

Her stomach clenching, she slowly climbed the stairs to the bedroom she shared with her husband of four years. Apprehension dogged her steps, making her clumsy.

Christian watched her go, the amusement gleaming brighter in his midnight blue eyes. *She looks like Anne Boleyn on her way to the blade*, he thought to himself.

He chuckled, for he knew that as much as she dreaded his discipline, she also craved it. Craved the pain the way a junkie craves a fix. His punishments were sometimes harsh, meant to make a statement, but always delivered with love. And they both knew that afterward, she would be calm and sweet; her time-management skills honed and therefore her mood much more stable.

Christian followed his wife up the stairs, removing the belt from around his waist as he went. As he walked through the bedroom door, he pulled it free of his pant loops, the swishing sound it made filling the otherwise silent room.

Emily's eyes widened at the sound, her gaze landing on the leather swinging freely from her husband's hand. He casually tossed the belt onto the bed as he shrugged off his jacket, hard muscles rippling under his shirt, and began rolling up his sleeves.

Christian looked down into his wife's wondrous eyes, noting how their crystal blue depths darkened with her fear.

"Christian--" she said, stopping when he slowly shook his head.

Dropping her gaze before him, Emily felt dread well up inside her. He was going to give her a strapping-- most likely a serious one. She had been cranky and scattered all day, and she knew how much Christian hated it when she allowed herself to get that way.

She started as she felt him put a finger under her chin and lift her face to his. Forcing her to meet his eyes, he stated firmly, "You deserve this punishment. You've been grumpy all day."

She lowered her eyes, and felt his hand force her head higher, as he demanded, "*Don't you?*"

Her voice shook slightly as she reluctantly whispered, "Yes, sir."

He leaned forward, his lips close to hers. "You need it," he breathed softly.

He brushed the corner of her mouth, raising one black brow. "Admit it," he ordered, his eyes searching hers, his hand firm upon her chin.

She chewed nervously on her lip, fear and then acceptance in her eyes as she admitted finally in a hushed voice, "I need it."