

His Assistant
The Apprentice Book One

By

Lynn Forest

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Chapter 1

Alicia Langford sat with her drink at the circular table in a dimly lit Columbus club. As she and her best friend Monica sat and watched the group of bare chested male dancers writhe to the fast music, they laughed and giggled, each determining which dancer the other should flirt with.

Suddenly, one of the dancers, Alicia's favorite, came dancing down the steps from the stage and into the crowd as the patrons laughed and applauded, and enjoyed the pounding music.

Alicia watched him closely, appreciating his physique, the sensuous movements and his glistening skin. Then he suddenly turned around, and began to dance straight toward their table, straight toward her.

To her amazement, he reached out to her, and she slowly stretched her hand out for him to take. He helped her from her seat as the crowd laughed and cheered, Monica encouraging the dancer to show Alicia a good time.

He took hold of her and turned her around, hugging her tightly from the back as he continued his erotic and undulating movements. But now his hands were suddenly upon her breasts, playing with the nipples that were becoming erect even through her clothing, then reaching down and pulling up the back of her dress, pressing her to him, swaying against her, his own arousal pressing into her backside.

He continued to grind against her from behind, and to fondle her breasts with one hand, while the other began to reach lower, lower down the abdomen, then down to her waist causing her to feel that she was about to... BEEP... BEEP... BEEP... BEEP... BEEP!

Alicia frantically reached for the button atop the troublesome alarm clock. She hit the snooze button to give herself another fifteen minutes, for she knew that if she did not take care of unfinished business at that moment, she would be distracted throughout her entire day.

It took only a couple of minutes of closing her eyes, remembering and reenacting her dream to allow her fingertips to finish what the dream had begun. She had been so highly aroused before the alarm had interrupted her, it did not take very long for the welcome, relieving spasms to overtake her. She then closed her eyes, and fell back to sleep for several minutes before she once again heard the unwelcome beeping sound. *Not bad dreams for a virgin.*

Forcing her eyes open, she sat up on the edge of the bed and stretched. Out in the hallway, she could hear the voices of her parents as they made ready to leave for another day of work at their small business.

She smiled and shook her head at the faint memory of the dream she was having when she was roused by the sound of the clock the second time it woke her. She was working, although she could not remember where, and her dream boyfriend had just strolled into the office where she was working. Unfortunately, she never had a chance to find out what happened next. *Come back and see me tomorrow night.*

It was the case, however, that the reality that awaited her upon waking was that she had not yet found a real job, and she had not really had a boyfriend in some years. But she had just finished school, and the twenty-two-year-old was ready and eager to address both of those deficiencies in her life.

Although she knew that the day was to be devoted to distributing her resume, she could not help but enjoy the lingering, slight trembling of arousal and yearning she felt throughout the middle

of her body. She could not even remember what the dream lover looked like, but obviously the subconscious version of Alicia liked him very, very, much.

In real life, she had found that matters of the heart had been something short of adventuresome. Still living at home, she had mixed feelings about the protective cocoon, that was both physical and emotional, provided by her parents.

Since high school, her dating experiences had been sporadic. Her parents had put most of their money into their fledgling business, and Alicia had to work a variety of part-time jobs to pay her tuition. There had been little time for a social life.

Now she was prepared for another day of looking for a job, and hoped that she would be able to finally bring some order and true adulthood to her life. But her search for a position in her chosen field had not yet been fruitful, and she had saved her search in her hometown for last.

Alicia waited patiently with a sense of subdued optimism in a well-padded armchair in the lobby of the law firm. It was the third such firm where she had dropped off her resume, and as Clayman, Ohio was a small city, this would be her last stop of the afternoon. It was a pleasant and mild day in May, just warm enough to go into the backyard of her childhood home and do some sunbathing for the first time that year.

She knew at least one attorney in each of the law offices she had visited that day in her hometown. Or, at least she had gone to high school with one of their children. In any case, she hoped that she could put her recently earned paralegal certification to work where she would feel comfortable with her surroundings, rather than moving on and applying for positions in the countless larger law offices in nearby Columbus.

Of course, she would do so before accepting another job working as a store clerk or waiting tables. That was how she had earned her tuition money, and she wanted to put such work behind her. At the same time, she knew that the odds were against her. None of the firms she had visited that day were actively or publicly seeking a new paralegal, but she wanted to cover all of her bases.

Upon her arrival ten minutes earlier, the receptionist had told her that she was welcome to meet with the managing partner if she were willing to wait until his appointment was over. In high school, she had actually dated his son, and had gotten along with her boyfriend's parents famously. If nothing else, perhaps she could at least wrangle a letter of recommendation from him.

She was stirred from her thoughts by the sound and movement of the entrance door next to her. A tall, broad shouldered man strolled past her and walked up to the receptionist, who looked up at him with a knowing smile. "Donovan, I think that Mr. Lowell will be free shortly. Please have a seat."

The man nodded his head, and then turned around. That was when Alicia got just a partial glimpse of the handsome face beneath the unruly brown hair, with the remnants of a small cut below his left eye. He was dressed in blue jeans, along with a dark tan corduroy sport coat. Alicia could not help but look forward to seeing if his entire face was as interesting as what she could readily tell about his physique.

The receptionist looked over at him again. "I see your little injury is almost healed. The next time, remember to duck."

He smiled and laughed. "I promise you, Marjorie, I will." He then glanced toward the only other person in the lobby, and nodded warmly to Alicia. She felt herself blush as she forced a smile in response, as she realized that as soon as he had turned around, she had been unable to avert her gaze from him, although he appeared to be many years older than she. But oh, did she find him to

be handsome, and he possessed a general appearance that she would have described as rugged. *Please take off your shirt.*

At the same time, there was something familiar about him. She was convinced that they had certainly crossed paths at some time in the past. Embarrassed at her reactions, Alicia quickly turned her eyes back to the resume on her lap, pretending to be reviewing the document. She was afraid to look back at the vaguely familiar man, but wondered if he was looking at her. *Maybe I should subtly hike my skirt.*

He was indeed looking at her, with as much subtlety and good manners as he was capable of. For he also thought that she looked familiar to him as well, and as he closed his eyes and recalled why that was the case, a thin smile creased his lips.

Even if there had not been that glint of recognition, she would have captured his attention. She appeared to him to be about five and a half feet tall, and the light brown hair that fell down upon her shoulders and back appeared to be soft and welcoming. She had an innocent girl-next-door look about her, her petite nose only adding to that persona.

She was dressed with an acceptable level of formality for a day of job hunting, wearing a blue pinstriped pencil skirt beneath a white blouse and gray blazer. Still, her shapely legs were sufficiently visible to remind Donovan of how she had appeared during their previous encounter years before.

Recalling how they had met, and its stark contrast to the present circumstances of their proximity, Donovan found himself somewhat amused. He finally decided to break the silence in the lobby. "Excuse me, but I take it you're looking for a job?" *And a man!*

Alicia nodded warily in return. "Trying to find a paralegal position. I just got my certification last week."

Donovan folded his arms and nodded slowly. "Well, congratulations. I hope you land a position very soon." He leaned toward her slightly. "I'm Donovan Brighton."

Alicia took a deep breath. "Alicia Langford. Um, are you an attorney?"

He shook his head. "No, I work as a—" Before he could finish his answer, a door swung open and an older, gray-haired man called out to him with a smile.

"Donny, thanks for coming in. I need your help with something."

Donovan stood and smiled at the young woman. "Please excuse me. Nice speaking with you."

Thirty minutes later, Alicia stepped outside into the bright afternoon sunlight. Although she had been told that the firm had no openings for a paralegal at that time, she was gratified that the elderly and respected attorney had spontaneously offered to send her several original letters of recommendation for her use, and had been generous with his time to provide her with some tips and encouragement in her job search.

After she had taken several steps away from the front of the building, she heard someone call her name out. She turned to her left to see Donovan Brighton resting on the hood of a Ford Taurus, his arms crossed but still conveying an attitude of total relaxation and confidence.

As soon as Alicia's eyes met his, he stood up and walked toward her. "Any luck?"

She sighed and forced a smile. "Not yet." *Except, possibly, for you.*

He pointed to a diner two doors away. "Then I would like to talk to you. Could I buy you a cup of coffee?"

Feeling somewhat intrigued and amused, to say nothing of flattered, Alicia smiled. "Thanks. That would be nice."

As they walked toward the blue-collar eatery, Alicia's mind raced to try to recall why this older but undeniably hunky fellow seemed familiar. He opened the door to the diner, and they were greeted by the lingering aromas of coffee and fried foods.

They sat down in a booth, and the waitress, who was obviously familiar with Donovan, smiled when he held up two fingers. A moment later, she brought two cups and a decanter of coffee along with sugar and cream. She smiled at Donovan and made some lighthearted comment that Alicia could not discern.

When they were alone with their coffee, Donovan smiled and leaned forward. "When Ed, I mean, Mr. Lowell, came to get me I was going to tell you that I'm a private investigator. I do work in this area, of course, some in Columbus and to the north."

He took a sip of coffee and smiled. "I could use an assistant who has some understanding of the law. Somebody who could also help me manage my office and records and so forth. But most of all, I need somebody with a sense of what's legal and not legal, how the courts and police operate, and trustworthy enough to help me with just about anything that comes up.

"I could pay you forty-five thousand dollars a year. Length of days will vary, and when I'm off the job, so are you. Interested?" *Yes... I'm also interested in the job.*

Alicia took a sip of coffee and gulped loudly. "Well... I think so. I would get to use my education. I think this sounds kind of... interesting." *And you are interesting as well.*

Donovan laughed. "I'm afraid that if you've watched too many movies, the reality of working for a private investigator may not measure up to how Hollywood portrays the life. Most of my time is spent observing people who have claimed disabilities, but are out playing tennis all day, and following spouses believed to be engaged in extracurricular activities. That's how I got this little cut on my face." He gestured to his eye.

"It seems that a restless wife I was following had a boyfriend who was able to sucker punch me. And he was wearing a large ring. Of course, every once in a while I get something a little more... interesting."

Alicia arched her eyes. "So today... did you pick up some interesting work?"

Donovan smiled conspiratorially and leaned closer to her again. "I did indeed."

Alicia laughed softly and tilted her head, a combination of mannerisms that made him want to reach out and take her hand in his. "So are you going to tell me about it?"

He grinned and shook his head. "I can only tell you about it if you agree to work for me."

Alicia sat back and took a deep breath. "And when would I start?"

"The moment you tell me that you would accept my offer. And by the way, every attorney in that law firm where we just met will vouch for my integrity and trustworthiness. And so will most of the police in this county."

Alicia sat in stunned silence for a moment. Then a cautious smile spread across her face and she nodded her head. "I'll do it. So you used to be a cop?"

Donovan allowed a big smile. "I spent my first four years out of high school in the Army. Then, I spent twenty-two years as a sheriff's deputy here in Steele County. That was how I first met you."

Alicia sat in silence for a moment, tilting her head again as she strained to remember. Finally, she recalled the interesting Saturday evening soon after she'd turned eighteen, when she was riding in a car being driven by her best friend, who'd had far too much to drink to be on the road.

She remembered the emotions when the red and blue flashing lights came up behind them and illuminated the interior of the sports car. Her jaw dropped open and her eyes grew large as saucers. "You were the deputy..." *I want to crawl in a hole right now.*

Donovan nodded slowly, a sinister grin his only expression. "I remember that you were innocent of any crime, but you certainly were quite mouthy." He also remembered the young beauty in the snug red shorts and white tank top being quite attractive in spite of her intoxication.

Alicia buried her crimson face in her hands. "I know I was awful that night. How close did I come to being charged with something that evening?"

Donovan put a finger to his lip as if trying to remember. "Such as, disorderly conduct... public intoxication." *Total idiocy?*

Alicia finally allowed herself to look at him again. "I suppose I should have been taken to jail." *Or placed under house arrest in your apartment.*

Donovan leaned closer once more, another sinister expression displayed. "Actually, if I had been free to do so, I would have delivered some immediate and appropriate justice to both of you ladies right then and there. Of course, I guess I'm kind of an old-fashioned fellow."

Alicia sat for a moment with an expression of puzzlement, before the meaning of his words finally registered with her. Her face once again turned dark red, but this time she began to giggle and nod her head in agreement. "I guess I really don't have any disagreement with that. Even though I was eighteen, I think that's what my father wanted to do to me when he found out about it, but my mother intervened on behalf of my backside." *And that was a close call.*

Donovan laughed again. "At least no one got hurt that time. Before I retired, I saw too many people who did. I don't miss that part of the job."

Alicia pursed her lips and nearly whispered. "I suppose that when you're young, you don't understand risk."

Suddenly, Donovan's expression grew more serious. "Actually, I disagree with that. By the time I was nineteen, I was patrolling the border between North and South Korea. It was a hair-trigger situation. Anybody making a mistake could have brought about gunfire and bloodshed. I had a lot of responsibility thrust upon my young shoulders, and so did my fellow soldiers."

Alicia felt as if she had just been scolded, and suddenly did not like her new boss as much as she had a moment earlier. "Okay... I get you. So where do I report to work?"

"About six miles from here, just outside Clayman on the way to Columbus, there's that horse farm with a big brick house and all that white fence."

Alicia nodded. "I know it. That's a beautiful place. It's yours?"

"Actually, my parents still own it, but they live in Florida now. The back of the house is a separate little residence, and the farm manager and his wife live there too. My office is in the house as well."

He smiled. "So, how about being there around 9 o'clock? I don't get a real early start, because a lot of my work is in the evening and I often get home around midnight or later."

Alicia began to feel a twinge of reluctance as if a small voice in the back of her mind were crying out to her to change her mind. But she glanced at one of the waitresses hustling back into the hot kitchen, and discovered that her determination had been reinforced. "See you then."

Although she was distracted by the anxiety of starting new employment the following morning, employment that was also promising to be quite unconventional, Alicia was still able to enjoy some time stretched out in her bikini on a lounge chair in the backyard. She made use of

what little sunlight remained, before going into the house, getting dressed and heating up some leftovers for her dinner.

One thing that she had not anticipated, however, was that while soaking up the sun she could not shake the desire to recount certain words that had come from the lips of Donovan Brighton. He had made a clear reference to the effect that when she and her best friend had been pulled over on that evening years ago, he would have preferred to have simply given both of them a spanking.

The fact that she felt fluttering sensations in her abdomen as a result, made her feel uncomfortable. She had never been spanked, even as a child, but she was finding that the thought of any type of physical contact with Donovan Brighton caused her to feel warm and wanting. *Even a spanking? Really? Really? Probably!*

As was typical, her parents had eaten packed meals between waiting on customers at their gift shop in a shopping center on the edge of Clayman. She was anxious to tell them about the day's events, and poured a small glass of wine to help her cope with the building anxiety she was feeling.

She spent an hour doing laundry, intermittently walking to her bedroom to open her closet and ponder what to wear to work. From talking to Donovan, it sounded as if she needed to be ready to interact with a variety of people on a moment's notice.

To keep her mind occupied, she also took care of the dishes that had been left untouched from the previous day, and tidied up around the house in general. As was usually the case, her mother would be able to tell right away that her daughter had felt the need for mental distractions.

Just before 9:00 PM, the familiar van pulled into the driveway that led to the brick ranch house where she had lived her entire life, even commuting into Columbus each day to attend her classes. She looked through the front door as her father began the process of carrying some boxes from the van to store in the garage.

Alicia returned to the kitchen, and took another sip of wine to await her mother. A minute later, an attractive woman who looked much like her strolled in the room. "Mom, I start a new job tomorrow."

Her mother sat down at the table with a smile. "As a paralegal?"

Alicia took a deep breath. "Not exactly. It's kind of a long story, but I'm going to start working for a guy named Donovan Brighton."

Her mother arched her eyebrows in response. "You're going to work for Donny?"

Alicia felt a twinge of anxiety. "You know him?"

Suddenly her father walked in, and patted her on the back on the way to the refrigerator to retrieve a beer. Alicia's mother turned to look at him. "Jim, Alicia starts work tomorrow for Donny Brighton."

The father cocked his head as if puzzled, then sat down at the table. "But isn't he doing private investigations now?" *I want him to check me out thoroughly.*

Alicia began to sense some unease in his demeanor. "I'm going to be an assistant to him. Things like legal research, court filings, probably some errands and some general office work. I'll still get to work with the courts and the other authorities, and it will be good for my resume."

Her father sighed, then rubbed his hand across his jaw. "Sometimes he deals with some bad situations. I just don't want you getting in the middle of any of that."

"He didn't mention anything like that. Besides, I got the distinct impression that he wants to do things his way, and I don't think this is going to involve me playing detective."

Her mother leaned back and sighed, then shrugged her shoulders. “At least, Donny is a very good person. I feel okay about you working with him.”

Alicia glanced back and forth nervously. “How well do you guys know him?”

Her mother smiled and appeared to be reminiscing. “Your father and I played cards with his parents before you were born. I remember when he went into the Army, and when he became a deputy. But I think I only met his wife one time.”

Alicia felt a touch of surprise in feeling disappointment at hearing the reference to his spouse. “Of course, such a thing would not come up in a job interview. But he never mentioned being married.”

Her mother shook her head. “Oh, no. They were married for less than ten years. His mother told me one time that his wife could not deal with the stress. She knew that he did undercover drug work, and often handled the more hazardous cases. She finally broke down over worrying about whether he would come home from work every day.”

Alicia sat silent for a moment. “He seems capable of being a tad overbearing. I considered backing out of the deal, but I start tomorrow. His office is at his house.”

Alicia’s father began to laugh. “Wait until you see just what that house is like. And as for his attitude... I think that you need to consider that he may have earned the right to feel that he’s always in charge. He’s done and seen a lot.”