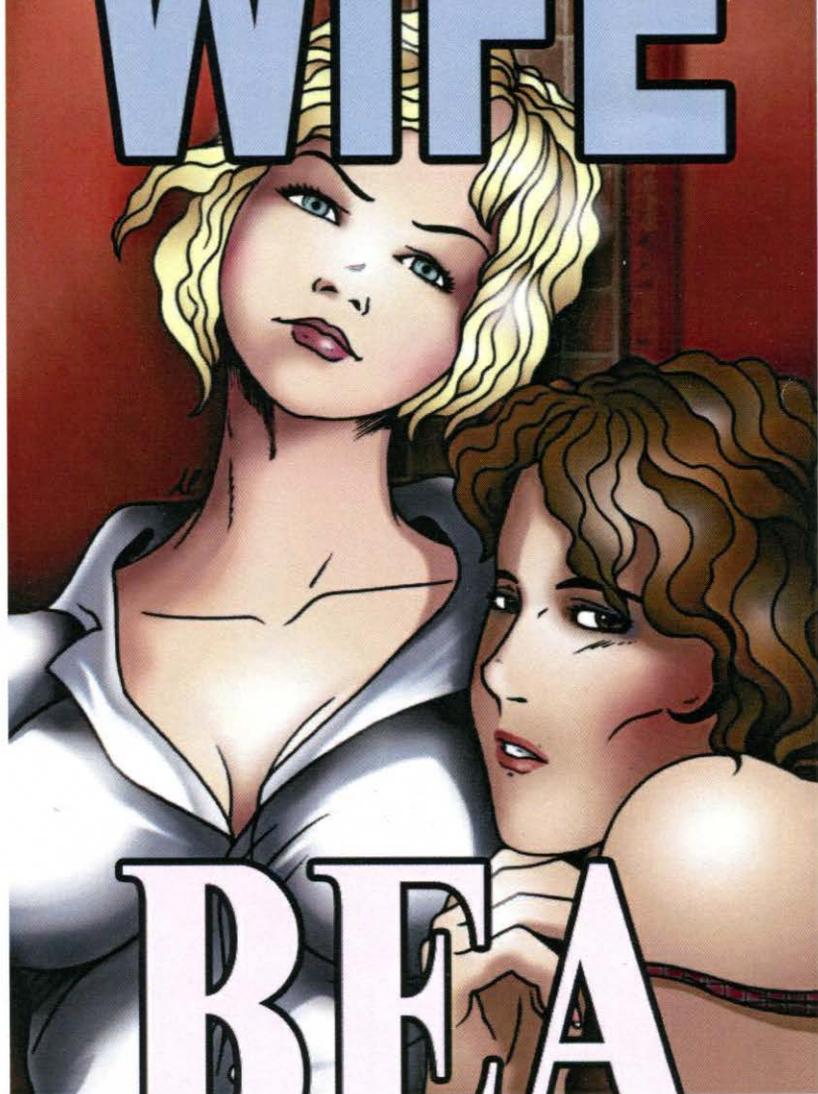


On Being A

WIFE



BEA

ON BEING A WIFE

By Bea

“C'mon Jim. Be a sport. We haven't had a vacation in years!”

“Couldn't afford one. You know that Priscilla.” I said shortly.

She looked distressed. “But Angie and Denise have booked the cabin – and have told me we only have to split groceries with them. I've heard them talk about this place before and it sounds wonderful. Out in the wilds and lovely. Just laze about all day. I could USE a rest Jim!” She closed her pitch with a desperate tone in her voice.

before and it sounds wonderful. Out in the wilds and lovely. Just laze about all day. I could USE a rest Jim!" She closed her pitch with a desperate tone in her voice.

She was close to getting mad, so I softened my defense a little. "C'mon Priss! You're asking me to live in with a bunch of women – and I don't think that Angie likes me very much – as a matter of fact I'm pretty sure she might fancy YOU!"

I knew immediately that I'd maybe gone too far. My wife looked at me, her eyes now flat and cold. "That's sinking pretty damn low Jim. You and I both know that Angie may be the masculine one of that twosome – but Denise is the boss in many ways. Catch Angie messing about? She'd scratch her eyes out – mine too probably if she thought I was involved with her boyfriend – which you KNOW that I've no interest in. Denise might be the feminine one of that twosome, but she's tough in some ways. Mighty tough."

I tried to mend some bridges. "I didn't really mean that Priss." I muttered wearily. "Sorry if I spoke out of turn."

She shrugged. "That's all very well – but you won't let me work because of some stupid macho pride thing and we have to struggle financially all the time. You're finally getting paid vacation from that place you work at – but when I ask you what we'll do to enjoy it – you simply tell me that you'll think about it." She shook her head violently. "I'm starting to think that your vague promises ain't good enough. I need a change dear and pretty damn quick. I'm up to about here with what you'll go along with. No of-

fense but I think you'd better come up with something that appeals to me pretty quick.” Then she paused. “I've been a good wife to you Jim, but I've just about had it. I think I'll tell the girls that I'll come along – regardless of what you do.”

I blinked. “Wow! You talking about splitting up? Divorcing me?”

She tutted at me. “Don't be silly. I'm just talking about going – if they'll have me. You'll just have to look after yourself for a few weeks. If I go, I think I'll be in a much better frame of mind when I get back – though I think that the girls would make you welcome if you joined us – but if you don't want to come? Well, that's up to you – isn't it? When I get back I think you'll find that my mental outlook is much better. That's all I'm saying. No threats meant nor intended.”

“But I'm not good at all that stuff , cooking and all of that shit – am I?” I shot back though I felt that I maybe hadn't finally pushed my long suffering wife a little too far, when she smiled. Weakly, but it was a smile.

“About time you learned then – huh? I have to put up with all of that *shit* every day!”

Stupid me – I grinned and backed down when I saw how serious she was. “I guess we'd better talk then, huh? Don't like the idea of me being all on my own for a while – might even give you some crazy ideas about getting along without me!”

She looked mildly astonished at my reaction, but smiled a little. “That’s better Jim. Just wait, you’ll see.”

* * *

The four of us sat around the kitchen table in Angie and Denise’s flat.

“Okay Jim.” Angie said. “I must admit that I’m surprised you’re coming, but have to admit that I’m pleased. Always thought you were a bit of a stick in the mud and that going on vacation with three women would scare the hell out of you.”

“Yes.” Denise added quietly. “We’ve known Priscilla for years and years – but thought that you didn’t like lesbians and tried to keep your wife away from us.” She looked at me clearly, though I could see the humor in her eyes. “I’m hoping that we’re not going to be getting any of that old nonsense from you – are we?”

“No Denise?” Priscilla jumped in before I could answer. “I’m pretty sure that Jim never cared much for women with women – but to be honest? I think he just looks down on women generally.” She shrugged and smiled a little. “He thinks that we’re *all* a bunch of nuts.”

Angie laughed. “Well just as long as he doesn’t try and convince ME! I’m quite a bit bigger and heavier than him. Had me a bunch of brothers to practice on, so he might be in for a real thumping if he takes me on. I had LOTS of practice fighting boys when I was young. They don’t scare me in the slightest. Nuts indeed!”

“You want the truth Jim?” Denise laughed. “I’m not sure that you’re even bigger than Priscilla or myself – and we’re not very big. So just keep in mind that if Angie isn’t around, us two remaining gals might combine forces, and give you a heard time!”

“Oh. I don’t think it’ll come to that!” Priscilla laughed. “Jim likes to bark about women and their rights – but he’s pretty decent most of the time. Just needs an education now and then!”

“Well – I’m just the gal for him then!” Angie laughed.

But then she got serious as she looked at me. “Jim? This is a vacation for all of us. You may think that Denise and I are probably weird about feminism – and maybe we are – but we think that fair is fair. We ALL split up the chores – no favoritism – no macho bullshit that a job isn’t for men. That sort of thing.”

“I’ll try to stay away from those words then Angie,” I laughed. “Don’t forget I’ll be outgunned on vacation by you ladies. On top of that? The one lady I’ll probably have to fight more if there’s any nonsense from me is my wife!”

“And? I don’t THINK that Angie takes any offense at being called a lady!” Denise smiled. “May go against her grain I think – but I suppose she’ll let it pass for now – though I wouldn’t belabor that point. Not if you want to stay healthy.”

“Oh shit! Sorry about that.” I said sincerely. “Certainly don’t want to hurt anybody’s feelings.”

“Don't worry about that – just watch out for your own.” Angie said – and we all laughed.

Oddly enough, I felt at home amongst this group more than I'd thought I would. I never had felt this way before, having a tendency to look down my nose at 'deviants' as I had called Angie and Denise, yet in many ways I felt peculiar around them – more defensive than anything else, though I'd never admit to this of course. I mean, the only word I could think of that made any sort of sense to me was 'scared', but as this was patently absurd, I said nothing at all about it. Looking back, I could see that I'd made a point to ignore them – not be around when they called or make myself scarce sort of thing. But sitting there amongst them? I realized how wrong I'd been. I had to admit that what they said made sense although I wondered tentatively what they might ask of me.

We all chatted over coffee – how much luggage, groceries etc, we'd take. They had a bigger car, so I offered to pay for the gasoline and a rough agreement was drawn up about our timetable etc. It made far too much sense for us all to go in one car if we could. Naturally, I left most of the details up to Priscilla – the date, point of pick up and so on. So? I had very little to do before the big day itself. We all parted amicably that night and I could tell that Priscilla was delighted with me – something that was becoming more and more uncommon all the time.

We'd been married for some time and with both of us being brought up with the idea that the man ruled the roost – in a manner of speaking, we'd both been quite content. Recently though, she'd started to seem uneasy with

our relationship, so I was finally pleased that I'd given in and accepted the idea of the vacation.

Naturally – being a woman – she over packed – just in case of snow, fog, rain etc. where I was a little more judicious. Her case was pretty heavy and I may have over reacted and made a big deal of getting it out to the driveway when the morning came for pick up. Had the awful feeling that I was straining my back. I really WAS having a struggle getting it up and into the trunk after the ladies drove up, when Angie, with a small snort, easily picked it up and placed it in position. I must admit to feeling a little embarrassed when Priscilla treated mine just as easily. She gave me a strange look but I desisted from pointing out that hers was much heavier than my own.

I also must admit that I'd got the rather silly idea that I was going to drive but when I went to make a move, Angie gave me a queer look and almost laughed at me – but did allow me to sit up front with her. We did stop for lunch and I had to admit that the mountain road curves might be making me car sick so after that I suggested that I sit in the back with Denise while Priscilla sat up front with Angie. I must have dozed, waking up to find my head on Denise's shoulder. Did I look weak? I don't know. Somehow I got the feeling that the women were starting off by looking at me as if I were a 'weak sister'. Nobody said anything of course.

I think I may have been somewhat awakened by the lurching of the car taking the side road to the cabin. Then we were there just as I wakened up completely. It was quite small from the outside though larger than I had anticipated

and there was no sign of any neighbors – so I was hoping that we hadn't forgotten anything knowing that the nearest place to shop was a small village and it was quite some distance away. As I looked around the beautiful surroundings once I was out of the car, I could smell the cedar and spruce. Thought to myself. 'Well if Priscilla wanted peace and quiet, she certainly got it here.'

There was no garage, just a sort of covered opening for the car that was attached to the side of the cabin. Angie drove in and parked the car. Denise had the keys, so went to open the front door. Denise and Angie had been there before but we hadn't, so they took a few minutes to give us a tour and I had to admit that it really was quite charming and, much to my surprise, Priscilla and myself even had our own bathroom. It was small, but contained all of the necessities – shower etc. There was a fair sized kitchen and a nice sitting room. Angie finally looked out of the window.

“Might rain.” She said, looking up at the sky. “Better get the car unloaded.” She and I went and unlocked the rear hatch door and lifted it so that we could get in at the luggage. Naturally, I stepped forward – as our luggage had been the last on it was to be first off. I reached for the handle of Priscilla's suitcase and hauled – and couldn't budge it. Red faced I heaved, but it wouldn't move.

“Let me see that, would you?” Angie said – then stepped in and heaved it to the ground with no effort. I could feel my face redden, but went to pick the case up now – but to my horror, Priscilla came up and said. “Jim. Don't strain yourself any more. I'll get it.” Then she lifted it

fairly easily and started toward the house. Embarrassed and ashamed, I now went to unload my own case – and though this was lighter, found myself struggle with it as well – though I finally got it onto the ground, very conscious of Angie's half amused look that was shot my way. Trying to look unconcerned I started heaving it towards the cabin.

Now, I was struggling to get it into the house, feeling it bang awkwardly against my leg to the extent that I had to put it down on the front porch – then to my total embarrassment, Priscilla came out on her return journey.

“I saw you having problems dear. Why don't you let me have this – and you can start giving Denise a hand with the grocery sacks? I'm sure that they are lighter.”

“Ha Ha! Enough of the jokes!” I blustered. “I just have a little strain on my hand . . .”

Priscilla moved closer to me and in a half whisper, spoke words that I never would have thought of hearing from her. “Jim? You're not very strong. A little on the soft side. You can yell all you want, but Angie has already sized you up for being a bit weak – and will probably tease you about it if you keep showing yourself up. Now dear? You have a choice. Leave the suitcase for me. Go and help Denise – and hope that Angie doesn't give you a hard time. Or ? Just try and work that suitcase in by yourself – and let her see more reason to tease you. What's it to be?”

“Well? I *have* hurt my hand!” I said loudly. Making my mind up in a hurry. “So thank you dear. Maybe carrying in the packages for Denise won't hurt it so badly!” I snuck a

look at Angie after I spoke. She had another half smile on her face. Priscilla smiled and took the suitcase without another word and I went back and graciously helped Denise carry in the lighter bags of groceries – though there were quite a few. I actually ended up puffing a little, but not much.

After I finished I went back into our bedroom. Priscilla was hanging up stuff. She looked at me. “Finished already?”

“All groceries and incidentals in!” I announced proudly.

“And put away?”

“Well. I figured that she'd know better what she wanted.”

“In a strange place? Everything almost new to her. For heaven's sake Jim – stop looking like such a layabout! For God's sake get back out there and help! We're their guests!”

I knew she was right but I still replied sulkily. “You made SUCH an issue of me being such a weakling when I *was* trying to help, I was too embarrassed to stay any longer than I had to!”

She shook her head. “That's a load of bullshit Jim. If you don't want me to help you the next time you leave yourself open for Angie to give you a hard time? Just say the word!”

I was hurt. “I think you're giving yourself an awful lot of credit. I could have handled that suitcase and Angie – NO problem!” I murmured.

Her eyebrows arched and she smiled. “Okay then. I'll stay out of things.” She said and went back to hanging clothes up. Ignored me.

It didn't take long before I found trouble. I knew that Priscilla had been correct but decided to ignore her. I wandered about while the gals got the place tidied and looking like home. The cabin WAS nice. Reasonably new in construction it had three bedroom and two baths. A good size kitchen and a nice comfy living room – although being up in the mountains the TV reception wasn't that good. Outside was a wilderness of coniferous trees and a good slope down to a lake about a mile away. It did look like rain though and I didn't spend too long looking around. After all, I didn't want to get wet. By the time I returned to the cabin it looked much nicer inside and Denise had made lunch for us all.

I had lunch. There did seem to be a little tension in the air but I figured it had nothing to do with me so, once I finished, I thanked Denise for the lunch and started walking into the Living room.

“Going somewhere?” Angie said, looking at me.

“Yeah. Thought I'd check TV. See if there's anything on. Maybe catch a nap?” I added the last with a smile.

“All tired out from carrying those big, heavy, suitcases?” She asked sarcastically.

I blushed. “Have a strained wrist.” I mumbled.

She positively bristled. “No you don't. You're a weakling. I wouldn't MIND you being so puny. It's when you're lazy to go along with it. You haven't done practically a hands turn since you got here – and I'm not going to let you get away with it. Sorry!”

She was staring contemptuously at me. “Now? I think you should offer to give Denise a hand to clean up. Priscilla and I are going to take a walk down to the lake – so I think that you should help Denise. After all – with it being *women's* work? It shouldn't be too much of a strain on your poor hand!” She was upset – not totally mad you know, but upset.

The insult she'd thrown at me was too much though. “If there was some men's work around here? I wouldn't mind! But a bunch of housework? I got better things to do.” I gazed at Priscilla for the backup I'm used to. She simply cocked her head. Then I remembered her promise to stay out of things.

Angie sat up and looked at me sardonically. “Dear? You're not STRONG enough to do a man's job! I doubt if you're even strong enough for women's work. To be honest? I'm stronger than you – agreed?”

I had to answer this out but without a challenge. “Well – you're bigger – and I've got a strained arm.”

She laughed. “It was a wrist a few minutes ago – but that's okay. Now will you agree that *Priscilla* is stronger than you?”

“Ha. No way.” I replied.

“Denise then?”

“You're not even funny now!” I snapped.

Angie was standing now. “Yes, Denise is small, soft and feminine. Certainly no bigger than you – even though you have a *sort* arm.” She came across the room to me. “But Jim dear? I'll give you a choice. Right now, you say that you'll start helping Denise on a regular basis – or I'll take you, put you over my knee and spank you until you agree.” She took another step towards me. “Or you can opt to do something else?”

“Or what?” I asked nervously.

“You take Denise on in Indian Arm wrestling. You win? You do anything you like around here until we leave. I'll never criticize you again. She beats you? You join her in being the little house maker around here. I'm sure that she'll have an apron that fits you?”

“Don't talk NONSENSE Angie!” Denise laughed. “I can't do Indian Arm Wrestling. I'm a *girl* you big silly! I don't even know what I'm supposed to do!”

“Angie? That IS asking a lot of Denise!” Priscilla said with amusement. “You might also be making *her* look puny and weak, if she can't beat him. I can't see her enjoying that.”

Angie turned to Priscilla. “You really think he could beat her?”

At that point I got a shock. Priscilla actually *thought* before she answered. “Now that you ask? I think he might – but it's probably a close call.”

Denise laughed. “This is utter nonsense you two. I'm not going to participate in doing something that will make me look bad.”

I felt the relief well up in me and maybe didn't hide it well enough. “See you guys? Even Denise thinks that it would be ridiculous! Pitting her up against ME! Just make her look bad is all it would be! I agree with her totally!”

I believe that the silence that fell is often described as a 'pregnant pause'. Knew I might have erred when Priscilla and Angie looked at each other and tittered. Denise didn't see any humor in it – none at all.

“I didn't say it was *ridiculous!*” She said, her face starting to get red. She glared at me. “Don't forget – I saw you fumbling around with those suitcases this afternoon. You didn't look all THAT strong to me! Didn't impress me one little iota! I saw that Priscilla had to do your work for you in bringing the suitcases in – so don't be acting all big and macho. Come to think on it? I'm not so sure that you *could* beat me!”

“I'm not so sure either!” Angie said smoothly. “Why don't you try, Denise?”

“I don't fight girls!” I said proudly.

Denise was standing now. “Well? This *lowly* girl wants to arm wrestle you – whatever that means! Chicken?” She scowled at me.

“C'mon girls! Time to get this all resolved! Clear up the air!” Angie smiled, clearing a corner of the kitchen table off and pulling two chairs kitty-corner to each other.

Denise started towards the table, her back all straight and angry, but she tittered at Angie. “You said *girls!* You meant boys and girls!”

“Well?” Angie shrugged, grinning. “Maybe I made a mistake?”

“Hey! This is TOO much!” I said, her previous comment ranking in me. “Sorry Denise! But let's get this over with – shall we?” I headed to the table and sat down, waiting for her – though I must admit that my heart was starting to pound in my chest and I had a glimmer of hope that she would back off when faced by my confidence. Put my elbow on the table – and glared at everyone as I waited.

It *almost* worked! I think that Denise saw what she had talked herself into and started having doubts as her face reflected uncertainty as she looked from Angie to Priscilla. But in all honesty? They gave her absolutely NO encouragement and I saw victory in sight, but then Denise grinned to everybody and shrugged.

“What do I have to lose, huh? I'm just a soft girl!” With that she sat down opposite me and put her white girlish elbow on the table. “Is this right?” She asked. Then “What do I do?”

Impatiently I waited until the other girls explained how she and I would compete. Hand in hand, elbows on the table and not allowed to rise – each of us trying to force the other back so that they either gave – or lost once the back of their hand touched the table. Best out of three. I had to snigger – Denise didn't even know what that meant. She did see my reaction to this comment though and I could see that she was NOT pleased.

We got set, hands in hand, then was given the decision to 'Go!' I won the first easily by immediately pressing and I think taking Denise by surprise. Though I will admit that once I got her hand almost parallel, she looked at me with decision on her face and actually held me back for a few seconds.

“Gosh! That was QUICK!” She laughed. “I wasn't quite ready.”

“Sorry dear!” Angie said. “He beat you fair and square.”

“Let's get this over with!” I grated with some delight. “No excuses in Indian wrestling. You win or lose – that's IT!”

Okay!” She said, and put her arm on the table. Suddenly, I felt a small doubt in my intestines, but I was committed now. Took her small hand in mine. Suddenly realized that our hands were not all that different – small, white. Weak maybe? Was it possible that her hand was now enfolding MINE? I felt her stiffen. Knew that I wouldn't catch her by surprise this time.

