

An AB Discovery Book

# The Therapist Decides

Plus  
'Promises, Promises'

written by

**Terry Masters**

The Therapist Decides

# *The Therapist Decides*

By Terry Masters

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These stories were originally published in the late 1990s but have been updated and edited for your current enjoyment. This volume contains two wonderful full-length stories, “The Therapist Decides” and “Promises, Promises”.

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# The Therapist Decides

Submitted to BBW in 1998, edited by Terry Master

## An Idea Forms



Doctor Patricia Neeland slumped back in her chair, her eyes staring unfocused across the expanse of her office. Her last patient, a fifteen-year-old boy who had been sent to her after he started wetting the bed for no apparent physical reason, had stormed out of the office halfway into the fifty-minute session when her questions became too embarrassing for him to handle. On any other day, she would have pursued him and coaxed him back onto the couch. Today, though, she welcomed the longer interval before her noon group therapy session for troubled teens. Today, she needed the time to sort out her own feelings about what had happened the night before.

It had been a typical night, ending as it usually did with her and her live-in boyfriend of three years snuggling together in bed. She could sense his discomfort, though, a tension running through the muscles of his body. It wasn't like him to keep anything from her,

and a simple prompt asking if everything was okay opened the gates.

Robert was a freelance copy editor who worked out the home they shared, having set up a small office in the corner of their den. That afternoon he was doing battle with a stubborn author who took issue with the changes he had made to her novel to better conform with the publisher's norms. He couldn't tell the unfortunate writer that he actually agreed with her arguments without losing his job, so he was stuck defending positions that didn't represent his own views. He had just hung up the phone and was attempting to calm himself down when the doorbell rang. Normally he would ignore it while working, but he needed the distraction. Striding quickly to the foyer, he flung the door open.

It was Joyce, a neighbor from down the street. Robert and Patricia didn't really count her among their friends, having only chatted briefly at block parties. They knew her more from the rumors that swirled through the neighborhood gossip channels which pegged Joyce as a tramp and man-stealer. To hear the worst of it, she had had affairs with no fewer than three married neighbors that led to two divorces. Probably an exaggeration, but who knew?

It was that reputation, deserved or not, that sent nervous tremors through Robert's body when he saw Joyce standing before him. In Robert's recounting of what happened next, Joyce invited herself in and before he knew it, they were sitting at the kitchen table having coffee. Not far from the truth, Patricia thought, knowing how timid Robert was and how easily he could be manipulated. An aggressive woman would have him eating out of her hands in no time.

The purpose, or pretext, of Joyce's visit was to find the name of a reliable plumber. She had an emergency and needed someone better than the last plumber she called. She didn't have phone numbers of any of the neighbors, so she just started knocking on doors, and wasn't it her good fortune that Robert had answered?

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Robert provided the name of a plumber, but Joyce had questions about his credentials, which led to stories about toilet disasters, which somehow morphed into Robert bemoaning his latest problems with the recalcitrant author.

Whatever plumbing emergency existed couldn't have been that urgent, as an hour quickly flew by as they talked. Robert never noticed that Joyce's chair had gradually shifted closer to his, and he jumped in surprise as she put her hand on his shoulder. Soon it moved to his thigh. She might just be one of those people who talk with their hands, he had explained to Patricia, but he wasn't sure. At that point, his cell phone rang and the irate publisher on the other end of the call demanded his immediate attention, so he swiftly led Joyce to the door.

*Was she flirting with him, he asked Patricia that night, or was it his imagination? Should he have done something sooner?*

Robert stammered out the questions without waiting for answers, and Patricia recognized the signs of guilt. Something more was bothering him, so she ventured a guess. Was there a part of him that welcomed Joyce's attention? Robert blanched, and Patricia had her answer even before he spoke. Yes, he said, he was flattered in a way. But he would never, never act on it. She had to believe him.

And Patricia did believe him, but that didn't make her any less upset. Just because she was a psychologist didn't make her any more rational than anyone else would be in that situation. She said some things she shouldn't have and cried and yelled, and in the end, sent Robert to sleep in the spare bedroom. She snuck out of the house early in the morning to avoid seeing him until she knew that she would have something cogent to say about the situation. He had already called twice, but she allowed the calls to go to voice mail.

*Let him sweat!*

She knew she had been too harsh with him. He did open up to her and she had no doubt that he had told the full story. But she also didn't want to take any chances that Joyce, or someone just like

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her, would someday take advantage of the man. Patricia was his first real relationship—he was several years younger than herself--- and he was more like a boy than a man in some ways in knowing how to deal with women. He was naïve and childlike in so many ways, in fact, but that was part of his charm. He was also attentive, loving, and devoted in a way that no prior man had ever been. He and Patricia seemed to fit together perfectly, and she was not about to lose him to some trollop. And she knew that she was a jealous enough type of person that one affair would be enough for her to dump him forever.

Not that any affair he had would last long once the woman got him into bed. Patricia smiled at the image. Robert didn't know it—he was a virgin when Patricia deflowered him—but he was a woeful lover. His penis was small, which wasn't in itself a bad thing, but he didn't make up for the lack of size with any special skill. And he was the poster boy for premature ejaculation. In and over in less than two minutes.

Most women would be frustrated with their lover's lack of performance, but for Patricia, it was one more reason to keep Robert close. When she was barely a teenager, a boy whom she thought was a friend overpowered her and took advantage of her. It was violent and disturbing and left Patricia emotionally scarred. Her parents refused to believe her, her school counselor covered it up and there was no one to help her work through the serious issues she had as a result of the incident.

It was that lack of support that led her to become a child psychologist. Perhaps she could offer help to tortured young souls that she never got. The irony, Patricia knew, was that despite all of her education and supposed wisdom, she could never cure herself of her inner demons. Sex, to her, was unpleasant and unnecessary to her fulfillment as a person. That's why Robert's infrequent quickies were a positive thing. She could never satisfy any man with a healthy sex drive and any penetration for longer than a few minutes would be horrific. She needed to keep him close.



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There was one more reason that she could not imagine life without Robert - Nicole, her seventeen-year-old daughter. Despite the circumstances under which she was conceived, she loved Nicole deeply and devoted her life to her. Robert came along just as Nicky was entering into the difficult teenage years and having him as a sort of father figure helped keep her daughter on the right path. Mostly, anyway. He was a good influence on her, and Patricia shuddered to think what would happen if he left their life. Which brought her full circle back to her dilemma.

Kicking Robert out of the house was never an option, and in reality, he didn't do anything wrong. Still, Patricia had to think of a way to prevent any chance of a repeat performance. Since she couldn't count on the boy to recognize the signs of seduction in time to cut them off, the obvious choice was to make him undesirable to other women. But how? What could she do that would maintain his attractiveness to her while putting him off limits to others?

An image of her last patient flashed through her mind, and an idea took root. In an instant, an entire plan formed in Patricia's mind. It was a bit extreme, more than a little devious, but at first glance, it would be exactly what the doctor ordered. There was no time to consider details, as she could hear her group of unruly teenagers gathering in the waiting area. But it would work. A sudden peacefulness filled Patricia's mind as she got up to open the door.



Patricia used the time during her drive home that evening to fill in the details of her plan and to look at it from every angle. It was deceptively simple, which meant fewer chances of something going wrong. But there were definitely a few possible bumps that could derail the whole thing, and she had to temper her enthusiasm. For one thing, the whole plot hung on her ability to dust off an old skill

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that she had learned as a tool for her therapy but which she rarely used. She was confident that it wouldn't take long to get back up to speed, however, and if things went according to plan, Robert would knowingly subject himself to it anyway. If it took longer than she expected to bring him under her spell, the delay would be frustrating but would not spoil anything. Besides, knowing him, he would be so willing to please her that she could succeed even as she got back into her rhythm.

The bigger concern was Nicky. She would need to be informed early on about what was going on and at a later point might even need to be involved. Patricia frowned. Would she think her mom had totally lost her mind? Would she reveal everything to Robert in order to protect him? Not likely. Nicky had resisted the authority Patricia gave Robert over her daughter and it was clear that Robert's lack of parenting experience made him timid with her, even as he tried to enforce discipline. There was a bigger chance that Nicky would tell him what Patricia had planned if she thought he would take offense and move out. She was an intelligent girl, and the thought would occur to her. But would she risk alienating her mother and actively take away a true source of happiness for her?

Possibly, but probably not. For one thing, Nicky would be leaving for college in the Fall and would more likely focus on the fact that she would not be under Robert's roof much longer. An even stronger reason, though, was that there would be a heavy dose of humiliation on Robert's part and Nicky would eagerly anticipate being a witness to it. The more she considered Nicky's possible reaction, the more convinced Patricia was that she would enthusiastically support the whole plan - maybe too much. She might actually try to take things to a level beyond what even Patricia intended. She would have to be watched as things unfolded.

By the time she pulled into her driveway, Patricia was not only convinced that she should immediately move forward with her plans but had practiced her initial speech for Robert. She was never

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one to procrastinate. The minute she walked into that house, it was game on. Robert's life would start changing that very night.

## Robert Is Sucked In



Robert was hiding in the den, pretending to be hard at work in order to avoid Patricia, which was fine with her. She needed to talk to her daughter before confronting Robert and starting him on the program that would protect him from the advances of other women. If he knew what was in store for him, she thought smiling, he might not wait so meekly to see how Patricia would be following up on their heated exchange from the night before.

Patricia found Nicole on her bed, listening to music. She looked up questioningly as her mom entered the room. Patricia knew that nothing got by Nicky, and she almost certainly had heard the argument, or at least the raised voices. It was a sign of how mature she was getting that she didn't raise the subject on her own but waited until her mother was ready to talk. It made things easier.

"So how much did you hear last night?" Patricia asked with a soft smile as she sat on the end of the bed. "We were probably pretty loud."

"I heard you yelling, but didn't make out any of the words," Nicky responded. Patricia could tell she was dying of curiosity but wasn't pushing for an explanation. "It isn't like you to scream at him like that."

"No, it isn't, and I apologize that you had to hear that. A child should never have to get in the middle of her parents' disputes." Patricia winced at her own words. Careful now, she told herself, don't go all "therapist" on her. She took a breath and continued. "And really, I should be apologizing to Robert as well. I overreacted."

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Patricia then replayed the entire argument for Nicky, being careful to stress that Robert had been forthright and that her own anger at Joyce had been misdirected at him. She explained how important he was to her and how devastating it would be if she lost him, whether to another woman or in any other way. Patricia looked into Nicky's eyes, hoping that she was getting the message that nothing that was being said in that room, woman to woman, was to be used as a device to get him to leave. Nicky looked sincerely saddened at her mother's distress, which was a positive sign. Patricia paused before getting to the heart of why she was there, silently evaluating whether she should open up after all.

Nicky assumed that Patricia was done speaking and used her silence to jump into the conversation. "So, Mom, if what you say is true and you need to apologize to Robert, why are you here talking with me?"

Patricia smiled. Astute girl, she thought. She looked directly at her daughter, made up her mind to follow her original plan, and spoke with confidence. "Because I've decided not to apologize to him. I need to be proactive to make sure that he isn't lured into a situation that will divide us, and for that I need him to think that I'm still angry at him. I have a plan, and I need your help."

Nicole's eyes grew wide, and her mouth opened as if to say something, but she remained mute. Clearly, her first reaction was one of surprise and probably a little bit of shock that her own mother would consider something apparently a bit sinister. Then her face changed. Patricia didn't need to be a psychologist to see that Nicky was excited. As she expected, the idea of conspiring against Robert was clearly thrilling to Nicky. Her daughter's next words confirmed this.

"So, what are we going to do? When are we going to start?"

Patricia giggled a bit at Nicky's obvious enthusiasm, which caused Nicky to giggle and soon mother and daughter were laughing together. Patricia composed herself, moved closer to Nicky, and took her by the hand.

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“You have to understand that what I’m about to tell you, what we’re going to do, has to be absolutely confidential. You can’t tell anyone, not even Sarah,” she said, referring to Nicky’s best friend since kindergarten. “I could not only lose Robert but lose my license.”

Nicky nodded solemnly. She sat attentively, waiting for Patricia to continue. Patricia hesitated, suddenly unsure of how to start. She decided to build to it slowly.

“I trust Robert. I think his heart is true in his affection for and loyalty to me. I don’t really believe he would betray me willingly. It’s just that he’s, well, he’s, shall we say, a bit naïve when it comes to certain things.” Patricia didn’t miss Nicky’s fleeting smile. Her own daughter was more aware of the trappings of the sexual world than her boyfriend, who was a decade older, and Nicky knew it.

“So ,it’s not enough to get his assurances that it won’t happen again, and I can’t always be around to protect him from the predators like Joyce. I can’t exactly sprinkle a magic powder on him to make him more aware. The whole episode from yesterday has convinced me that the only way I can feel safe is to make Robert unappealing to other women.”

Nicky’s face first flushed with puzzlement as she tried to work out where her mom was going, then cleared as she nodded. “I guess that makes sense. But what could you do? You can’t exactly splash acid on his face or anything.”

“No, I wasn’t talking about his physical appearance. I was thinking something completely different.” Nicky looked confused again as Patricia tried to think of a way to approach the subject in a way that she would understand. Then an idea hit her. “Do you remember last summer when you babysat the Jordans’ daughter? How cute you thought she was when you first picked her up?”

Nicky’s eyes rolled up at the memory. “She was cute. A little dolly. But I don’t understand...” Nicky stopped mid-sentence as she

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suddenly saw where her mom was going. Her mouth dropped open and she looked at Patricia with a combination of surprise and amazement. "You can't be serious."

"It was the first time you had sat for a child that young. I remember you took a picture of her on your phone and sent it to me with a message talking about how adorable she was, and how perfect her little fingers and toes and nose were. You were gushing so much I was worried that you would run out afterward ready to have one of your own."

Nicky snickered. "Yes, and then she fouled her diaper and she wasn't so cute anymore. She was wet and stinky, and it was disgusting. I think I was crying when I called you."

"Yes, and if you remember I had to come over to change the diaper. That was the last time you babysat for her. You thought she was the prettiest thing you had ever seen, but that all changed in a moment. The baby's appearance didn't change, just your perception of her. You went from wanting to keep her for yourself to never wanting to be near her again."

"I remember. I get it now. But it's not like you can get Robert to wear diapers," Nicky said jokingly. Patricia blushed as her lips curled into a devilish smile. She nodded and Nicky stared at her in admiration and excitement. "But how? You need to tell me everything and you need to tell me now!"

And for the next thirty minutes, Patricia did just that.

# The Devious Duo Plot Robert's Demise



Before leaving Nicole's room, Patricia had to caution her daughter again about the importance of keeping everything they had discussed to herself. The girl was so excited about their plans that she was literally bouncing on the bed. For her, it was Christmas in July.

As she reached the bottom of the stairs, Patricia breathed a sigh of relief. One hurdle cleared without a problem. The next one, though, was much more critical. Even though Robert was not as perceptive as Nicky, one false move would still make him suspicious and that would ruin everything. There was no turning back at this point, though, so Patricia steeled herself and strode toward the den.

Patricia could feel Robert tense up as she entered the room. The fact that he was nervous in her presence, perhaps even a bit scared, was a positive thing. She needed him to be willing to do whatever it would take to repair their relations, and it helped if he still thought that she was angry with him. He would have to put his fate in her hands of his own accord.

"Robert, we need to talk." Patricia hoped that he didn't notice the slight tremor in her voice, or that he would assume it was a result of her continuing irritation with him. He turned to face her, and at that moment Patricia knew she was going to succeed. He was pale, trembling, and had the look of a prisoner being led to his execution. Putty in her hands.



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“Patricia, I’m sorry. Really, I am. I didn’t realize—”

“Stop right there, Robert.” Patricia cut him off deliberately. She didn’t want to give him the chance to launch into whatever speech of contrition he had been rehearsing all day. She had to assume control of the course of the conversation. “I’ve been thinking about what happened yesterday and I know it wasn’t entirely your fault. Joyce took advantage of your good nature. But the fact that you let it go as far as you did, even if it was subconsciously, worries me. I think it may reflect uncertainties that you have about our relationship, that maybe on some level you are looking to see what else is out there. Deep down, your commitment might not be as strong as you think it is. That concerns me.”

“But Pat, you don’t—”

“Robert, don’t interrupt. I’m trained to analyze just these kinds of behaviors and no matter what you say, I’m sure I’m right to be worried. If I’m to forgive you for your actions yesterday, if we are to continue as a couple, I need to make sure that you aren’t harboring thoughts of other women. I’ve come up with a way that I can overcome any doubts I have about your level of devotion. Unless you agree, I could never be completely comfortable in my own mind. In that case, you might as well pack your bags and go tonight.”

Patricia waited for a reaction. Robert’s posture reminded her of a deflated balloon. The temptation to soften her words was enormous, but she needed to remain cross to effectuate his upcoming training. “Robert, that was your cue to speak. Are you willing to do what I ask in order to keep us together?” Robert was so overcome with emotion at that point, she doubted that he realized she never told him anything about what she was asking him to agree to.

“Of course, dear, I would do anything. You have to know that I love you and would never even think about leaving you.” Patricia saw the light bulb go off in his head and he looked at her with a puzzled expression. “Um, what exactly is it that you need me to do?”

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“First, I think it’s best if we don’t share the same bed for a while until all of my doubts have been erased. You can use Nicky’s old bedroom.” No protests so far. Good. “Next, since my biggest concerns involve your subconscious desires, the part of your mind that harbors thoughts that even you don’t realize, I want to probe that area of your brain. I want to see if there’s anything in there that shouldn’t be. In other words, I want to hypnotize you.”

Robert’s jaw dropped, and a slight squeak may have emitted from his mouth, but he didn’t say a word. Patricia didn’t want to give him a chance to object, so she kept on going.

“It’s the only way I can address my doubts. If your subconscious mind reveals the sort of love and devotion that you claim you have...” She gave him a stern look, hopefully conveying the impression that she had her doubts about the sincerity of his protestations, “then we’re good and can move on with confidence. If not, well, then...” Patricia let Robert fill in the rest in his mind.

“So, starting tonight, every evening before bedtime we will spend some time together answering our questions.” Patricia wanted Robert to think that this was a mutual undertaking. “You will get comfortable, and I’ll gently put you into a trance, where your innermost thoughts will reveal themselves to me. I’ll be the one doing all of the work. You will probably come to enjoy these times. I’ve heard they’re very relaxing.

“It’s not something that can be done in a single night or even a week. I won’t know how long it will take to get the answers I need. I have many, many questions.”

As she said this, Patricia moved over to where Robert sat dazed in his chair and stood above him menacingly. It had all gone just as she had hoped. He was so overwhelmed with guilt and confusion that she had run him over before he could form any thoughts of his own. As far as he knew, her anger from the night before had not abated one bit.

“Now, you can get back to work. Dinner in thirty minutes.”

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Dinner was uncomfortable, which was exactly how Patricia wanted it to be. She had to keep Robert thinking she was still upset with him so that the warmth she would show later if the hypnotic triggers worked would reinforce the desired behaviors. Nicky played the role of the sullen teenager perfectly, although more than once Patricia saw her glance at her stepfather with a subtle grin.

When he had finished eating, Robert slunk from the table and retreated to the den, closing the door behind him. Patricia had barely got up to clear the table when Nicky burst out excitedly.

“Well, how did it go? Is everything okay? Did he agree to let you hypnotize him? When are you going to start?”

The questions spilled from her daughter’s mouth faster than Patricia could answer them. She finally sat back down and faced her daughter.

“Shhh... not so loud. Yes, he agreed. I didn’t leave him much choice. We are going to start tonight.”

Nicky smiled widely. “Do you think it’s going to work right away? I mean, will he wet the bed tonight?” Patricia was a bit taken aback by her daughter’s enthusiasm. Then again, she anticipated the idea of humiliating her Stepdad would appeal to Nicky.

“It’s possible—he’s pretty suggestible—but it will probably take several sessions. We’ll just have to wait and see. And no,” Patricia could see the next question form in Nicky’s mind, “you can’t listen in. I need to be able to concentrate without having to worry about you making a noise.”

She could tell that Nicky was momentarily disappointed, but it didn’t take long before she regained her excitement. After all, the process itself was not the best part, The result was what would make it fun for her.

Patricia’s own vocalization that she would be starting that very night brought on an unexpected case of nerves. She would need a few minutes to gain her composure and build up her

confidence, but first, she decided to make sure Nicky knew her own role.

“Now, you do know how you’re supposed to act around Robert in the normal course of the day, right? I’m going to tell him that you and I had a talk and that you are aware that we are having problems. You’ll need to be distant and cold. He’ll assume that you have taken my side in our difficulty and are upset with his behavior.” As she spoke, Patricia realized that “*distant and cold*” wasn’t a whole lot different from how Nicky usually interacted with Robert, so she wouldn’t need to put on a performance. “But if he has an accident during his sleep, and you discover it, tell me what you need to do.”

If she was exasperated at her mother’s covering the same ground for the hundredth time, Nicole didn’t show it. “I am to be sickeningly sympathetic to him, and to be really nice, and to let him know that it could happen to anyone. And to give him a hug and treat him like I care.” Nicky frowned as she spoke. Patricia also frowned; those weren’t quite her words, but the gist of it was accurate enough.

“Close enough. Basically, the only time either you or I will show Robert any warmth is when he is wet. Hopefully, that will plant the right idea in his subconscious.”

Nicky giggled a bit, and Patricia reached over and put her hand over that of her daughter. “Well, wish me luck. I need to get things rolling.”

Patricia stood outside the door to the den for a few moments, closed her eyes, and muttered a simple mantra intended to give her a confidence she didn’t feel. After a couple of deep breaths, she entered the room.

Robert was startled at her approach and quickly turned to face Patricia as she pulled a chair over close to his. He seemed to sense that she did not want him to say a word, for which she was grateful.