated a hush. ... No, that wasn't it. Maybe it was more like walking into a womb. There was still an expected hush, and it still felt spiritual, but it wasn't a worshipping of what was. It was a worshipping, a respect for what was becoming. It was life without the loud, maybe. It was Holly's own primordial ooze of oil paints. It was a place that took me to beginnings and uncertainties, a place that made me think. Maybe that was why I avoided it.

But now—now, I looked at it and felt a sense of kinship, remembering how it had sheltered Claudia and me with its half-house shape. She and I had made love in its shadow. I had befriended its outside, and vice versa. And now, I owed it something, and it owed me. See, it wasn't just a blotchy building where Holly painted. It had a life of its own.

"Get a move on, Sutter," Laura's voice suddenly interrupted my thoughts. "You'll freeze your ass off."

With that, we zoomed up the path and abruptly stopped at the door. Strangely, we both hesitated and looked to the other to enter first.

"Go on," she ordered.

"No. You go."

"No. You go. I have the whistle. Shut up and go!"

I squinted my eyes at her. "Why the hell don't you want to go?"

She laughed, but it came more from awkwardness than humor. “I don’t usually go in there.”

“Why?” That seemed odder than odd to me.

“Because I usually end up in trouble.”

“What kind of trouble? Why?” I imagined her spilling paint, tipping over an easel, making a nuisance of herself.

“There’s something strange in there, Sutter. She’s the sexiest creature in the world, but in there...” She stopped talking and lit a cigarette for us to share. After a long drag and a hand off to me, she leaned against the studio and said, “There’s just something strange. Why don’t you want to go?”

“I’m not falling for your non-answer. You explain what you mean first.”

“I’m not sure I can,” she said and grabbed the cigarette from my hand. “I have a hard enough time behaving when we’re out here. When I’m in there with her, she becomes completely irresistible. She sees paint. I see her. She smells turpentine. I smell her. She touches a brush. I want to touch her—and not even sexually or romantically. I mean I really just want to touch her. Just put my skin on her skin. She paints. I want to—There’s just something strange in there.”

I seized the cigarette. “So, what, you don’t trust yourself?”

She laughed again. “I trust myself. I trust that every cell of me will succumb to whatever happens to her when she’s in there, when she turns into that artist who makes beautiful things appear out of nowhere. ... Why don’t you want to go?”

“I’m not sure,” I said, and I wasn’t. “There *is* something strange in there, but it doesn’t make me look at Holly any differently. Maybe it’s more as if it makes me look at myself differently. ... I don’t know. There *is* something strange in there.”

“Have you ever been in there with Claudia?” When I shook my head, she asked, “Want to make a deal?”

I was notorious for getting the short end of the stick whenever I made a deal with Laura, but for some stupid reason, I said, “Sure. What is it?”

“See if the same thing happens to you with Claudia. Tell me the truth, either way, and if you get yourself under house arrest—which seems inevitable, knowing you—I’ll give you one free-of-charge pardon.”

“*What?*”

“Seriously, Sutter. I want to know if it’s the place or just Holly—or if it’s both. Deal?”

“Fine.”

She stomped the cigarette and picked it up. “All right, let’s go.” She motioned for me to get the door.

The shithead!

Trying to be very quiet, I slowly pulled open the door, and the warmth that blasted me made me realize just how cold I had been outside. A myriad of smells ran up my nose and made themselves at home. Then I looked to the eight of them in the room. The morning sunshine made them look like surreal, glowing silhouettes.

After Laura tossed our spent cigarette in the garbage, we crept further into the room.

“There you two are!” Holly shouted when she saw us. “Kate, get over by Claudia. Babe, you come by me. Let’s get this show on the road.”

I scooted to Claudia, who generously offered a kiss. After greedily accepting, I scanned the room, trying to determine everyone’s mood, but I found no face forthcoming. I turned back to Holly and discovered an uncomfortable Laura standing next to her, eyes trained on me. Oh goody, I was the screw’s diversionary focal point.

Holly beamed and said, “Next to Laura and you guys and Noelle and my mom and my dad and... Um, next to people, I love art more than anything. And Alison before you start complaining about lack of talent, I honestly believe you don’t have to be good at it to experience how incredible it is. Good comes from practice, but the experience comes from the good that’s already inside.”

Laura piped in, “In other words, pleading ‘no talent’ and/or not participating will result in house arrest.”

We all looked at Alison and her grand gape. Then, we supplied our own. For me, art was speeding down a potholed street and not spilling coffee. For me, art was—

“Art is simply taking what’s in your mind and making it exist outside yourself, giving it form.”

Alison raised her hand and dared, “Holly, I’m really not complaining, but what if the form you give it looks nothing like what’s in your mind?”

“So what?” Holly answered. “Call it abstract and move on. If you focus on the experience and not the product, it can be incredible no matter what you end up with. Experience the colors of what you see. Feel the lines and the curves instead of just trying to duplicate them. That’s what I want. That’s what Holly would do.”

We exchanged glances, and everyone seemed amenable to the idea.

Holly smiled approvingly at us and said, “Cool. It’ll be fun! ... I thought we’d be better starting with pencil and then if you want to add some color, we can try paint or pastels—whatever you want.”

She was excited, and it seemed contagious to everyone but Laura and me. She instructed each couple to grab an easel and a table and set up a work area. Without protest, we embarked on the mission.

Eventually, redhead and blackhead's area cropped up behind ours, the professors' to the side, and the vegan and the schoolteacher's catty-cornered.

When we finished, Holly said, "Okay, now you need to decide who will draw and who will pose."

"Pose?"

"You mean we have to draw our partner?"

"I was thinking fruit bowl."

"Fruit bowl?" Holly shouted with great disgust. Her arms jutted from her hips again, and I found myself trembling in fear. "We are *not* doing fruit bowls!" Then, she declared. "We're doing nudes!"

"Nudes?" times eight equaled *Holy frickin' shit!*

"You're kidding, right?"

"Of course, I'm not kidding. What better subject could there be? You know the subject. You worship the subject. Seriously, chickies, if we're going for the experience, what better subject could there possibly be?"

"A fruit bowl," Janice flatly said and immediately received a cuff from Alison.

"You'd rather draw a fruit bowl than me?"

"No, I'd rather you drew a fruit bowl than me. ... Wait! Wait! Wait! Al, are you saying you'd let me draw you nude? Naked nude? No clothes nude?"

"Of course, I would. I think it sounds like fun. And at the risk of getting hollered at by Holly, you do draw better than I do."

They hugged for a mere three seconds before Susan climbed aboard the HollyWould bandwagon. "Maggie honey, will you pose and let me draw you?"

Maggie eagerly nodded, and before I had a chance to even contemplate the unexpectedness of their enthusiasm, Ginny had already gotten Kris to consent to a strip and sketch. It all happened so fast that when everyone's eyes turned to Claudia and me, I had neither a question nor an answer at the ready. I looked at her and she at me, and we both dove into deep thought.

Hmm, let's see... Nudity did not bother me, most times, but there existed a *humungous* difference between her being naked and me being naked. I could stare at my naked self all day, and it would produce nothing but utter boredom. I was apparently not my type. But her! *Her!* Jesus, a simple peek could completely seize me and send all reason out the window. It was much safer—for all womankind—for her to draw me. Yes, it would be much, much safer.

But then again... If she were drawing me, she would be forced to scrutinize. The idea of that gave me a sick pain in my gut. See, just as

with the big-boob bimbo babe, flaws in passing could prove unnoticeable. With scrutiny, however, flaws had the ability to enlarge, turn freakish. And scrutinized flaws were quite capable of huffing neon gas, turning marquee in nothing flat, telling the world: *Flaw*. Flaw. *Flaw*. Flaw. *Flaw*. Flaw.

No! I did not want her scrutinizing me at the moment.

But what of scrutinizing her? I had studied her—a hundred thousand times—and I had never found anything but sheer perfection, despite what she claimed to be her flaws. But that was always in private—with her skin at my fingertips. I tried to imagine beholding her like that in room filled with people and an invisible but blatant billboard, “Do not touch.” I hated not being able to touch her. I hated it when I desperately wanted her but couldn’t have her. It was akin to having my car all packed and ready for a joyous expedition, a pilgrimage, only to realize the car was on blocks. No matter how heavily I put my lead foot to the gas pedal, I wasn’t frickin’ going anywhere. The engine would rev until it sounded like a scream. Belts would snap. Bolts would melt. Head gaskets would blow. Pistons would get pissed off. The whole frickin’ thing would overheat. All that, but I wasn’t going anywhere. I hated that sensation with a passion, literally.

But perhaps more than anything in life, I hated *not* feeling that way when I looked at her. To me, that was a sin, a crime, a freak of nature, a harbinger of self-loathing and shame.

She looked at me and sweetly smiled. “You draw. I’ll pose,” my project manager confidently proposed.

A frightened, trembling voice in my head whispered, “Because she doesn’t want to look at you,” and with frantic desperation, I smacked it into silence.

“Okay,” I agreed, and subsequently, I vowed to myself that I could do it. I could keep my souped-up pilgrimage-bound sports car on its blocks and not overheat. I could. I wanted to. God, I wanted to!

The complete book can be purchased in ebook or paperback. Please visit the [LAC Bookstore](#). Also available from other retailers.

About the Author

Rosalyn Wraight is also the author of three Detective Laura McCallister lesbian mysteries: *Woman Justice*, *Secrets and Sins*, and *Corpse Call*. These novels feature several characters from this book.

Watch the Dykes Who Dare website for sneak peeks of forthcoming Lesbian Adventure Club titles.

On the Web

LAC Bookstore: LesbianAdventureClub.com

LAC Characters' Blog: DykesWhoDare.com

Author Blog: LesbianWriter.com