

Bonus Material- Beyond Physical

(At the end, please don't forget to return to your eBook or Amazon and leave a review.)

Joy's point of view.

I still have a crystal clear recollection of the first time my eyes met Richard's. I remember the brief flash of approval in his hazel eyes, quickly covered by a mask of cool indifference. It was at the Hospice House, where he'd driven an elderly friend to her first appointment. Surprisingly, I recently learned that part was true—a real coincidence before he started investigating me and not a manufacturing of the FBI like every other encounter we had after that.

It had been a long time since a man had caught my eye—even if only as appreciating an interesting art object that you know you can look at but not touch. I took notice of his stature, his wide shoulders, his attractive features, and those gorgeous laugh lines framing his eyes. It's not that he had a movie star face, but there was something about him that set him apart. Maybe it was that air of self-confidence, almost arrogance.

Then later on, that good-looking man kept running into me in “coincidental encounters,” which eventually led to him shadowing me at work. He'd said he wanted to learn more about the mental health jobs because he was considering a career change. For weeks after that, he became my eternal companion during work hours—the person with whom I shared my lunch hour and who traveled in my car with me between clinics and hospitals. It was unavoidable that conversations flowed and our relationship evolved into a friendship.

There couldn't exist two human beings more different than us. I was the upper-class girl from a small beach town in Florida, raised in a bubble of protection, who'd always played by the rules and worked for the shiny star of approval from her teachers. He was the rebel kid from the

Bronx, raised without religion and with no supervision, who'd learned violence early in life in order to survive. Even far into his adult life, he resisted and resented rules.

Our initial intellectual attraction was fueled precisely by the fact that our view of life was so contrasting, challenging the other so much. Our first couple of arguments didn't go well; but after that, more friendly and enjoyable debating arose. It started out of boredom one day while stuck in snowbird traffic while coming back from one of the hospitals. Discussing a depressing case we'd seen earlier at the Hospice house, we started talking about assisted suicide. He was an advocate for it and considered it the ultimate right of a person to decide their end. I, on the other hand, sustained that *death was as sacred as life* and considered it a sacrilege to try to interfere with it in any way but to stop fighting it.

We never were short of debate topics after that. He was pro-gun; I call myself "Pro-Peace." He was pro-death penalty; I'm a fierce defendant of life. He was a believer in the intrinsic evil in human beings that needs to be repressed constantly; I'm a believer in the intrinsic goodness in everybody that just needs to be fostered. The debating quickly evolved into brainstorming about the big questions of life. Conversing with him became a pleasure I looked forward to every morning.

Then we started finding unexpected similarities under our apparent differences. We were both devoted parents, avid readers, loved nature, and were crazy about the ocean. Later on, he told me that all that had been true and not part of the character he was playing—though I'm never sure what to believe.

Something else we had in common that I didn't know at the time was that we both had been Carl Andrews's students and were fascinated with his spiritual theories.

How did I not notice he was getting under my skin? Maybe I was resting on a false sense of security. I had a force field around me, pushing men away. Yet with Richard, I sensed I

didn't have to worry. He was pushing me away even more than I was pushing him. If one day we got one step closer, the next day he'd be more distant than ever, almost cold, keeping me at arm's length, as if holding his own invisible shield between us. Little did I know that his shield was nothing less than the *small detail* that he was there on an undercover mission, trying to find evidence that I had killed my husband, Michael.

Should I have suspected something? After all, this was a man who'd sit so still in my office that I wondered, sometimes, if he was breathing. Yet he could spring to my side in a flash to hold my arm when a car was about to run me over. He was the man who carried a constant air of indifference, as if he couldn't care less for me as a woman. Then he'd suddenly surprise me by remembering clearly something I'd said weeks ago, showing he'd been paying much more attention than I'd thought. And for someone like me, who spent her childhood feeling invisible and inaudible, that feeling of being so seen and heard felt wonderful.

He reportedly had a girlfriend at the time—I'm still not sure if that part was true or part of his fabricated persona—so it never occurred to me to think much of his unpredictable moments of attention. Some days he'd show up with a cup of coffee exactly when I was about to fall asleep or a snack when my blood sugar was about to crash. He seemed surprisingly in tune with my routines and needs, even guessing my favorite brand of ice cream. Only much later, I found out the reason for that was because he and his team had been spying on me for months.

That "girlfriend" was also why I didn't try to read much into the great time we had together at the staff party at the Hospice House. I admit it; I may have flirted a little that night. But I swear it was all innocent! I was just practicing social skills, encouraged by my sister. I thought I'd never see him again after that.

As much as I was enjoying his company, I was good enough at denial and disconnecting myself from my own feelings that I did a good job brushing over the fact that I felt attracted to him.

Until that night when he kissed me for the first time, in the dark parking lot at the Hospice House.

I was completely taken aback. I couldn't handle it. My brain short-circuited; and for months, I tried to pretend nothing had happened. I felt terrible, but I couldn't help it. He seemed even more confused than me—getting closer to me one day, pushing me away the next one, and even disappearing from my life for weeks at a time.

And then I blinked, and I'm waking up next to him. We're a couple, together in bed.

How did that happen?

I still have to retrace the steps in my mind to figure it out. After all, I once swore I wanted nothing to do with men ever again. I'm still not sure how Richard was able to change that idea in my mind. But, boy, he succeeded!

I once truly believed I was *a soul which happened to have a body attached to it*, and that this body was nothing but a necessary evil in the path of spiritual growth. Richard made me reconsider that. He has taught me that the body can also be a gateway to the highest heaven.

The First Night (Continuation of Epilogue)

Reluctantly, I joined him under the covers.

Finding myself surrounded by his arms felt wonderful. The warmth of his chest was delicious against my skin, which was already turning cold from the glacial temperature he keeps his AC set at. My tension relaxed.

He moaned. "I needed this so much. Your arms are so soothing. I could do this all night." He kissed the top of my head, making my body relax more. He kissed my face again and again.

How many pairs of hands does this man have? It must have taken more than one pair to knead the sore muscles in my back and waist in the delightful way he was doing it. Yet another hand ran through my hair, caressing my scalp. His warm mouth left a trail of kisses on my neck, sending shivers all over my body. I closed my eyes, losing myself into the pleasure of his caresses.

Scared by my own desire, I tried to get out of the bed. He groaned in pain.

"Are you okay?" I asked, worried. His eyes were tightly closed. He breathed deeply, waves of nausea and pain alternately crossing his face. I tried to sit up, but his arms held me firmly in place.

"Is there anything I can do?"

He shook his head. "The peak is passing."

I remained still, letting him hold me.

Suddenly, he let go of me and sat up in the bed, panting. "I feel hot. I'm burning up." He unbuttoned his shirt.

My first thought was one of worry. A minute ago he'd been shivering and needed to get under the blankets. Now he complained of feeling hot. Did he have a fever? Had I missed an infection in his wound?

My hand reached out to feel the temperature of his skin; but at that moment, he shed his shirt on the floor. I stopped midair, gasping at the view of his muscular, shirtless torso.

My jaw dropped. I'd guessed about those muscles many times before, when he'd held me in his arms, but nothing had prepared me for what I was seeing.

Before I had a chance to react, he turned off the nightstand light, took me in his arms again and lay down.

In the darkness, I was suddenly deeply aware of the fact that he was wearing nothing but his briefs. Now his chaste kisses and caresses took a new level of meaning. His hard thighs pressed against mine, separated only by the thin fabric of my jersey dress, and they rubbed skin against skin in those areas where my skirt rode up. He kissed my neck, melting me away. Then his mouth was on mine, gentle, non-demanding, nibbling on my lips.

A hunger for more rose inside me by the second, but then he stopped kissing me and turned me around, spooning me—my back against his chest. My brain was relieved, yet my body cried in protest.

A comfortable silence grew between us. For a while, the only sound was his deep breathing, either fighting the pain or fighting his desire.

"I want to apologize about Friday," he said. "I was still under the high of the rescue operation. I was so relieved that we were alive—I wasn't thinking. I know I was pressuring you. I'm sorry."

“Please don’t,” I said. “I’m the one who has to apologize. I’m always pulling the rug out from under your feet. And I’m sorry. I can’t help it.”

“I know.” His breath against my neck, his arms holding me tight as he spooned me, he whispered, “I know you’ve never been with another man but Michael.”

His words startled me.

How did he know? I didn’t want to ask. He and the FBI had bugged my house, spied on my telephone conversations, and even recorded video footage of my most private family moments. It was scary to wonder how much he knew about my deepest secrets, especially considering how little I knew about his real self.

His mouth kissed the back of my ear, sending goose bumps all over my body. His voice was soft as he said, “I know that all this is new for you—dating, progressing physical contact, the idea of intimacy with someone who’s almost a stranger . . .” He left a path of kisses down my neck and shoulders, his left hand stroking my back. “And knowing what a bastard Michael was—how cruel he was to you over the years—I know you’re scared to open up again. If he’s the only thing you ever knew as a man, I can understand your fear.”

Tears formed in my eyes.

“At an intellectual level, I know,” he said. “Forgive me if sometimes, in the peak of the passion, I forget. I just want you to know that I understand—and I’m willing to wait.”

His words brought me huge relief. Could this man really be this wonderful?

“I want you to know that I’m willing to wait for as long as you need,” he said. “I’ve been dreaming of the moment when you’re finally mine for months. More than that. I think I’ve been dreaming of you all my life. It’s no big deal if I have to wait a little longer.”

I felt so deeply thankful for his understanding that I turned around and kissed him. I let my lips communicate my love, my gratitude, and my debt. His body tensed, and he mirrored my passion with deeper and demanding kisses.

My hands took a life of their own and started tracing his hard body. Following my lead, the caresses of his hands on my body and his mouth on my neck turned more and more ardent. I didn't fight it. I felt reassured by the fact that he made no attempt to take off my dress.

I thought my self-restraint was strong enough for the two of us. But I should've known better. I can't even remember who moved first. Next thing I knew, my center was against his, and I could feel his growing arousal through the thin layers separating us.

And then my brain melted away. I'm still not sure exactly what happened after that. I have hazy memories of his hands and mouth all over me—and mine all over him. He was kissing me senseless, touching me and teasing me.

Then I was begging him to take me.

And he gladly obliged. Ravenous. Desperate. Yet somehow also gentle and tender.

My mind evaporated in a cloud of light and pleasure, and it didn't take long for him to follow after.

Later, still shaking in his arms, barely understanding what had just happened, I sent a prayer of thanks to The Universe. I'd feared that moment terribly—and now we were past it. I felt relieved, and also surprised, that it had been so enjoyable. I also felt one step closer to freeing myself completely from Michael's ghost. I no longer belonged to him; I was Richard's.

"I'm sorry," I said. I was so used to being in trouble with Michael, apologizing was the only thing that came to my mind.

He held me tightly. “Sorry for what, angel?”

I didn’t even know. For making him wait so long? For the time we’d wasted? For having doubted him, not realizing he wasn’t Michael? For having enjoyed myself so much I forgot about his pleasure?

I heard my own voice saying, “I’m sorry if I wasn’t the best lover today. I promise I’ll get better.”

He went silent for a moment. “You’re talking nonsense. There’s no way in the world that could have been improved.” He kissed my head.

Bliss, peace, and gratitude filled me. I knew I was safe now. I knew I could trust him.

Could I?

Slowly, an idea crept into my mind and came into focus in the form of a question:
How come his leg was no longer hurting?

I lifted myself up on my elbow to look at his face. His eyes were closed; he was still catching his breath.

Holding his face, my voice was almost a whisper. “Did you . . . did you lie to me about being in pain?”

He gasped, and then laughed. “What? No! How can you think something like that?”

Rolling to his side, he looked in my eyes. “Angel, do you have any idea how hard it was to get you to trust me, and how close I was to losing you? Do you think I could ever be so stupid to ruin it?” Now it was his turn to hold my face with his hands. His eyes pierced my soul. “Baby, *you are my life*. I know I don’t deserve you. But the gift you gave me tonight—the gift of your trust—is something I’ll never risk losing by lying to you ever again.”

Brushing his lips on mine one more time, he made me lay my head on his chest again, kissed my hair, and closed his eyes. I looked up to his face.

Wait. Is that a repressed smile twisting his lips?

Is that facial expression bliss . . . or is it smugness?

The relaxed rhythm of his breathing soon announced that he'd fallen asleep. But I stayed awake in his arms for a long time, wondering.

Am I the luckiest woman in the world?

Or am I a fool?

I hope you enjoyed these bonus scenes and they didn't feel too steamy for your taste. I'm still feeling my way around, so feel free to leave me feedback at pichardojohanssonmd@gmail.com . Please don't forget to return to your eBook and leave a review.

If you liked Joy and Richard's love story and would like to see them overcome the obstacles separating them for good, don't miss "[Just for Joy: Beyond Achievement,](#)" already available.

And if you're favorite part of the story was the Inspirational/Spiritual touch, stay tuned for the immediate sequel, "Beyond Light and Darkness," coming in 2019. You can gate updates about this book release through my Newsletter or visiting the Books section of my [website](#).