

Chapter One Just This Once

Excitement and friendship enveloped Terri like a shroud. This is what she wanted more than anything. She had made the right decision. She had arrived! The girls acted like she was their sister, and the guys were hot! They laughed together. Heather handed Terri a beer, and they all lifted them up as Tommy offered a toast, “To the great and mighty gods of Rome, who have given us victory on the battlefield, as well as in bed. We thank you!” They were seniors in high school, members of the winning football team, the Tampa Gladiators, and friends since grade school. Life could not be better. And tonight, Terri was allowed into their private party.

Laughter erupted into ecstasy as Tommy quickly swallowed his drink and reached over to kiss Terri. Her heart raced, and her hands began to sweat. Tommy was the star quarterback of their high school football team, and he had invited her to this after game party with some of his closest friends. Terri’s head spun in pleasure.

Debra walked from the kitchen where the cooler of beers and bags of chips were laid on the counter and held the camera out to take her next selfie. Heather joined her as they smirked and flaunted beautiful breasts pressed firmly against their tight shirts and took pics to share with classmates not lucky enough to be here. Giggles marked the self-satisfaction these pics created. Terri laughed while holding on to her date. Tommy used to date Debra, but apparently, they were cool with new adventures. So, she relaxed a little more and walked over to talk with Debra and look at the selfies. This was her chance for new friends. Not just any friends, the popular kids in school. This was a dream come true.

“Whatcha doing with a loser like Tommy?” Debra jested.

Heather jumped in. “Loser? The hottest guy in school? The best football player ever?” She laughed. “Oh yeah, he is a loser ... He let you get away...” She busted out laughing, and Debra began to laugh too.

“Well, he’s not all that good at things that matter,” Debra said as she shot Tommy a playful glance. He didn’t seem too upset at their play at his expense.

Tommy pulled Terri in a bit closer, “Well, maybe Terri is a better judge of performance than you are.” He winked at Debra and reached down to kiss the top of the head of tonight’s date. Terri beamed as he kissed her. She didn’t understand but definitely enjoyed the attention.

Debra rolled her eyes at the kiss and walked back into the kitchen. “I need another drink. Who wants one?”

After her second beer, Terri was amazed at how good it had begun to taste. She knew she would have to make the decision to stop soon, but not yet. She thought she was still in control. *I can go a little farther*, she said to herself as she sat down by the others, trying to calm the guilty feelings raging within. But, just as the beer had begun to taste better after the second can, so the inner voice of guilt and warning became quieter, almost more distant, until finally, she was left with only the happiness of the moment.

Tommy said that he was going to go into the back and change, and asked Terri to come with him. Terri felt passion flood through her body as Tommy looked at her with desire. She felt a tingling at the base of her spine that ran up and down her entire body, and it felt good. Terri giggled as she agreed to go with him. The giggles were repeated by the other girls, and the redness of her face was hidden in the darkness of the hallway. Terri was embarrassed, but then she thought the girls were only laughing in good-natured fun. She hoped they really had accepted her.

“Oh God, help me stop before I go all the way,” she whispered. Then, almost word for word, she repeated the words of the voice that had become so familiar to her. “I can go a little farther. He said I am beautiful. He said he would love me if I would...”

Tommy shut the door behind her as she entered.

The demons of Popularity and Compromise danced in the intoxication of the sacrifice. The god of Immorality was present and was pleased that another virgin was being presented tonight. Any act of immoral sex was to his liking, but the desecration of a virgin was always to be highly rewarded. He longed for the act to be completed, but he knew if he moved too quickly, she would cry out for help and all would be lost.

Tommy moved to her. His body held her captive with desire. Slowly, he laid her on the bed. His hands danced in her hair. Her neck curled back in pleasure. He kissed her, his hand moving up her thigh.

The Spirit of God that dwelt in Terri spoke, "Terri, stop, this is wrong!"

The demons shut their mouths. Terri sat up in bed. Chills replaced the warmth. She was instantly reminded of her promise to God to stop, and her prayer to Him to remind her. This had been her only request in this battle. There was no deceitful voice brave enough to speak to her now. The decision was hers alone.

Tommy felt the coldness on her back. He knew he was close to the "touchdown." This was going to be his big play. Another game won... he knew by experience that he shouldn't wait and needed to move quickly. He knew that most girls fought with their conscience the first time. The first time... He had often noticed that after he had sex with a virgin, he seemed to run faster, and play harder. Whatever the reason, he knew he liked the conquest and the reward. He would win again. The guys of the team had laughed together, saluting their Roman soldier god, their mighty school spirit, that gave them the victories that young men sell their souls for. He would have his Win.

The voice of Conquest, so familiar to Tommy, was silenced in the presence of the voice of God. Suddenly, Tommy called a time out. He didn't know why, but he had to get out of that room.

“Terri, I really want this to be special. Hey, let’s stop and party with the gang. They are probably already starting without us. Let’s go. I promised you a really good time. Come on.” Tommy spoke with an urgency that surprised himself.

Terri rose and began to follow him out of the bedroom. She knew she should leave this house, as well. She felt the presence of God warning her to leave. She turned and walked toward the front door, but then turned and walked past it, toward the dining room. Suddenly, her mind quieted from the thoughts of warning. She had decided to stay. There was no leaving now. The decision was made, and it was hers, but the consequences would be beyond her control.

The evil voices breathed deeply, then laughed.

Tommy pulled a small white bag from his jacket as he walked to the dining room table, and carefully poured the powder from the bag onto the table’s edge then cut ten thin lines. He was the first to bend over and inhale the cocaine. Terri watched as a few of the others quickly inhaled their line of coke.

Debra rolled her eyes at her friends. “Come on Tommy! You said you were going to stop using this crap! Heather come on! You don’t need this stuff.” Darien laughed at her and turned his back on her and bent down to the table.

‘Come on Debra don’t be a prude. This is nothing. A quick 30-minute thrill ride. Come on! Stop acting like you don’t like it.” Heather begged her friend to join them, “Really, what is wrong with you?”

Debra rolled her eyes at her friends and turned to Terri. “Really, you come here tonight with Tommy and you are just going to go along with these idiots!” She turned to her friends, “Really? Fine! Then I am going to the store for some cigarettes. I am not going to just watch you make fools out of yourself.” Debra spun away from them and

stomped off. She wouldn't be run off by her friends, but she wasn't going to stop them either. "You guys are idiots!"

Tommy walked over to Terri and pulled her tight against his strong chest. "Come on! Don't pay attention to her. She can be fun, but she only wants things her way! Ya wanna be with me, ya gotta party with me." He kissed Terri as Compromise came and wrapped his arms around her.

Compromise spoke to her, "Just this once."

His voice was familiar and comforting. "Just this once," she repeated, as she lowered her head and bowed before the table. The rolled \$10-dollar bill laid beside the white stripes. Before she could change her mind, she took it and inhaled the coke through the bill. Sharp pain filled her nose and throat. Her eyes watered and she coughed. The others laughed at the inexperience of their new friend.

Tonight, the cocaine these teenagers inhaled had not been cut enough and was almost completely pure and laced with Fentanyl. The gods danced in the dark, as the teenagers bowed at the table of sacrifice. One choice resulting in one outcome, their deaths.

Laughter filled the house, as the rush of cocaine flooded their minds and bodies. The rush of drugs brought them to their feet, and they danced to the music. None seemed to notice the others as each was aware only of their own racing heart, and the growing need to sleep. Terri sat on the couch, as Heather and Darien curled up on the floor. Heather seemed to quickly fall asleep, but Darien spasmed before he lay still.

The Voice of Conquest brought Tommy to his feet. It possessed him. Tommy had been unable to resist the Voice of the Good One when he had not taken her earlier. There was no longer time for slow victory. Tommy, because of the poison of coke and alcohol, was captive enough to the darkness to accept the Voice of Rape.

Tommy laughed with pleasure as he approached his date, feeling the strength of control and conquest flowing through his veins. He sat beside Terri on the sofa. Forcibly, he began to touch her, pressing her. Instantly, she knew that this embrace was different. It was as if his hands had thorns, and these thorns cut deeply into her heart. She suddenly knew she was wrong to be here, that she had made the wrong decision. She no longer wanted him to touch her, and she began to fight him, trying to push him off. Tommy's voice changed to reveal the hideous laughter of the evil within.

The Voice of Cocaine had hoped to weaken her with fear, by the weight of the chains of drugs and alcohol that bound her. Instead, the small amount of cocaine she inhaled began to reveal the hideous forms and the dark voices of the demons that worked around her. She began to tremble in fear as she became aware of a world that she had only heard of before. She could hear the screams of horror and of evil laughter. The demon stood before her mockingly, until from her lips, he heard his defeat. Terri cried out for God, "God, help me..." And God heard.

Death pushed back the impotent demon of Rape, "I'll take this male captive – Now! You lost your virgin prize. I'll not wait any longer." Rape had no choice but to turn in his defeat and release Tommy. One stronger than he required his prize. Conquest kicked Tommy in his frustrated impotence. Tommy released his attack against Terri and fell quickly from the sofa and onto the floor. His body spasmed and shook. His eyes rolled backward, and his mouth filled with white foam. Suddenly, he stopped shaking as his body jerked forward. It looked as though someone unseen had kicked him in the back. Terri watched as he lay perfectly still. Tommy's eyes were wide open. His pupils were fully dilated as if he were in a dark, dark place. Forever dilated, forever dark, forever dead.

Cocaine squeezed his hands around his last unclaimed captive. Terri's heart began to race, exceeding 200 beats per minute. It beat so fast she was sure it was about to burst in her chest. She rubbed her sweating face with her trembling hands and noticed the white powder that had remained under her nose. Fear gripped her as the reality of Death cleared her mind of the effects of the Cocaine and numbed her to the knowledge that the others were probably dead, and she too, would die soon.

So, she prayed: “Oh God: I’m so sorry. I am afraid. I know you warned me. I knew I shouldn’t have come, I knew, but I did it anyway. Please forgive me.” She opened her eyes, feeling her heart racing and her head spinning. She gasped, trying to think and all she could see was her mom and the pain that would come. Tears ran down her face, “Please, tell Mom I love her. I am so sorry.” In that last breath, fear released, and peace settled. Terri closed her eyes and submitted to the darkness of impending death, held firmly in the arms of Peace. “Mom, I love you...

Instantly, Terri sensed that she was somehow walking within the darkness that surrounded her. The farther she walked, the more she became aware of her own senses. The drugs and alcohol lost their hold on her with each step she took. Suddenly, eternal light broke the darkness of death. Terri looked around and saw a Great Light before her, and she began to walk a little quicker. A few steps farther, and she began to hear angels rejoicing. She was not alone. Peace who had held her as she transitioned into death, could now be seen. Terri smiled as she looked at Him who silently walked with her.

Terri stopped and paused to look around at all that was before her. She breathed deeply of the revelation that the acceptance, for which she was so willing to compromise, was surrounding her freely. Her heart rejoiced as she walked deeper into the Light.