

CHAPTER ONE

1953, Miami Beach, Florida

“Jacob dear,” Irma said, patting the puffy cushion of the loveseat. “Come sit down.

I have a confession to make.”

In the exaggerated baritone voice of an old-fashioned radio announcer, Jacob said, “This is True Confessions.” When his young wife did not respond to his humor he sat quickly on the spot she had patted.

It was one of those rare days in South Florida when a shift in trade winds sent a hint of arctic air to tickle the skin of the surprised citizens of heat and humidity. Not quite jacket weather, it was welcomed with reverence. Irma pulled her sweater so it overlapped her chest. She had been Mrs. Jacob Mann for sixth months. Showing the irresponsible naiveté of youth, the newlyweds had enjoyed making love for those six months without encumbrances.

“Remember our first night?” she asked.

“You bet I do. You wouldn’t do it till we were married, and I was one horny bastard by then.” He gave her breasts a little feel. She giggled, and her nipples puckered in response. Snuggling up to Jacob she said, “And remember how much trouble we had with the rubber?”

“How could I forget? No wonder they’re an instrument of birth control. After struggling with the damn thing, the big fella loses his desire.”

“And you said, ‘To hell with these things. The Big Sword doesn’t need a scabbard to do his job.’”

“Pretty corny, huh?” Jacob said as pink colored his cheeks. “I must have seen the washbuckling movie *Scaramouch* that week.”

“Do you remember what else you said?”

“I love you?”

“No. Well maybe you did, but do you remember you said, ‘If it catches, it catches. It will be *basher!*’”

“Irma, the sword was at attention. He was doing all the talking.”

“But I went along.”

“Un huh. Where you going with this?”

“I’m not just late for my period.”