

*Not Flowers
but Love*

Krys Batts

*This novel is dedicated to my grandmothers, two brilliant,
loving women who I know are watching over me.
I hope that they're both smiling proudly as well.*

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Truth

*Set your words to the truth,
A tune not always sweet to hear,
And yet the most enduring rhapsody ever
To be written, to be spoken, irrevocably sincere.*

*Allow your tongue to connect with your heart,
For there lies your honest humanity.
And though vulnerability may render you shaken,
Your yearning spirit will finally be free.*

*If words may be music,
Then your voice is the instrument,
Your soul the composer, your mind the audience.
Listen to the song that sings within you,
That eternal truth that wants you to dance!*

*I've heard it said that love is
many-splintered thing...*

CHAPTER 1

O beautiful sunlight!

Without thee, all the brilliant blooms would perish.

IT WAS THE last day of their weekend getaway in San Francisco, but a heavy storm had rumbled in and delayed their flights home – his to Miami and hers to Houston. As the morning was still young and the daylight shadowed by smoke-colored clouds, they had decided to stay in bed, their naked bodies intertwined, his face lying gently atop hers as they listened to the soft tap of rain against their august hotel-room window.

Jamie liked it here in this place, snuggled up against Ken's solid six-foot frame. If she wasn't careful, she could get used to this – the pleasant feeling of comfort and belonging with this man. She could lose herself in the sensations he evoked simply by holding her and placing his large palms securely around her back and waist. And she especially enjoyed these moments of serene quiet when it was almost as if the rest of the world ceased to exist. All that remained was this dim room that they shared, tucked so nicely away, with their limbs carelessly entangled. Neither of them was complaining that the storm had prevented

their immediate return to their busy lives. There would be plenty of time for the hustle and bustle that awaited them.

"I don't want to go back." Ken broke the silence and pulled her more tightly against him. Her back was pressed skin to skin against his chest, and she smiled a satisfied smile that he couldn't see. "I just want to stay right here in this bed with you. It's like being on a remote island somewhere."

"I was just thinking the same thing." Jamie rolled over to face him and pressed her nose lightly against his before kissing it. "But our real lives are waiting for us."

"Yeah, I know." He sighed and turned onto his back.

"What's wrong?" She placed a hand on his chest and ran her fingers downward before rubbing his abdomen. He was built like a rock. There was absolutely no fat to be found on his exquisite body.

"Nothing's wrong. I've just got a lot going on, a lot of changes to manage."

"Stuff at work?"

"Yeah, it's always work."

She leaned down to slowly brush her lips against his. She then kissed his ear before whispering, "Don't think about any of that right now. Think about me."

Ken chuckled, rolled back over, and encased her in his arms once more. He then kissed her forehead before delivering his own special attention to each of her lips individually. "Just remember – you asked for it."

Jamie laughed delightedly as his mouth covered hers. Then his body covered hers. And the rain that she knew

was still tapping against the window suddenly seemed like a world away because she was aware of only the feeling of Ken's body merging with her own.

She could get used to this. She definitely could. But she wouldn't. She would never say to herself that her relationship with Ken was anything more than casual and convenient for them both. When they had met at an energy-industry conference several months earlier, she had been immediately drawn to him – his polished carriage, his keen intellect, and, of course, his chiseled build. But she wasn't in the market for a serious relationship then or now, having already endured a series of calamities otherwise known as her love life. Now she had sworn off fantasies of marriage and the whole white-picket fence thing...at least for the time being.

Jamie moaned with pleasure as Ken adeptly plunged so deep inside her that she swore she could feel him in her stomach. She would allow herself to thoroughly enjoy this moment of sweet surrender to his commanding prowess. She gave herself permission to do that. But tomorrow, when she was back at work and restored to a universe that was completely separate from his, she would stuff down this reckless abandon and all of the perils that could come with it. Tomorrow, Ken would once again be a toy that she had taken out of the box to play with for a short while before returning it safely to that box, stored away in a dark corner of herself along with all the past heartbreaks that she had tried so hard to bury.



KRYS BATTIS is a Texas native who has spent the last thirty years writing creatively. She published her first romance novel, *Walls Fall Down*, in 2003, and later a mystery/suspense novel, *What's Done in the Dark*, in 2014.

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