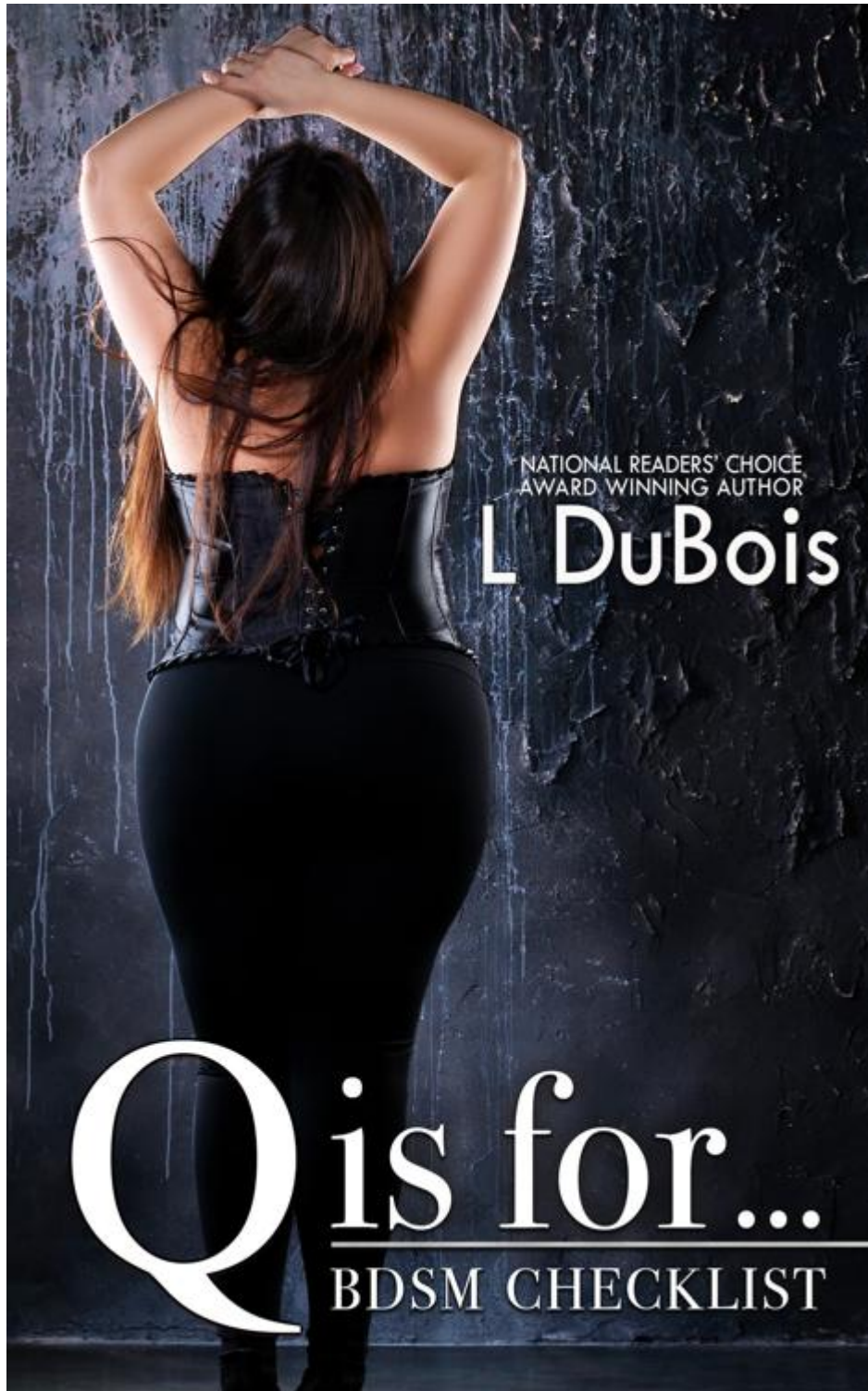




NATIONAL READERS' CHOICE
AWARD WINNING AUTHOR

L DuBois

Q is for...
BDSM CHECKLIST



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Published by:

Farm Boy Press,
Sacramento, California, United States of America.

First electronic edition: February 14, 2023

This edition: February 10, 2023

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Cover design by Lila Dubois

Copyedits by Fedora Chen

Book formatted by Farm Boy Press

ISBN: 978-1-941641-75-0 ebook

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*This one is dedicated to all the self proclaimed “boob guy”s
and “boob girl”s.*

You’re out here just doing the lord’s work.

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TRIGGER WARNINGS

THE CHECKLIST SERIES IS FOR MATURE READERS AND ALL BOOKS CONTAIN EXPLICIT SEX.

In addition to BDSM elements, this story contains:

- Body image issues, discussion of body size, including use of the term “fat”
- Emotional abuse (in the past, off-page)
- Discussion of, and depiction of, rape fantasy

For a complete list of additional trigger warnings for this title please visit www.trigger.liladubois.net

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Q IS FOR...



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CHAPTER 1



Orgy? Maybe they were going to have an orgy. Nomi fidgeted, rising up so that she wasn't sitting back on her heels. Kneeling like that caused her lower legs to tingle after only a few minutes, and if they were going to have an orgy she'd need feeling in her limbs. Every member of the club—Doms, Masters, Owners, subs, slaves, and every flavor in between—was in attendance at this quasi-mandatory meeting. So far there had been no instructions given, but when the other subs had started kneeling in the center of the room, Nomi had followed suit.

If she'd known how long she had to wait, Nomi would have headed up to the loft space and grabbed a seat. Shifting position helped. "Kneeling up" like this meant her lower legs weren't losing feeling, but the concrete floor of the converted barn they called the Conclave was hard on her knees.

Nomi was debating standing up when Master Morton walked past her. He was casually strolling among the subs and as he passed her, his hand brushed her hair.

Nomi let out a soft sigh, feeling much more submissive now than she had thirty seconds ago. Rather than standing and going upstairs, she switched to sitting cross-legged.

Behind her, the door opened, and she wondered who the latecomers were. The sound of footsteps—two heavy, one clicking heels—told her this wasn't a latecomer.

The overseers were here. Finally.

Nomi lowered her chin, but watched the overseers through her lashes. Masters Mikel and Leo, plus Mistress Faith, were the club's fearless leaders. Nomi had to forcibly stop herself from trying to guess who and what these three were outside of the walls of the club. Or trying to answer the question of what would make someone decide to create a place like Las Palmas.

“Subs, focus on us.”

At that there was a ripple of movement among the subs, slaves, and pets, most raising their previously-bowed heads. Master Leo wore a half-mask, as did Mistress Faith. Interesting. They didn't always wear them.

Nomi refocused on what they were saying when Master Leo spoke. “We've become complacent.”

That didn't sound good. Were they closing Las Palmas Oscuras, because owning and running LA's most exclusive BDSM club no longer met whatever need it was filling for them?

“Each of us has found pleasure and pain, often both, within these walls,” Master Leo finished.

Now Master Mikel—unmasked—took over. “And yet, we do not push ourselves. Comfort and safety is for the mortals out there. We are gods, gods who are growing lazy and stupid in our complacency.”

Nomi's fingers twitched with the urge to start taking notes. There was a second ripple of moment, but this time it wasn't the bottoms, it was the Doms and Masters who shifted, some

rising to their feet, others leaning forward, their attention predatory-like as they looked at the overseers.

“If you want to play the same games, if you want the safety of the known, then we invite you to leave. The contract you signed when you joined will remain in effect. Any discussion of who we are or what we do will be met with swift, harsh retribution.”

Whoa. That statement was followed by a heavy silence as everyone processed. They weren't closing the club, they were...what?

Master Mikel went to the door of the tack room. The Conclave really had been a barn at one point. Prior to becoming Las Palmas Oscuras, this property high in the Malibu hills had been a high-end equestrian facility. The Conclave had been a barn, or maybe a stable. Nomi wasn't all that clear on the difference. Either way, when it was retrofitted to meet the needs of a sex club, they'd kept most of the structure in place, meaning one long wall of the building was lined with horse stalls, while on the other side there was some open space and a tack room.

Mikel emerged from the tack room wheeling a large board. It looked like one of those mobile white boards found in conference rooms, except it was draped in black cloth.

After positioning it near the front of the large space, Master Mikel paused dramatically, then said, “My friends and companions in debauchery, prepare yourself.” Then he yanked off the cloth with a theatrical whoosh, revealing...

The alphabet. Shimmering silver letters tacked in four near rows.

Nomi grinned and a laugh bubbled up. She held back, waiting for everyone else to start laughing.

No one did. Good thing she'd checked that initial urge. No one so much as chuckled.

Oh, they were taking this seriously.

She raised her hand to her lips, hiding the smile while darting a quick look around to check if anyone else was smiling, or had noticed her reaction.

Her gaze met that of a tall, dark-haired man with medium brown skin. He wasn't exactly smiling, but it hovered on the edges of his lips. He raised his brows while holding her gaze.

Are you laughing? his expression asked.

Nomi tipped her head to the side, raising just one eyebrow. *Yes, aren't you?*

His expression shifted, becoming not hard...but focused. Earlier she'd thought of the Doms as predators, and right now the dark-haired man was definitely a predator. The way his attention narrowed on her made her feel like a small fuzzy creature that had just caught the attention of a cat.

Nomi fought the urge to lower her gaze. He was *a* Dom, not *her* Dom, and this wasn't a scene. But the fact that he could make her inner submissive sit up and take notice from across the room had her wondering exactly how intense he'd be up close and personal.

Nomi turned her attention back to the overseers. She swore she could still feel Mystery Dom's gaze on her, but she was not going to check if she was right.

Master Mikel looked around, his attention skating over her as he said, "When you joined us you completed a sex, kink,

and fetish checklist. Some of you have updated it as your tastes evolved, others have only the one on file.”

Mistress Faith looked and sounded disappointed as she said, “Of all the hundreds of delicious sexual things on that list, many of you have only tried a few. We will no longer allow that.”

Nomi narrowed her eyes, trying to figure out where they were going with this and what it had to do with the craft project alphabet board.

“Each of you has been assigned to a letter, and with it every kink and fetish in that part of the alphabet.”

An unexpected spike of lust lanced through Nomi.

“We’ve also become complacent in our playmates. Those of you who indicate that you are willing to share or be shared may be partnered with someone new.”

It took a minute for that to penetrate. They were assigning every Dom a letter of the alphabet...and every sub was being assigned to a Dom.

The lust of a moment ago shriveled up, replaced by panic. She scanned the Doms, her heart in her throat.

One of these people would be her assigned partner. They wouldn’t pick her, wouldn’t want her, they’d be *forced* to partner with her.

It was Nomi’s worst nightmare.

Internally she recognized the hyperbole of that statement, but she was too freaked out for that thought to calm her down.

“Masters! Come pick up your envelopes. Each of you will receive your letter, the name or names of your assigned partners, the list of associated activities, kinks, and tools, and

your partner's checklist. Those of you who have reserved space in the mansion for this weekend are expected to begin your checklist activities tonight. The rest of you should make plans tonight and make reservations.”

Oh god, this was happening right now.

The overseers dismissed the subs and Nomi scrambled to her feet, the motion difficult thanks to her corset. Normally she would have been conscious of how she got up, not wanting to look inelegant, but right now her desire to be not-here overruled potential embarrassment.

She was one of the first subs out the door.

The night air was crisp as she speed-walked the path that led from the Conclave back to the sprawling collection of buildings that made up the main section of Las Palmas. Each California mission-style building had an open-air courtyard in the center, with wide, covered halls that ringed the center. Themed and well-appointed playrooms and public spaces opened off the covered halls.

The various buildings were linked by short paths, and to get back to the Subs' Garden—the submissives-only space that served as both changing room and retreat—she skirted through several of the courtyards. With each closed door she passed, with each stage, St. Andrews cross, frame, and pile of floor pillows she passed, Nomi's anxiety amped up.

Unlike the other buildings, the Subs' Garden didn't completely surround its courtyard. Instead, it was a U-shaped building, with the open top of the U closed off by a tall privacy fence with an elegant gate in the center. Nomi shoved through the gate, practically running now.

“Hey, are you okay?”

She heard the question but didn't turn around to face the speaker as she replied. "I'm not doing this."

"It's a little shocking, but they said the Doms have to abide by our checklists. They can't force us to do something if we marked it as a hard limit."

"Yep. Great." Nomi's fingers were shaking as she opened her elegant wood locker. She reached for her purse, prepared to just walk out, then looked down at her chest, her heavy breasts rising like proofed dough above the leather. She couldn't drive like this.

"Can you help me out of this?" Finally, she turned to the speaker. Josslyn was a poised, elegant brunette Nomi knew in passing. She had skin the gold-brown of a California tan, but hers was clearly genetic rather than sun-induced.

Josslyn raised a brow, but started forward. Nomi turned back to the locker, holding on to the door as Josslyn started loosening the laces at her back.

"Are you leaving?" the other woman asked softly.

"Yes."

"You're resigning your membership?"

Nomi opened her mouth but paused. That was what they'd said. It was either play the game or leave.

Oh God, was she going to have to give up her membership? Las Palmas most definitely filled a need in her life. Without it, she wasn't sure how she'd get this need met.

The corset ties in back were now loose enough that she could undo the hook and eye closures hidden down the front, so Nomi started popping them open. As she did, her heavy breasts sagged to their normal position, her soft belly spilled

free, and the pooch on her lower abdomen—no longer pulled up and flatted by the corset—was once more pronounced.

Nomi let her corset fall away. She looked down at herself, at this body she'd spent too many years hating. This was her body, and she loved it now, thanks to a lot of work unlearning the body shaming she'd absorbed in her teens and early twenties. She respected and appreciated herself, and she demanded the same from her partners.

It was why she was very, very careful about those partners. She only scened with people who found her attractive, because to do anything else was to risk cruel rejection. While she might know how to handle people out in the real world who felt they had the right to look down on her, or pass comment on her, here...

Nomi needed to submit. It was an emotional release valve, and one of the only ways she could offset her need for control. Despite needing it, wanting it, submission could be hard for her—she couldn't just walk through the club doors and start dismantling mental walls and defenses the way she knew many of the people in the club did. For some, standing in the Subs' Garden and changing into attire they only wore here was enough prep. They were submissive when they walked out the garden gate.

That didn't work for Nomi.

She needed to submit, but every time she walked out that gate, she was afraid. Afraid that here, in this place where she let herself be vulnerable, someone would say or do something and their words and actions would cut deep.

She counteracted that by being highly selective when it came to her partners. She chose men and women who actively wanted to scene with her. She never settled, never subbed for

anyone unless she was sure they wanted her, and that their needs were a good fit.

Until she was sure they wouldn't make her feel fat and stupid—both things she'd been called in the past—with either words or actions.

And now the overseers wanted to assign her a partner. They wanted her to scene with someone who might take one look at her and decide that...

Her brain flashed up a series of traumatic possibilities.

The Dom would decide that since she was bigger than most of the other female subs, she could handle more pain.

...that happened about six months into her exploration of BDSM and it had taken weeks for the welts to fade. She'd been too new, and too scared to use her safe word, though looking back she absolutely should have.

The Dom would decide that she must have a degradation kink, and start calling her names and saying horrible things about her body.

...luckily that had happened before the scene really started and she'd backed out, but cried in the car on the way home.

The Dom would be kind, the scene acceptable but at the end, before they parted ways, he would order her to run a mile every day for the next week, then claim he was taking care of her by helping her focus on her physical fitness.

...multiple fuckers had tried that. She'd been shocked the first few times, then started asking them what they planned to do to make their dicks grow, since apparently it was okay to start requesting changes to one another's bodies.

Nomi leaned her forehead against the locker beside hers. Her eyes burned with tears, but they weren't sad tears. No, these were a combination of fear and rage. What was she going to do without Las Palmas? How dare the overseers do this to her?

Nomi cleared her throat, then grabbed her bra and a t-shirt. She could drive in the thick vinyl booty shorts she'd paired with the corset, so left those on, along with the fishnets.

Wearing an oversized white t-shirt on top, and fet wear on the bottom, she stuck her feet in a pair of slides, slammed her locker closed, and stalked out of the Subs' Garden. She ignored the curious and worried looks people were throwing her way as she made her way to the club's main foyer.

She wasn't going to play this game. Wasn't going to let herself be vulnerable with a stranger.

Even if it meant walking away from something she desperately needed.

CHAPTER 2



Julen passed out the beer bottles, while Ilias pulled a pocket knife from his pants, used it to pop the cap, then passed the opener to his right.

Tareq accepted it, uncapping his bottle and setting his bottle cap on the trunk of the car behind him, then passed the opener to Peter, who stood to his right.

In silence they opened their bottles, then the five of them shared a long look. It was Julen who broke the silence.

“What the fuck.”

Tareq’s lips twitched, and he raised his bottle. Ilias snorted in amusement and raised his own drink towards the building in a silent toast before taking a sip.

The five of them—Tareq, Ilias, Julen, Peter, and Lihn—had retreated to the parking lot after picking up their assignment folders. It was a new grouping, and Tareq wasn’t entirely sure how freely he could speak in front of Peter and Lihn.

He and Ilias were friends, both inside Las Palmas and out in the real world, though they’d met here. Ilias, in turn, was friends with Julen, that friendship rooted in a shared interest in rope and shibari, though Ilias used it more as a tool within a

scene, than as an art form as Julen did. What Julen could do with a body, some rope, and a good frame was undeniably art.

Peter and Lihn were here because they were partnered with Julen. All three of them were assigned to the letter S. Given the laundry list of items under that letter it made sense that there were so many people.

Ilias had R, which also had a hefty list of kinks, toys, and fetishes, but apparently not enough that the overseers thought it needed multiple Doms assigned to it.

Tareq took another sip. His letter...

“You have Q?” Peter asked.

“Yeah. Not much on it. Just two items.”

“You could probably knock that out in one night,” Julen said.

“Where’s the fun in that?” Tareq shrugged one shoulder. “I need to plan out a longer scene and incorporate the Q items. One of them...it’s probably meant to be part of a role-play scene, but I’m not sure I want to take it that way.”

“Do you three each have your own sub? Sharing one?” Ilias asked the S team.

It didn’t have the same ring as “A-team.”

Tareq covered his smile by taking another sip, his attention drifting from the conversation back to the Conclave. To the woman who’d been on the verge of laughter when she saw the alphabet. They’d exchanged a look, had a moment, and he’d planned to find her after to introduce himself and get a closer look at those lovely breasts. But that had been before the overseers announced the game, and the assigned partners. He’d mentally tabled the issue of the pretty brunette with the

impressive rack, planning to circle back after the checklist game.

Except that when Tareq opened his folder and saw the picture of his sub, he was pretty sure it was the same woman. In the profile photo attached to her completed checklist, she wore street clothes and her hair was a lighter brown with blond highlights. The woman in a black leather corset had long dark hair that spilled over all that pretty flesh, but he was fairly sure the face was the same. The profile picture was shoulders up so he couldn't make a definitive identification based on tits.

“What about your partner?” Ilias asked him.

“Nomiki Thalia.”

“Lovely woman,” Julen said immediately. “You have to earn her, but when you do, it's glorious.”

Tareq felt weirdly jealous, but aloud all he said was, “She likes ropes?”

“She does, though I think I like tying her more than she likes being bound—she enjoys it, blisses out, just isn't as passionate about it. Doesn't need it every time she's here.”

Tareq could easily imagine Nomiki suspended, those spectacular tits encircled with red rope.

He mentally added that to a list of possible things he could use to bulk up their scene to flesh out the Q items.

“Do you think anyone is going to leave?” Lihn, who was standing opposite Tareq and facing the entrance to the club, narrowed his eyes as he posed the question.

“I think some of the tops are going to throw a fit at being told what to do,” Peter said, “but no. I don't think anyone will actually quit the club.”

“Tareq.” Lihn had a funny look on his face. “What does your sub look like?”

“White. Dark hair. Fantastic tits.”

“I think Peter’s wrong,” Lihn continued. “I think at least one person is going to leave rather than play.”

As one they turned, searching the parking lot for whatever had caught Lihn’s attention.

“Tareq,” Ilias said, spotting her first. “I think your partner is making a run for it.”

Tareq blinked in shock at the sight of the dark-haired woman from the Conclave marching along the back edge of the parking lot. She had a tote over one shoulder, and as she passed between two cars, he got a good look at her outfit.

Fishnets, shorts that made her ass look biteable, and an oversized white t-shirt that looked like it would rip easily.

But the thing that really caught and held his attention was her face. Her expression.

“She looks upset,” Julen said. “Maybe I should—”

Tareq shot the other man a look, handed Ilias his beer, and headed towards her. She passed through a bright patch of landscape lighting, and he was now certain this was the woman in his file. He should have let Julen go. If they’d scened together, Nomiki might feel more comfortable with the rope-master.

But she was *his*. Not just because she was his assigned partner, but because of that moment they’d shared. He wanted to know the woman who’d been ready to laugh in amusement at the overseers’ fancy board of letters. Wanted to scold her for that amusement just because it would be a fun pretense for a

punishment, then tell her he agreed with her. That he too had found the moment more funny than dramatic.

Tareq winced when he realized his brain had taken several shortcuts and classified her as “mine” and “sex partner” when they hadn’t even met.

How he’d been a member of the club this long and not noticed her was a question for another time. Now that he was aware of Nomiki, now that the game meant he’d mentally labeled her as “his,” Tareq wasn’t going to stand by and watch as she walked away.

FUCK EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING.

Those words were her new mantra, the tune she marched to as she stomped through the gravel parking lot to her car.

And she was working hard to keep the fires stoked, to keep the anger burning hot. That was how she was going to hold back the tears until she got home.

With so much of her attention turned inward, Nomi didn’t register the sound of footsteps, the crunch of gravel.

“Nomiki.”

She shrieked, jumping at the sound of her name. Her tote fell to the ground and she jerked her head up. A broad dark-haired man stood in her path, close enough that if he hadn’t said her name, she would have barreled into him.

Anger combined with fresh fear as her brain screamed “dangerous looking man confronting you in a parking lot” and reacted accordingly.

Nomi hauled back her fist, and punched him in the nose.

At least she tried to.

The man's eyes went wide and he leaned to the side to avoid her fist, then caught her wrist.

Nomi blinked, staring at her own outstretched arm, at his big hand wrapped around her wrist like a cuff.

She shifted her attention from where he held her to his face, and finally recognized him. The man from the Conclave. The one who'd caught her almost-laughing.

“Oh.”

His lips twitched. “Hi.”

She tugged on her arm. “Can I have this back?”

“Are you going to hit me?”

“No. That was a reflex. Being approached by strange men at night isn't something that ends well for women, historically.”

Instead of replying, he used his hold on her wrist to both lower and turn her arm, twisting it so her hand was palm up, her elbow now tucked in at her side.

He stared at her hand, and when his thumb stroked her wrist, her fingers curled in pleasure.

The man raised his attention from her limb to her face, and Nomi swallowed hard. He had intense eyes, so dark it was hard to see where the pupil stopped and the iris began, though that might have been a trick of the lighting.

“I'm sorry.” He finally released her wrist. “I tried to stand far enough back that I wouldn't be threatening, but you didn't see me until you were close.”

As if to show exactly how close, he raised the other hand, skimming it down her arm, but without actually touching her, a thin barrier of air between them.

And yet she shivered.

To cover the involuntary motion, Nomi bent and grabbed her tote, slinging it over her shoulder once more, then crossing her arms.

His gaze dropped to her chest, and Nomi looked down to see that crossing her arms had tugged the shirt down, so an impressive amount of cleavage was visible.

She took a really deep breath, and smiled when his eyes widened.

His gaze slid up to hers. “You did that on purpose.”

“I mean, you were looking. Felt like you deserved a show.”

“Then let me offer my heartfelt thanks.”

Nomi let the grin break free. “Besides studying my boobs, was there a reason you were intercepting me in the parking lot?”

“Well, I got some self-defense practice.”

“You duck really well.”

“Thank you.” He tucked his hands in his front pockets. The front of his dark jeans sagged as he pushed down, exposing a little strip of skin between the top of the pants and the hem of his Henley.

“Now who’s looking.”

Nomi jerked her attention to his face and met his wide smile with a rueful one of her own. Hitching her bag higher on

her shoulder, Nomi once more crossed her arms—this time careful not to pull down on her shirt.

“Now that we’ve established we’d both survive an encounter in a parking lot with someone sketchy—” She flashed him a smile, but it was forced, because her next words hurt. “—I have to go.”

“Go, go? You’re leaving the club?”

Nomi froze, the question unexpected from this stranger, but what surprised her was the intensity of her own reaction. Her whole body went tight as every nerve ending in her body screamed “no.” Damn it, this wasn’t fair. It wasn’t fair and she didn’t want to go. She didn’t want to leave Las Palmas.

She cleared her throat, pressing her nails into her arms as she kept them crossed. That was enough to ensure her voice was steady when she spoke.

“I don’t really have a choice.”

“Of course you do.” His brows lowered, forming a nearly straight line above his eyes and there was something so stern and foreboding in that look that her blood warmed with arousal.

“Nomiki, has someone in the club ignored your hard limits? Or safe word? If that happened, and that’s why the game scares you—”

“No. No it’s not...not that. And who says I’m scared?”

He raised his brows. It was the same expression he’d had back in the Conclave.

“I’m not scared.” That was a big fat lie. She was scared of being treated badly. Scared of being hurt both physically and emotionally.

His brows were still raised, but he nodded once. “Okay, let’s say you’re not scared.”

She stiffened. “Don’t patronize me.”

“I’m not. I’m humoring you.”

“Wow. That’s not better.”

“Sure it is. Humoring is definitely better than patronizing.”

Despite herself, Nomi smiled. “Okay, let’s just say that I weighed the possible outcomes, and the safest option is for me to opt out of the game, which means I have to leave the club.”

He nodded slowly. “Okay, Nomiki, let’s say that’s true. Maybe—”

She stopped listening as something occurred to her. He was calling her by her full name. She only really used that at work. Most people knew her as Nomi, and when she was at Las Palmas, she introduced herself as Nomi.

She jerked her attention back to him, interrupting him mid-sentence. “How do you know my name? Wait, first, what’s your name?”

Her dark-haired pseudo-assailant stuck out his hand. “Tareq Zine.”

Nomi eyed his hand, then carefully placed her own in his. The feeling of his fingers closing around hers made her stomach tense. His hand was broad and warm, with blunt fingers that would feel nice and thick—

“Nomi,” she rushed to say. “Nomi Thalia.”

“You prefer Nomi. Got it.”

“I do, and that’s how I introduce myself. Which means you got my name...”

“I got your name off your checklist.” His fingers tightened on hers, not enough to hurt, just enough to make her aware of the pressure.

Her gaze met his, and there were faint lines at the corners of his eyes when he smiled. Maybe it was more of a smirk.

“You’re my partner.”

TAREQ COULDN’T QUITE READ HER EXPRESSION. SURPRISE? Interest?

Maybe that was wishful thinking. This encounter hadn’t exactly started out well, with him startling her in a dark parking lot. But the more they talked, the more he liked this woman.

The idea of her walking away, not only tonight but from the club, bothered him. A woman who punched first and asked questions later didn’t seem like someone who would run from a ridiculous game. Unless she was one of those people who refused to be told what to do. That Tareq understood.

She blew out air in a long exhale. “Why does this feel like meeting my high school lab partner?”

“If a girl like you were my lab partner, I definitely would have flunked.”

She went still, and her expression hardened. “And why exactly would that be?”

“I’m not insulting you.”

“Ah sure, of course you’re not. That didn’t sound like you were insulting either my intelligence or my appearance.”

Damn it, he hadn't meant it like that. He was doing a terrible job of making a good impression.

Tareq cleared his throat, then said, "Boobs."

Nomi blinked. "What?"

"Boobs. You have very nice boobs. High school me probably wouldn't have been able to think past proximity to boobs. Adult me is barely managing."

Nomi blinked again, then laughed, seeming surprised by her own chuckle.

She cupped her tits and looked down at them. "They made their appearance freshman year."

Tareq took a minute to appreciate the sight of her touching herself. "So, lab partner, are you really going to quit this class before you even know the details of the assignment?"

Nomi eyed him with suspicion. Tareq spread his arms out to the side, letting her look. Some of the suspicion left her gaze, and she pursed her lips, making a stirring motion with one finger.

Tareq obligingly turned in a circle. "Want me to strip? So you can check for a wire? This is starting to feel like a drug deal."

"How many parking lot drug deals have you participated in?"

"Excuse me." Tareq fixed his expression in mock outrage. "All my drug deals were done in alleyways."

At that Nomi laughed, her tight shoulders finally relaxing. Satisfaction zinged through him.

“Have a drink with me,” he said before her defenses could go back up.

“Why do you care if I leave? I’m sure they could find you another partner.”

He shrugged. “No lab partner left behind.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“No, it’s not. If you want a better one, you’ll have to have a drink with me.”

“Okay...” Nomi pulled a purse from within the bigger tote, fished out keys, then clicked the remote.

Tareq walked her to her car, watching as she put the tote and purse into the trunk of a sporty little four door. As they turned back to the building, he put a hand at the small of her back, a light touch that was all instinct. He was already treating her like he had a right to touch her, and he didn’t.

Tareq dropped his hand.

“Everything all right?” Ilias called out. He spoke in Darija, the version of Arabic spoken in Tareq’s parents’ home country of Morocco. Even in a metropolis as big as L.A. finding someone who spoke the language was rare. Finding that person in L.A.’s most exclusive BDSM club had been improbable bordering on miraculous, and it had cemented their friendship.

“We’re good,” he called back in English, before switching to Darija. “I’m taking the pretty lady for a drink.”

Ilias raised his beer bottle in a silent toast.

“Is that Master Morton...” Nomi was peering into the gloom where the silhouettes of Tareq’s fellow Doms were visible. “Are you all drinking in the parking lot?”

“You’re not the only one who had a strong reaction to the game.”

“But still, the high school analogies just keep coming,” Nomi pointed out.

“Lab partners,” he agreed.

“Drinking beer in a parking lot.”

“Discussion of boobs.”

Nomi started laughing before she could add another comeback. As they mounted the steps to the Las Palmas front door, Nomi stuck her car key—which was the only thing still in her hand—down between her boobs.

Tareq watched with appreciation, and she demurely patted her chest.

Tareq opened the door for her, then slipped inside, reaching back to open it. She raised a brow as she followed him in.

“Technically the gentleman is supposed to open the door, then enter first to ensure there isn’t any danger. Only if it’s safe does he allow his companion to enter,” he said.

“I didn’t know that.”

They walked side by side through the foyer.

“Are you a gentleman, Tareq?”

“Sometimes.”

“And the rest of the time?”

He smiled, inwardly thrilled she was curious. Curiosity would keep her here, keep her with him until he found out why she wanted to walk away from Las Palmas rather than play the game. He couldn’t say exactly why he felt so possessive of

this woman, but he did, and he had every intention of keeping her until the game was over.

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CHAPTER 3



Tareq was leading them straight to the library, and as twitchy as it made her to walk into the play spaces of the club in just a t-shirt, she didn't mention stopping at the Subs' Garden to change.

There were clubs with strict dress codes, usually aimed at subs, but Las Palmas actually had fewer rules than most. They operated with more of a "you're responsible for yourself" approach, and advocated RACK rather than SSC. There was nothing that said she couldn't wear street clothes, and there was an odd morning she'd stopped in to get breakfast after she was already dressed to leave. Still, she was off balance in her half and half outfit, and as they emerged into the central courtyard, Nomi felt slightly twitchy given the casualness of her upper half's attire compared to what she normally wore.

Scenes were starting up, and the club was more populous than she'd ever seen it before. Tareq's hand brushed her back, a slight pressure guiding her closer to him to allow others to pass by.

Nomi inhaled, smelling him for the first time. He smelled like leather, though he didn't seem to be wearing any. His clothes were far more casual than hers, though from a distance

she'd thought the dark jeans were actually slacks. The long-sleeved Henley hugged his shoulder and arm muscles.

He glanced at her, and Nomi stepped back, out of his personal space. He started forward once more and she fell in step with him.

The library, which she personally thought of as more of a sex museum, since the shelves bore dramatically lit vintage sex toys rather than books, also doubled as a bar. Several subs in fet wear were playing bartender, and the tables and couches scattered around the room were mostly full. Tareq surveyed the room, then confidently guided her over to a free barstool.

Nomi took a moment to calculate the most graceful way to take a seat, then grabbed the bar with both hands, braced a heel on the rung of the stool, and slid onto it in one graceful motion, no inelegant wiggling. Tareq leaned on the bar beside her, close enough she could feel his body heat.

When he crooked a finger, a pretty woman wearing nothing but rope slid over to them.

“Good evening, Master Zine.”

“Good evening. My companion would like...” He looked at her.

What Nomi actually wanted was something with lots of juice and sugar that made it far too easy to suck down drink after drink.

“Red wine. Whatever you have open is fine,” she said instead. Las Palmas’ cellars were curated by a club member, and everything they had was both quality and drinkable. She didn’t love red wine, but for appearances’ sake it was the better option.

“Same,” he said. “Actually, a Malbec if it’s open, a Cab if not.”

They were quiet as they waited for their drinks. The silence was tense, but not strained. The tension was anticipation.

Nomi picked up her glass when it arrived, holding it out to Tareq. He tapped his to hers, and the soft chime sound felt like the starting bell of a boxing match.

“The way I figure,” Tareq said, “there are three, maybe four reasons someone would say fuck this and leave after that announcement.”

Nomi pressed the rim of the glass to her lower lip but didn’t sip, her attention on Tareq.

“First, you don’t want to be told what to do. I get that. Especially since right before they showed off their sparkly alphabet—”

Nomi grinned at that description.

“They insulted us by saying we were complacent.”

“True,” she agreed.

“But the insult also turns the game into a challenge. Then it becomes less them telling us what to do, more them challenging us.”

“And you love a good challenge.”

“Don’t you?”

Nomi saluted him with her glass in response.

“Next option. You’re worried about the actual contents of the checklist. Either you don’t remember what’s on it, don’t remember how you filled it out, or do remember, and you’ve

changed your mind since then. Meaning there might be things on your yes list that are now hard limits.”

“That would certainly be a concern,” she agreed, hating the direction of this conversation, yet not wanting to stop it either.

“Which leads to the third reason.” The way he paused, his attention narrowed in on her, meant he’d already guessed this was her main objection.

“You don’t want to be assigned a partner.”

Nomi exhaled slowly. She faced forward and didn’t look at Tareq, though he was a looming presence in her peripheral vision.

“Again, maybe it’s a control thing, but I think it’s more than that.”

The conventionally attractive man beside her wasn’t going to guess the exact reason she couldn’t risk partnering with a stranger, but she had a bad feeling he’d come close.

“I think it’s because you don’t trust easily.”

That surprised her, and Nomi looked over at him. In this light she could see his eyes were actually brown with flecks of gold and maybe even a little green.

“This—” He gestured around the room. “—is all about trust. And I’m guessing there are a few Doms you trust, but you’re not willing to risk being partnered with someone not on your trusted person list.”

Nomi stared down at her glass. Trust. It really did come down to that, didn’t it? She didn’t, couldn’t, trust someone not to take one look at her, and because of the way she looked, hurt her.

“Am I right, Nomi?”

The sound of her name on his lips startled her into responding. “Yes. Mostly.”

“Did someone hurt you?” His voice was softer now. “Did someone at the club ignore your safeword or hard limit?”

She took a sip. “Not this club.”

He considered her. “How long have you been a member?”

“Trying to decide if it’s been long enough that I’m still justified in my feelings?”

Tareq’s eyes gleamed. “No, just assessing the likelihood I can find the fucker and beat him up for you.”

Nomi’s lips twitched. “That’s a very nice offer...but I don’t need you to fight my battles.”

“No one fucks with my lab partner and gets away with it,” he declared seriously. “Me and my boys in the parking lot will take care of him. All I need is a name.”

“Them, not him,” she said softly.

“As in, this person’s pronouns are they/them, or more than one person treated you badly?”

“More than one person,” she said softly, then shook her head. “I’m not sure why I’m telling you this.”

“I asked. I brought it up.”

“True. And the game itself brought up some stuff for me.”

“Which is why you were willing to leave the club rather than play.”

“Yes.”

He finished his glass of wine. She followed suit.

“I want to ask something, but I don’t want to overstep.”

That made her laugh. Tareq was more than a little pushy.

He smiled, watching her until her amusement faded.

“Will you give me a chance to earn your trust?”

The words shivered through her, and Nomi dropped her hands to her lap, to her wide thighs made wider by the way she was sitting.

“Why do you care? You have no vested interest in my participating or not. Even if you’re really excited by your letter —”

“I’m not. It’s a boring letter. Q.”

“Okay, then you’re excited because this game is a challenge...making me and my participation part of that challenge. But it’s not really about me. I’m sure if I leave, the overseers will assign you another partner. They have to have a backup plan for people who refuse to play.”

“You’re probably right, they probably have a plan, and probably would assign someone else to be my partner.”

“Then...” Nomi raised her hands, palm up, fingers spread.

“But I want you as my partner.” He leaned in, close enough that his chest almost brushed her shoulder.

“Don’t,” she hissed. “Don’t lie, don’t patronize me.”

Tareq’s eyes narrowed. “Did you just call me a liar?”

That voice sent her submissive alarm bells ringing. Truth, like trust, was practically sacred in BDSM.

“I’m saying that I would rather walk out that door than have you complimenting me because it’s part of your strategy to get me to play the game. You don’t want me.”

Tareq gripped the back of her swivel bar stool with one hand. His other was braced on the bar. Slowly, he turned her to face him. The precision control and low speed of the movement made her blood heat. It was dangerous-slow, not lazy-slow.

When he was done, she was facing him, trapped in place by the bar on one side and his outstretched arm, still gripping the back of her seat, on the other. His forearm pressed against her, and she was more aware of that point of contact than she should be.

Nomi threaded her fingertips through the fishnet on her thighs, holding tight, but raised her gaze to meet his. She was right about this, and wasn't going to back down.

Tareq eyed her, then leaned in, looming over her, his hips pressing against her knees.

His hips and his cock, which was most definitely hard.

Nomi's eyes widened. Tareq leaned in more, bending so his lips brushed her ear.

"I'm fighting the urge to..." He paused, the sound of his controlled exhale loud in her ear. "I should put you over my knee and spank you until you learn not to call me a liar... or insult my taste in women."

Nomi stopped breathing, and her nipples hardened in arousal.

He leaned back, enough that he could meet her gaze. Nomi knew her eyes were a little too wide, her mouth open in shock.

"And after I was done," he said softly. "After I'd stroked your well-spanked ass and cuddled you..."

Nomi realized she was holding her breath, forcing herself to exhale.

“Then I’d bend you over the bed.”

That made her look away, shame and anger dousing arousal. Of course, he’d bend her over the bed—where he wouldn’t have to look at her front, at her belly and heavy breasts as he fucked her.

“Slide a plug into that very biteable ass.”

Arousal surged back, shoving aside her body issues.

“Then flip you over and fuck the brat right out of you.”

Nomi stared at Tareq, and for the first time in a very long time she didn’t know what to say.

He examined her face, his gaze working its way over each feature. By her chin, he was smiling.

“What do you say, Nomi. Shall we negotiate?”

THEY ENDED UP BACK IN THE PARKING LOT. OKAY, NOT exactly the parking lot—they were sitting on the front steps of the club, looking out at the parking lot. It was a rather uninspiring view.

“It’s gorgeous up here,” Nomi said.

Tareq turned to look at her.

Nomi raised the bottle of wine they’d confiscated, and he held out his glass. She added a finger of the red wine, which looked black in this light.

“You don’t think so?” She gestured with the bottle to their surroundings.

“It’s a parking lot.”

She snorted. “Don’t be boring. The trees, the stars. I like to pretend we can see the ocean from here, that maybe some of the darkness out that way is water.”

He turned to look to the west. They were too far back, deep in one of the Malibu canyons to see the water, but he understood.

And there was beauty here. The twin lines of palm trees, illuminated by landscape lighting, flanked the long driveway. The stars that weren’t exactly bright, but were at least visible.

“Boring?” He asked after a moment. “Not, ‘unromantic,’ or maybe ‘cynical’?”

“Boring,” she confirmed.

“Well, I don’t want to be boring, so...that’s a pretty tree. That one.” He pointed to the line of nearly identical palms that flanked the long driveway.

She snorted in amusement and shook her head.

“No, you’re looking at the wrong one,” he said seriously. “The one next to it. That’s the pretty one.”

“Oh yes, of course. I see it now.”

Nomi tucked the blanket she’d grabbed on their way through the club tighter around her legs. It wasn’t that cold, but given the shortness of her shorts and the fishnet, he wasn’t surprised that she needed something to stay warm. He resisted the urge to put an arm around her, to tuck her into his side.

They drank in companionable silence for a while, and when she started to fidget, Tareq hid his smiling by rubbing his lips with his hand. He expected her to break first, to say something about the game, their letter, their possible scene, but she didn't. She was definitely fidgeting—toying with the fringe of the blanket, adjusting her legs—but she didn't speak.

“We might have had too much to drink to negotiate,” he said when it was clear she was going to outlast him, damn it.

“Maybe,” she said quickly, “we could start, and then revisit it...revisit all of this in the cold sober light of day.”

“You sound sad. Why?”

“I just realized that you were drinking.”

“Yes?”

“I mean before, in the parking lot. You were drinking and that might be why you're...interested.”

Tareq carefully set his glass aside, then shifted, twisting his upper body so he faced her, his knee nudging her legs. “Nomi, we talked about this.”

She didn't look at him, leaving him staring at her profile. She rocked back, pushing her heels against the stair below her, then relaxed and rocked forward.

“Nomi,” he prompted.

“I remember what you said in the bar,” she murmured.

“Is that what's making you nervous? What I said? You know that I won't do anything that you aren't okay with, and that we haven't talked about first.”

She nodded, but it was jerky.

“Our scene doesn’t have to involve sex, or any sexual contact.” Actually, one of their two items definitely involved sex, but if she didn’t want that he wouldn’t. Fuck the game and the overseers. He’d have that fight before he did anything to make this woman uncomfortable.

“It’s not sex that’s the problem.” She took a deep breath, held it, then let it out. “You were right that my problem with this is being assigned a partner. I don’t like the idea of someone being...forced...to scene with me.”

“Someone being forced to be with you, or you being forced to scene with someone?”

Finally, she looked at him, and there was something stark and vulnerable in her expression. “Someone being forced to scene with me. Because they didn’t explicitly choose me, they might be disappointed when they see me and say or do something to hurt me—”

He stiffened.

Nomi held up a hand. “Maybe not on purpose, but yes, that has happened. They’ll see me and I won’t match their idea of attractiveness.”

Tareq sat back, surprised as something occurred to him. “Wait, do you think you’re...unattractive?” He winced even as he asked the question, because fuck this had to be horribly rude, but he needed to know.

To his relief, she smiled, though it was just a small twitch of the lips.

“No. But I’m fat.”

“You’re not fat, you’re gorgeous.”

“I didn’t say I was ugly, I said I’m fat.” She gestured to her body. “I’m larger than current conventional beauty standards and diet culture deem acceptable. Fat isn’t, well, shouldn’t be, a bad word.”

Tareq opened his mouth, then closed it. He wasn’t a moron, he knew the dialogue that went on around female body size, but he’d never had this kind of blunt conversation before.

“I am happy with myself,” she continued. “With my job, my life, my body. I would even say I have a healthy self-confidence. But at the same time, I’m protective. I have to be.”

“You didn’t want to be assigned a partner because your partner might have a problem with your body.”

“Exactly.”

Tareq eyed her. “I want to tell you that wouldn’t have happened, but that would be bullshit, wouldn’t it?”

“So much bullshit.” Now her smile was more genuine.

“Then I won’t say that.” Tareq stared out over the parking lot. He wanted to fix this for her. But it wasn’t his to fix...and did it even need fixing?

“You said...” Tareq clasped his hands together. “It’s happened in the past, hasn’t it? Someone treated you badly because of how you look.”

“Not necessarily how I look. My size.”

“Right, sorry. But someone hurt you.”

“Yes.”

“A Dom?”

“Yes.”

“Will you tell me about it?” If he was going to top this woman, and he desperately wanted to, he needed to know where she was vulnerable to avoid applying pressure to those spots.

“I... I don't want to. This is nice. Fun, even. And if I start talking about it...” Her laugh was shaky. “I'll probably cry, because thinking about it makes me angry, and when I'm angry sometimes I cry and I hate that.” Nomi huddled in on herself. One shoulder of her white t-shirt slipped down her arm, exposing a pale bra strap.

“Can I hug you?” he whispered the question, giving her the option of ignoring it.

Nomi nodded once.

Tareq scooted over, his hip against hers, then put an arm around her shoulders. She leaned into him, stiff at first, but then she relaxed.

It was a sweet moment, them sitting there in the moonlight, her cuddled up against him, accepting the comfort he'd offered after she allowed herself to be vulnerable.

If he were a different man, a better man, he could have left it alone. Could have let it be a sweet movie moment. But he wasn't sweet, and if this were a movie it was going to be triple-X rated.

“This doesn't change anything.”

She went stiff under his arm. He squeezed her a little.

“You're still my lab partner...my game partner. And I still want to do fun, sadistic things to you, and then fuck you if you're into it.”

Nomi shifted, and Tareq would have bet the pink slip to his car that she was at least a little turned on.

“You came to me,” she said softly. “You clearly recognized me from my photo, saw that I was about to leave, and if you had a problem with my body, you could have just let me leave.”

It sounded more like she was talking to herself. That she was working through this.

“Unless you like the idea of hurting me because of my body, as a punishment because you feel you have the right—”

“Absolutely not.” Tareq shifted away, then grabbed her shoulders, forcing her to turn so they were face to face. “I didn’t look at you and think ‘that woman doesn’t look like an Instagram model and therefore I should hurt her.’”

“What did you think?”

“Honestly?”

“Please.”

Tareq raised his brows, waiting until she nodded impatiently.

“Boobs.”

Nomi blinked, then rolled her eyes. “Seriously?”

“Seriously. Your tits in that corset were—” Tareq shook his head. “I mean I noticed the rest of you too. I watched you leave—you were one of the first ones out and that ass...” He pressed his fingertips to his lips and made the chef’s kiss gesture.

She laughed. “Okay, so you’re a boobs and butt guy.”

“Mostly boobs.” He let his expression turn serious. “But I want to be clear. I saw you, and I wanted to do things to you that will hurt. Not because of your body, but because I’m a sadist, and because I know I can use pain and sensation to give you the submission I assume you need.”

She held his gaze, then very deliberately lowered it.

Tareq’s hands flexed on her upper arms. “We haven’t talked about...anything.”

“No,” she agreed softly.

“We haven’t gone over your checklist.”

“True.”

“Tomorrow morning. Can you be here tomorrow morning?”

“I have work.”

“Right. Some people go to jobs, and that means they can’t just drop everything to hang out at a sex club.”

Her lips twitched and she raised her gaze, brow lifting in amusement.

“Tomorrow night,” she said.

“We’ll meet tomorrow night, and we’ll negotiate then.”

“And if you change your mind—”

“I already want to do unspeakable things to your ass, don’t give me excuses.”

She licked her lower lip.

Tareq really hoped she was interested in full sexual contact. Most people at Las Palmas were. That was the nature

of this club, and one of the reasons members referred to it as both a sex and kink club.

“Tomorrow night,” she agreed.

Tareq rose, offering her a hand.

She placed her fingers in his, but didn't let him pull her up, she barely touched his hand, instead using her free one to push herself to her feet. Given what she'd told him, he had to wonder if she was scared that she was too heavy for him.

He thought about their letter, about what he hoped they'd do, and grinned.

“Your smile is a little alarming,” she said as she folded the blanket.

“Serial killer alarming or Dom with a plan alarming?”

“Dom with a plan.”

“Then I'm doing it right.”

She finished folding the blanket, and held it out to him. “Would you mind taking this back inside? I'm going to head home.”

He nodded. “Drive safe.”

“I will.”

“And I'll see you tomorrow night?”

“Yes.”

Nomi fished her key from her cleavage and he didn't even pretend to not watch.

“It was nice to meet you, Tareq. And...thanks. For stopping me. I really do need this.” She looked up at the

building. “I was stressing out about what I’d do if I didn’t have this as an outlet.”

“My pleasure.”

She started down the steps and he went with her.

“You’re leaving too?”

“No, I’m walking you to your car.”

“You don’t need to.”

“I know. You can clearly take care of yourself. If it bugs you, I’ll stop.”

“No, it’s...nice. In an unnecessary way.” She clicked the fob and her car lit up.

They stopped by her trunk, Tareq with the blanket tucked under one arm, the other hand shoved in his pocket.

“Thanks again, for listening,” she said softly.

“My pleasure. And I mean that.”

She got her purse out of the trunk. When she went to the driver’s door, Tareq waited for her to open it, then held it, making sure she was in before carefully closing the door.

She started the car then rolled down the window.

“We have Q, right?”

He nodded. “We do.”

“Do we actually have anything on our list? Some of the letters must be blank. And it feels like Q is one of them.”

“Nope. We have a few items.”

“What are they?”

Tareq grinned, bracing one hand on the roof before leaning down. “I bet you really want to know.”

She narrowed her eyes. “And you’re not going to tell me?”

“Not until tomorrow.” He straightened, tapped the roof twice. “Drive safe.”

Nomi eyed him as she rolled up the window. Tareq backed out of the way, and watched her drive out of the parking lot before heading inside.

He had a lot of planning to do, plus he had to get a room for tomorrow. The club was probably fully booked, which meant he’d have to negotiate. He’d do whatever it took to make sure that tomorrow night he had a well-equipped private space where he could do every dirty, depraved thing he’d been imagining.

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CHAPTER 4



Tareq rose, pulled out her chair, then held it for her as Nomi took a seat. She was grateful for the courtesy, given the dress she'd chosen for tonight.

Picking out what to wear had been a study in commitment issues. The whole day had been a trial as anxiety and anticipation made her stomach muscles tight, and she'd changed her mind about coming half a dozen times.

Once she was seated, Tareq rounded the table and took his own seat.

He eyed her appreciatively. "I like that dress."

"I thought you might." Nomi adjusted the off the shoulder sleeves, which were really just draped bits of chiffon.

She'd bought this dress to wear to a wedding at the Getty Villa. Given that the museum was housed in a recreation of a Roman country home, the layers and intricate draping of the dress were a subtle nod to ancient Greek and Roman fashion, without being costumey.

The bodice was fitted, with pleated layered fabric that gathered at a central point just below her breasts before trailing down in long lines to the hem. While the bodice was sturdy, with layers of fabric, boning, and a snug fit to help it

keep its shape, the rest of the dress was loose and flowing, the thin, diaphanous material tending to cling to her curves.

When she'd worn it for the wedding, she'd had on heavy-duty foundation garments that smoothed out her belly and thighs. Those didn't give her the cinched waist of a corset, but did minimize and control her body.

Tonight, she wore nothing beneath the dress. No bra, no foundation garments. Just a pair of boy-cut satin stretch panties. No bra meant her boobs weren't as lifted as they would have been if she forced herself into both a strapless bra and the structure of the dress itself. No foundation garment meant that her rounded stomach and the "extra" roll on her hips were both on display as the fabric of the dress clung to her.

It had taken all her courage, and a protective shield of "anyone who thinks I'm not fucking gorgeous right now is a dick" attitude to walk out of the Subs' Garden.

She'd felt people's attention on her as she walked through the club, but hadn't checked to see what their expressions were saying. The optimistic part of her wanted to believe everyone was merely curious, since she wasn't wearing fet wear, that the long, formal-if-low-cut and clingy gown was drawing attention in a good way.

The pessimist within was sure that at least one of those people saw her and thought to themselves "oh, there's that fat sub."

Despite her comment to Tareq last night that fat was just a word and not necessarily derogatory, part of her curled up into a protective ball at the idea of anyone using it to label her, accurate or not.

“Nomi.”

She jerked her attention up from her lap, where she’d been twisting fabric between her fingers.

“You okay?”

“Yes. Sorry. Just...thinking.”

“Do you want a drink?”

“Sure.”

He started to rise, but she held out a hand. “Not red wine. I don’t actually like red wine that much.”

Tareq’s brows drew together. “Then why did you order it last night?”

“Because it’s the smart option.”

He dropped back into his chair, the frown smoothing out a bit. “Because red wine drinkers are snobby if they see you order white?”

“Because red wine is supposed to be healthier. Less sugar than white. Certainly less sugar than my actual favorite drink which is a French 75.”

Tareq planted his elbows on the table and leaned in. The posture made his shoulders seem huge, and even though they were both seated he loomed.

“You lied to me. Again.”

“That’s...uh...that’s not the main takeaway from my statement.”

“Isn’t it? You lied because you were more worried about appearances and what people thought—”

“That’s not fair. I was protecting myself—”

“Nomi.”

His voice was low and hard, and it cut through her half-finished statement. It was as if he froze her breath in her lungs with nothing more than voice. More specifically *his* voice saying *her* name in *that* tone.

“You will not lie to me. That’s non-negotiable.” He stared at her, and Nomi wanted to keep protesting. To explain. To point out that “no lying” was juvenily simplistic.

The words wouldn’t come, and after a long moment he rose, turning towards the bar.

Nomi closed her eyes and slumped back in her seat.

Part of her wanted to get up and sneak out while he was at the bar. Just do what she’d planned to do yesterday and leave Las Palmas. But if she did that now, it wouldn’t be panic-born self-protection.

It would be cowardice.

That internal truth made her grimace, and Nomi forced herself to sit up and open her eyes. Tareq was standing behind the bar while reading something on his phone. He started setting out ingredients—sparkling wine, a lemon, an unlabeled bottle of something clear, a blue bottle of gin.

The makings of a French 75.

She watched, caught between feelings she refused to name, as he prepared her drink. He was careful, focused, and cleaned up as he went. To contrast that, when he poured his own drink, he carelessly splashed red wine into a glass and jammed the cork in with his thumb.

She watched him bring their drinks, her whole body tight with anticipation.

“French 75.” He set the glass down in front of her.

“Thank you.”

Tareq grabbed his own chair and shifted it so he was sitting beside rather than across from her. Nomi fingered the stem of her flute as he took his seat.

They clinked glasses, and Nomi took a sip.

“How is it?” he asked. “Be honest. I expect the truth from you.”

“It’s good. Maybe a little too sweet.”

“It was a dud lemon,” he said grimly. “Not enough juice.”

“I really do like it, and the fact that you made me one is...”

“Too much? Given that we’re just—” He smiled as he raised his glass. “Lab partners.”

Nomi chuckled and shook her head. “No. I was trying to find a way of phrasing what I wanted to say that made sense. You’ve been taking care of me. Tonight. Last night too. Do you do that with everyone?”

She resisted the urge to add to the questions, to ask if he felt like it was his job to take care of other people. If he put others’ needs before his own. She wasn’t at work.

He looked slightly uncomfortable. “I do get a little possessive.” Now his expression morphed into a grimace. “That makes me sound like someone’s psycho ex on a true crime podcast. It’s not that I think of people as my possessions or something, it’s that I think of them as my people. Ilias says it’s tribal. That once my brain tags someone as being part of my tribe, my instincts tell my lizard brain that it’s my job to take care of, and protect, them.”

It was the first time in their admittedly brief acquaintance that he'd seemed off-balance.

"I was unaware one's instincts were separate from the lizard brain." She smiled to show she was trying to tease and lighten the mood. "And yes, it does make sense. The game created a situation where you mentally tagged me as one of your tribe, and you're acting accordingly."

As she realized the implications of that, Nomi's stomach dropped. Maybe this was why Tareq reacted to her the way he had. Maybe this drive to protect and care for people he viewed as part of his tribe overrode any objections he might otherwise have about sceneing with her.

"Not the game."

Nomi heard him and nodded, but wasn't really listening.

Tareq's hand closed over her wrist. The contact was unexpected, his hold tight. She stared at her wrist, then raised her gaze to his face.

"Whatever you're thinking right now is wrong."

"How would you have any idea what I'm thinking?"

Tareq tugged, positioning her forearm on the table, her wrist still captive.

"The look on your face wasn't good. So I made an educated guess."

Nomi swallowed. "It's possible that...It's possible that you feel the need to push forward with our scene only because you feel a sense of responsibility towards me."

Tareq shook his head. "Are you questioning my taste again?"

“No. I’m exploring the possibility that this is a mistake. Not a malicious one—”

“If you’d been listening, you’d have heard me say that it’s not the game, or not just the game, that made me feel this way about you.”

“What did?”

“That moment we had in the conclave. You were the only other person I saw who was ready to bust out laughing, rather than be caught up in the drama of it all.”

The knot in her stomach relaxed. “It was the craft-project feel of the sparkly letters that did it for me.”

“The rolling cork board was almost more than I could take,” he said, mock serious.

Before she could add another comment that would continue to lighten the mood and steer them away from dangerous conversational waters, Tareq tightened his grip on her wrist, just a little squeeze, but it made her go still.

Gently, if firmly, he rotated her wrist, until her hand rested palm up on the table.

Tareq placed his palm on the inside of her wrist, letting the weight of his hand hold her down without applying any other pressure.

The soft, needy places inside woke up, battering against the inside of her protective walls. She wanted to let go of every reservation, forget all the reasons she was wary, and submit to this man.

She wanted to know what he would do to her. Wanted to see if he would use her in unholy ways, while also treasuring and protecting her.

When he finally lifted his palm off her arm, Nomi didn't move.

“As much as I enjoy bantering with you, I think it's time to have a more serious conversation.”

Nomi had to take a sip of her drink before she could answer. “Agreed.”

Tareq reached under the table and pulled out a large envelope.

“Assignment packet,” he said with a grin, but then went serious as he took out the papers inside. “Do you remember what you put on your checklist?”

“I know what my hard limits are. What I'm less sure of is which things I marked as ‘willing to try’.”

Rather than a binary yes or no, the checklist every member filled out when they joined offered three options. “Yes”, “hard limit no”, and “willing to try”.

Ostensibly, they'd probably been meant to use these checklists regularly as part of negotiating individual scenes or in finding new partners. Instead, Nomi hadn't seen hers since joining. She had a few partners she trusted, a few scenes she really enjoyed, and she stuck to those.

Maybe the overseers had a point about everyone becoming complacent.

“You marked both Q items as willing to try.”

“Are you going to tell me what they are?”

“Are you willing to be surprised, knowing that past-you was willing to try them?”

“If I say no, will you accuse me of not trusting you?”

“No. I want you to be comfortable and confident with the scene.”

“The idea of not knowing is...more interesting than expected.”

“A little turned on by it?” His gaze slid down her face to her chest and then lower.

“More than just a little,” she admitted.

“Then let’s go over some parameters in general. Direct genital contact, yes or no?”

“Yes.”

“Penetrative sex?”

Did she want this man’s dick in her, despite the fact that they’d only just met? Yes, yes she did.

“Yes.”

“Oral?”

“Yes to giving and receiving.”

He grinned, staring at her lips. “Good. How formal do you like it?”

“I don’t like high protocol for the sake of itself.”

“I get that, and same. I want you to talk to me. I want to know what you’re thinking and feeling.”

“Emotional intimacy,” she said softly.

He paused to consider, then shrugged. “I guess so, but what I’m getting at is that if I’m going to top you, I need you to communicate with me.” He touched the center of her upturned palm with two fingers, pressing hard.

Nomi sucked in air at the unexpected intimacy, her fingers curling in response, her fingertips brushing his hand.

“Honest communication. That means you prioritize honesty over saying or doing what you think I, or anyone else, wants to hear.”

“I’ll do my best.”

He started to say something but she shook her head. “That’s all I can promise. Like I said, it’s protective.”

He considered her for a long moment. “I won’t ask you to trust me, but I will ask you to trust that I’m being honest. If I say that I want to fuck you—and I do—it’s not about the game. It’s not even about you being one of my people. It’s that I can’t wait to have you naked and wet and submissive, ready to take my cock.”

They went over a few more rules, her safe word protocol, and both their personal boundaries, but the visual he’d painted hung between them, heavy and hot, just waiting to be let free.

Finally, Tareq tucked the papers back in the folder. When he rose, Nomi held her breath.

Tareq held out his hand and she took it, rising to her feet. Then Tareq adjusted his grip from her fingers to her wrist and a little shiver of mingled relief and pleasure skittered down her spine.

As he guided her out of the library, any fear she had about not being able to let go enough to scene with this man evaporated, because with each step they took she felt more and more submissive.

And that was dangerous too, but it was too late to turn back.

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CHAPTER 5



He hadn't managed to secure one of the playrooms, but he had bartered for—and that had been fun helping out with “S” last night—one of the hotel rooms.

Many members didn't just come up to Las Palmas for an evening, but made a weekend of it. Sometimes it was due to simple logistics. Depending on how far they lived from Malibu, it could be a very long drive. Other times it was about immersion—shutting out the real world and diving into the kink for more than an evening. Either way, Las Palmas had separate buildings away from the main courtyards with both hostel-style dorms and these hotel-like rooms which could be reserved by any member.

Las Palmas's three main courtyards each had a theme, coupled with a specific type of playroom. Of those three courts, the Sub Rosa court's rooms were the most “normal.” They looked like bedrooms, but were well equipped playrooms. In contrast, these hotel rooms were normal bedrooms, with a few extras that made them adaptable for kink.

Tareq opened the door and stepped through, then held it for Nomi. He still held her wrist, but as she walked into the

bedroom he released it, not wanting to put her arm in an awkward position.

He stopped short when her fingers grabbed his, her grip on his hand almost desperate.

Tareq let the door close and studied her profile. Nomi looked calm, maybe even a little regal, but her grip on his hand told a different story.

Gently, he wiggled his fingers free of her hold. The moment she realized what she was doing she released him, and he could see the faint flush that rose on her cheeks.

She'd grabbed his hand because she was either nervous or scared, instinctively seeking a connection, and he'd rejected that same connection. That wasn't actually what happened, but he could practically see the thought on her face.

Tareq lightly gripped the back of her neck, his fingers clamping her hair against her skin. "Ah ah ah, Nomi. Don't get lost in your head."

Now she was tense, but no longer curling in on herself. A different flavor of tension.

"I'm not, Sir."

His cock twitched at the word 'Sir'. They'd discussed this, and agreed on her calling him either Sir or Master Zine as he preferred the Master Last Name rather than Master First Name format.

Nomi tipped her head back, the base of her skull resting on the edge of his hand. Her neck made a lovely line, and he surrendered to the need to touch her, running his finger from her chin down the curve of her neck to her collarbone.

Her lovely breasts were right there, the soft swells vulnerable and ripe. He wanted to worship her with a kiss and then taste her with a bite.

Instead, he forced his hand to follow the line of her collarbone out to her shoulder and down her arm until he hit the fabric of her sleeve.

He toyed with that for a moment, making it dance up and down until she shivered. He tightened his hold on her neck, just enough to make sure she really felt it.

“Remind me of your safe words.”

“Stoplight system,” she murmured. “Red for stop, yellow for slow down or pause, green for keep going or more.”

“Good girl.”

She shivered again.

Tareq pressed his lips to her hair, then kissed her earlobe.

“Do you like being called a good girl?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“You’re going to be a very good girl for me, aren’t you?”

“I’ll try, Sir.”

“You won’t have to try. I’m going to make sure you’re a good little sub who knows exactly who this pretty body belongs to.”

“Not exactly little,” she murmured.

Tareq stilled. “What did you say?”

“I said I’m not exactly little.” Nomi gestured down the length of her body with one hand.

Tareq quickly recalibrated his plan for the scene, because this needed to be addressed now, and in a way she'd remember.

“Did you just insult my sub?” He whispered the question in her ear. Her reaction was a gratifying shiver, and her voice was high and nervous when she spoke.

“No, I made a factual observa—”

“Don't pretend this is about semantics. Apologize to yourself.”

She tried to turn, but he grabbed her arm, holding her by the neck and elbow, his body partially behind hers.

“I'm not small,” she said in a too-calm voice. “I want...I want to make sure you realize that.”

“Ah, so now you think I'm stupid?”

“No! No. I...”

“You what, Nomi? What were you trying to do when you corrected me?”

“I wasn't trying to correct you, Sir.”

“Fine. What were you trying to do?”

“I wanted to...I wanted to say it before you did.”

Tareq released her neck and grabbed her other arm, using his hold to march her across the room to a full-length mirror. The freestanding mirror was heavy and wide, but the base had wheels. A small adjustment to the angle and occupants of the bed would be able to see themselves.

Tareq forced her to stand in front of it, pressing his body against her back.

“Don't,” she pleaded, meeting his gaze in the mirror.

“Don’t what?”

“Don’t try to make me love myself by looking in the mirror, apologizing to myself, or something. I do love myself. I really do.”

“But you think others can’t.”

Her breath caught and she looked away.

“You assume other people don’t like or want this body, and so you insult yourself before they can?”

“I’m protecting myself.”

Her words were lower than a whisper, barely audible, and he might not have caught them if he hadn’t also been watching her mouth in the mirror and reading her lips. There was that term ‘protecting’ again. Time to change up how it was being used.

“I don’t want you protected...” he murmured. “I want you exposed and soft and vulnerable. I want you to yield to me.” Tareq slid his hands down her arms to her wrists, letting his fingers play over the skin.

“I want you helpless, and wet, and begging.” Tareq grabbed her wrists, squeezing tight, making sure she felt his control. Her gasp made his cock twitch and the urge to dominate this woman tore at him.

“I’m going to hurt you and pleasure you.” He pulled her wrists to the small of her back. He didn’t have an easy way to bind her, and didn’t want to let go long enough to get one. Instead, he forced her to grip his belt, her fingers curled under the leather, trapped between it and his pants.

“I’m going to punish you for insulting my property.” That might be taking this too far. “Property” was a loaded word.

She wasn't interested in being a lifestyle slave, any more than he was interested in having a slave rather than a sub. But in the moment, it felt right. Felt like the extreme was necessary to make his point. Given the way her breasts rose and fell, and the look in her wide, hungry eyes as they met his in the mirror, the word did what he'd meant it to.

“When I call you a naughty little girl, my naughty little sub, I'm not talking about your body being little.” Tareq cupped her shoulders. “I'm talking about control...as in how little control you have.”

Realistically that was bullshit, subs had a massive amount of control over a scene, but again his words were about setting the tone for the evening.

“And that means I can do whatever I want with this lovely body.”

He watched her expression as he said lovely body, saw something flit across her face, there and gone before he could name it.

Tareq slid his hands down from her shoulders across her collarbones.

This time he didn't stop.

His palms smoothed down her chest, over the soft upper curves of her breasts, then his fingers dipped under the fabric. She gasped, arched her back to press herself more fully into his hands.

Tareq hummed in pleasure as he gripped her tits, heavy handfuls of soft skin. He shoved his hands deeper down the front of her dress, gathering up more of her breasts and kneaded them. He felt her nipples harden under his palms, and

adjusted his hands so he could pinch the tips of her breasts using his thumb and the side of his first knuckle.

She hissed out a breath and arched, shoulders pressing back against him as she simultaneously pulled on his belt. For a moment his body posture mimicked hers, back bowing as she pulled his hips forward and pushed his shoulders back.

Then Tareq set his feet and straightened his back, making his body hard and unyielding.

He relaxed the pinch, instead using his thumb to roll her nipple along the edge of his index finger.

“Oh my god, that feels so good,” she whispered.

“Yes, they do.” Tareq spread his fingers to cradle the bottom of her breasts, his pinkies nestled in the crease where breasts met ribs.

The front of the dress was stretched tight thanks to his hands in it, his wrists forcing the sides of it down. He wondered if...

Tareq dropped his elbows, letting the weight of his arms push down on the dress. That wasn't quite enough to do it, so he gave her tits a nice squeeze then lifted. Her breasts popped free of the dress, which sagged around her lower ribs.

Nomi hissed out a breath, her head tipped back against his shoulder.

Tareq took his time looking her over. Her breasts were big and heavy, her areolas wide and a lovely shade of brown tinged with pink. His semi-hard cock became a full erection.

“Open your eyes and look in the mirror.”

She hesitated.

“Look at me,” he said, this time making it a sharp command.

Her head came up, eyes popping open. Tareq flicked her nipples with his thumbs, her hips bumping against his in reaction.

“I see you.” He realized too late how stupid that sounded. Like something out of a children’s book.

But she didn’t laugh or smile. Her expression was flickering between vulnerable and neutral, as if she wasn’t sure what she wanted to show him.

“I see your body,” he said. “Can you trust that?”

She nodded.

“Good. Then unless something is making you uncomfortable, physically or emotionally, I want you to stop trying to defend how you look, or preemptively insult yourself.”

“I meant what I said. I really do like my body, and—”

He released one breast to bring his hand up and press a finger to her lips, stopping her mid-sentence.

“I believe you. And I’m glad. But your self-defense mechanism that makes you comment on your body before anyone else can is going to get in the way of the scene.”

She looked like she might object, and he lifted his finger away from her lips so she could say what she needed to say. After a pregnant silence she merely shook her head.

“I’m not trying to deny or minimize your worry.” He danced his fingers down her chest until he was once more cupping and lifting her breast. “But while you’re mine...” He paused, rephrased. “While you’re subbing for me, I need your

focus to be on what I'm doing to you. It's no longer about what shape your body is. It's about what I'm going to do to it."

Nomi let out a soft, quaking breath. "Yes, Sir."

"Good."

Releasing her breasts, he found and undid the zipper of her dress, which was one of those tiny little ones. He struggled, but managed to get it down. Even unzipped, it clung to her rather than falling away.

Tareq turned Nomi to face him, her back to the mirror. Her fingers tangled together in front of her, and the way she had her arms pressed in at her sides, holding the dress in place around her middle, made her naked breasts squeeze together.

His brain popped up a vivid image of what it would look like if he straddled her and fucked those pretty tits.

Tareq adjusted himself so he didn't end up with an impression of his zipper on his dick. That done, he caught her chin on the edge of his hand, lifting her face to his. Nomi kept her eyes submissively lowered, and the need to dominate her, to use her all in the name of giving her what she needed, rolled through him like a storm surge.

"Nomi."

"Yes, Sir?"

"Drop the dress."

Nomi didn't hesitate. She relaxed her arms, then wiggled the fabric down her body. Only when it was at thigh level did gravity take hold. She stepped out of it, and her shoes, carefully pushing them aside with her foot.

Tareq looked her over, knowing intellectually that her body wasn't society's ideal. But in that moment, he truly couldn't

fathom how anyone could see her and not want to stroke and spank and kiss and bite every inch of her.

He sure as fuck wanted to do those things. Those and more.

Tareq backed up to sit on the edge of the bed. He glanced at her, reassessed, then scooted back until he was more fully on the bed, one foot on the floor for balance, the other leg pulled up.

“Nomi.”

“Yes, Sir?”

He patted his thigh. “Face down over my lap, please.”

She jerked, gaze darting up for a moment, meeting his.

Tareq raised a brow. “You insulted my sub. That’s a good excuse, but more importantly, you’re already having trouble being open and vulnerable.”

“I really do...I feel my submission. I was just thinking how fast, how easy it’s been, to feel submissive with you when sometimes I struggle.”

“Good.” He’d think later about how hot it was that she reacted to him instinctively. “But I want more.” He waited a moment to let that sink in. “You need a good hard spanking, don’t you?”

Nomi’s expression was pure relief. “Yes, Sir.”

“Then get over here. I want you face down over my lap.”

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CHAPTER 6



Nomi eyed the way he was sitting, then crawled up onto the bed, kneeling beside him. She was backwards to the way he'd probably expected—he probably thought she'd have her legs dangling over the side, chest on the bed, but experience had taught her this was better.

Tareq gripped her arm, tugging her forward. Gingerly, Nomi stretched out, planting her hands on the mattress beside the leg braced on the floor. Now she was on hands and knees over him, her side against his chest. She tensed as she felt the edge of the mattress give a little under her hand.

“As fun as this position is—” Tareq’s hand reached under her and she sucked in air as he toyed with her dangling breasts. “—I want you on my lap. Lie down.”

Slowly, Nomi lowered herself, her midsection over his thighs, her breasts on the mattress, her arms folded under her cheek, one elbow sticking off the side of the bed, her legs stretched out on the bed at an angle.

Tareq adjusted a little, gripping her shoulder and hip and scooting back. He kept one foot on the ground, which meant her head and shoulders were a little lower than her ass, and she had the vague feeling that she was sliding. She moved one arm out from under her head to grab a handful of duvet.

“I won’t let you fall.”

“Just making sure,” she murmured.

There was a beat of silence and then Tareq gripped her wrist, squeezing until she let go of the fabric. Then he forced her arm behind her, holding her hand at the small of her back.

“I won’t let you fall,” he said again.

Nomi shivered. “Yes, Sir.”

His other hand slid from her hip down the back of one leg. Nomi let out a long sigh of pleasure as he stroked down to her calf, then reversed course.

He spent several long minutes stroking and petting her legs, always stopping just short of touching her butt. When he released her wrist, she left her hand in place until trying to hold her arm in that position began to make her shoulder muscle protest.

“Sir, may I move my arm?”

“Yes.”

She folded that arm alongside the other under her cheek.

“One thing we didn’t talk about is pain tolerance.” Tareq’s voice was soft and intimate. “I have a heavy hand, so you may not be able to take as many spanks from me as you do from other Doms.”

Something about that sentence made her stomach tighten with fear-laced anticipation, even as her pussy clenched with need.

“I want you to tell me when it stops being fun, warm-up hurt.”

“Is that when you’ll stop, Sir?”

“No.”

One word, one simple word but it hit her hard, and her submission rolled over her like a wave.

“This is punishment, not foreplay. Every time your ass hurts for the next two days you’ll be reminded not to insult what belongs to me.”

“And I belong to you.” It wasn’t a question, though it should have been.

His hand slid up to her ass, gripping one cheek. “Yes. The game made you mine.”

The reminder about the game deflated her a little, but she didn’t have time to dwell on it, because Tareq was tugging her panties down around her upper thighs.

His hand skimmed over her bare ass and Nomi’s mouth went dry.

“This is a very spankable butt. You’re going to be sore after this punishment, and I’d like to say I won’t spank you again because of that.”

“But?”

“But this ass is...seriously spankable.” She heard the smile in his voice.

She tensed slightly when he used two fingers and his thumb to push her ass cheeks apart. Cool air touched her anus. She knew he was looking at her there, maybe planning how to use her.

“Next time you need a proper punishment I’ll have some ginger for your pretty asshole.”

“I haven’t been figged in...years maybe...Sir.”

“Then the burn will be a fun surprise.” Tareq let go of her butt cheeks and went back to petting her.

She knew what he was doing. Knew he was gentling her so she'd relax before starting in with the spanking, while also prolonging the anticipation. Knowing what he was doing and why he was doing it did nothing to negate the effects. With each minute that passed, her body softened, the muscles she'd been holding tense relaxing, while she simultaneously wanted to scream for him to hurry up and do something.

His hand lifted from her butt, and then the first swat landed.

He'd taken her by surprise, and Nomi jerked. His hand on her ribs kept her in place.

He'd left behind a good sting, a surface level buzz on her right butt cheek.

The second spank landed on the other cheek, another quick, stinging swat.

“Lovely,” Tareq murmured, his hand back to stroking over her ass.

That was the pattern. Two spanks—one to each cheek—then he stroked her.

Nomi had been worried after his comment about his heavy hand, but while these were certainly nice firm spanks, they weren't particularly painful.

The painful part was the waiting. She could never quite relax enough to fully enjoy the stroking and petting because she was anticipating the next set of spanks.

“How are you doing?”

“Good, Sir.”

“Nice and warmed up?”

Oh. This was just warm up. “Yes, Sir.”

“Good. Now don’t forget to tell me when you hit the point of it tipping over from pleasure-pain to pain.”

The reminder that he was going to hurt her only made her pussy wetter.

She turned her head so instead of face out, she was facing the bed, and could see him out of the corner of her eye.

Tareq looked down at her, smiled, and raised his hand.

The crack of sound hit her a moment before the burn registered.

Holy crap, that hurt.

Nomi yelped, shocked by the deep throbbing pain in her left butt cheek.

Tareq placed a matching blow on the other side. His hand hit hard, the sound of it shocking.

“Ouch.”

“Felt that, did you?” Tareq pushed her hair away from her face.

“Oh, I definitely felt that.”

“Good.”

Tareq raised his hand.

Each one hurt a little more than the last, the sting quickly followed by a deep heat. It was a good spanking, she wouldn’t deny that—he always hit the midpoint of her ass and lower, never getting lazy and striking the top of her butt. But it was

also a hard spanking. He wasn't just letting his hand fall. He was putting force behind it.

Nomi lasted six more spanks before she lost the ability to hold still. When the next blow landed, she drummed her feet on the bed. The one after that had her reaching back with one hand, trying to cover her ass.

“No.” He barked the command, grabbing her wrist and forcefully moving her arm back to the bed, her hand near her face.

“It hurtssss,” she hissed out the word.

“Good. Thank you for telling me.” He put a hand on her thigh, stilling her restless legs. “Just a few more.”

Tears sprang to her eyes. “I won't do it again. I promise.”

His thumb touched a tear as it slid along her nose. “I know you won't. You're going to be a very good, very submissive girl for me, aren't you?”

“Yes, Master Zine.”

He raised his hand.

Nomi shrieked when the spank landed. Damn it, that hurt. It was pain avoidance instinct that had her wiggling her legs towards the side of the bed in an effort to slide off his lap.

Tareq gripped her thigh and yanked her more firmly onto his lap. He didn't stop there though. He gripped the knee closest to him, forcing her to bend her leg so it was tucked up around him. Her panties dug painfully into the edges of her thighs.

“If you get off this bed, the spanking upgrades from my hand to my belt.” His voice was hard but not angry. He was stating a fact rather than making a threat.

“I’m s-sorry, Sir.” Her voice shivered and trembled. “It hurts.”

“I know it does, pretty girl.” He petted her ass and thighs, her hair and shoulders. “But you can take a few more, can’t you?”

Nomi whimpered in reply. She was an unholy, chaotic mix of afraid and aroused. Her pain-avoidance was at war with her need to submit. To be the “good girl,” the “pretty girl” he’d named her.

“You can jump and thrash all you want,” he assured her. “I’m not going to stop spanking you until I’m done.”

“But if I do that and I slide off your lap...”

“Then I’ll take my belt to this pretty ass, yes. But I know it hurts, so I’m not going to make you do all the work of staying in place.”

Tareq shifted again, turning so that he was half facing her feet, his left arm tucked all the way around her waist.

“Knees together.”

It was a relief to obey and not have her stretched underwear digging into her thighs. When she closed her legs, he shoved the panties down another few inches.

“I’m going to spank you right here.” His fingers danced over the sensitive spot where ass met thigh. “Right on your sit spot.”

Nomi whimpered.

“That’s a sexy little sound. Makes me want to do things to you.”

“Please... Please, Sir.” Nomi spoke without worrying about what he’d think. Without questioning and planning and trying to make herself something she wasn’t. She felt wonderfully out of control, deeply submissive.

“Please what, pretty girl?”

“Please do them. The things you want to do to me. I want them.”

In this moment she would have let him do anything to her. Later she could worry about how quickly he’d brought her to this place, and with nothing more than a spanking.

No, that wasn’t it. Or not entirely it. It wasn’t just the spanking that had brought her here. It was his words. It was him.

“Even if what I want is to keep spanking you?”

“Yes, Sir.”

He momentarily spread her ass, letting cool air hit her anus, before saying, “Good.”

The next thing she felt was the burning pain of his hand cracking down on her flesh.

Nomi screamed, grabbing handfuls of duvet as her feet drummed the mattress. He didn’t give her any respite, the next blow landing before the pain of the first had faded.

She choked on air when his hand returned to the first side, landing in nearly the same spot as a moment ago. As he’d promised he was spanking her sit spot. It was her favorite place to be spanked because it hurt, and because she’d feel it the next day.

She was going to feel this for several days.

She thrashed and wiggled and he held her tight around the waist, his spanking thorough and merciless. The burning pain had spread from her ass down her thighs, and she could feel her heartbeat in her abused flesh.

“You’re taking this beautifully.” The praise made her pussy clench with need, made her feet fall still in a silent effort to please him.

“Just four more, pretty girl,” he murmured.

“Yes, Sir.”

“Do you think you can hold perfectly still for me?”

“I can try.” She took a breath, shivering as she exhaled. “I will do my best, Sir.”

“Such a good, obedient girl,” he praised, his hand gently stroking the back of each knee. “Can you count for me too?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Good.”

Then he hit her again, striking flesh that was already hot and throbbing. Nomi sucked in air, her whole body focused on the pain he’d given her.

“One, thank you, Sir.”

“And a ‘thank you’? Impressive.” There was no mocking in his tone.

Smack.

“Two, thank you, Sir.” Her voice was watery, but she got the words out.

“Final two,” he murmured encouragingly. “You’re taking this so well. Your ass is bright pink.”

Smack.

Nomi curled her toes in an effort to keep her legs still as she stammered out, “Three, thank you, Sir.”

Smack.

He made the last one count, made it hurt.

Made it hurt because that was what she needed.

“Four, thank you, Sir.” The words ran together, and her voice was thick with tears.

“Well done, well done.” Tareq eased her legs off the bed.

Nomi scrubbed her face with one hand, the other braced on the bed as he slid out from under her. She locked her knees, preparing to stand up, but then Tareq was there, his hand at the back of her neck.

“Bend over the bed.”

“Sir?” Her voice wobbled. Oh god, was he going to spank her again?

“Yes?” Tareq kept his hand on her neck as he pressed her shoulders and head down onto the mattress. He asked it as a question, and that in and of itself was a reminder for her to obey.

She wanted to ask if he was going to spank her more. Warn him that she was close to needing to say yellow, which would be true, but she’d warn him about it as a way of getting him to change his plans. Was that wrong? Was that manipulative or good communication? She was rattled and jangly and didn’t know the answer to that question.

It came down to her wanting to know what was happening so she could prepare herself, brace herself, so she stayed in

place, and when he once again asked, “Yes?” she merely said, “Nothing, Sir.”

“Ah that’s my good girl.”

The praise skittered down her spine.

“Take one big step back. Good, that’s it.”

He wanted her vulnerable and he’d asked for her trust. She’d give him both.

His hands on her thighs guided her to where he wanted her, with only her shoulders and head on the bed, her breasts hanging down, her ass in the air.

Tareq dropped to his knees behind her and slipped her panties down to her ankles. “Step out of them.”

She did, very aware of her own nudity. Aware of the way it wasn’t just her breasts but her belly that hung in this position.

“Spread your legs. As wide as you can.”

Nomi inched her feet apart.

“I’m right here behind you,” he said softly. “Looking at you. Watching you. I want you to spread your legs more, so I can really see your pussy.”

Nomi kept inching her feet across the hard floor. The muscles in her ass protested, and there was still a steady throb coming from the abused flesh.

“Now reach back, grab your ass, and spread yourself.”

Nomi stilled.

Tareq’s hands settled on her thighs. “I want to see all of you, pretty girl. I want you spread and vulnerable for me.”

His words hit her like little points of fire, as if he were holding a sparkler and embers had landed on her skin.

Nomi clenched fistfuls of the duvet, her face burning with embarrassment or arousal. She wasn't sure which.

He petted her thighs and calves, quiet and patient.

Nomi sucked in air then reached back. She felt the hot skin of her own ass as she grabbed her butt, then inched her fingers towards the center to get a good grip before pulling her cheeks apart.

Once more cool air touched her, and she was hyper aware of how close he was behind her, of the unveiled view he had of her most intimate parts.

“This is a lovely sight.”

Her face burned with embarrassment, yet she didn't want to hide from him.

She did flinch when he ran his hands along her stomach rolls up to her breasts. He stroked the undersides, then gently pinched each nipple and pulled down, extending her breasts even further.

“Can you feel me looking at you?”

“Yes, Sir. I can feel it when you...when you exhale.”

He made a pleased noise, and then he blew air over her pussy and ass. She clenched in reaction, and felt fresh moisture slide from her vagina down her labia.

“Now that is a pretty sight.” He rewarded her with a little twist to her nipples.

“Thank you, Sir.”

She wasn't sure how long they stayed like that, her bent over and utterly exposed—breasts hanging, her own hands holding her ass-cheeks open, her spread legs showing him her sex.

When he finally released her nipples and stood, Nomi didn't move. She stayed there, despite knowing it wasn't the sexiest position, despite how uncomfortable it was and how much her ass throbbed from the spanking.

“I have a pet theory,” Tareq said after a moment. “That it's easier to submit with something in your ass.”

His hand touched the small of her back, steadying her, and then cool, slick lube touched her anus. Nomi dug her fingers into her skin, sending shocks of pain through her spanked backside.

Tareq casually pressed a plug into her, ignoring her little yelp as the tip breached the ring of muscle. Nomi shifted her weight from foot to foot, leaning forward to ease the invasive pressure.

Not that it did her any good. He pushed the long, slim plug in. It filled her, opening and stretching her until it finally settled in place, her body tightening down around it.

Nomi panted and whimpered, and when Tareq tugged her hands away from her ass she brought them up to her chest, tucking her fists under her shoulders.

But Tareq wasn't done. He wrapped an arm around her ribs and helped her stand. When she tried to close her legs, he tsked, and she stopped, swaying a little. Once she was up, he brought her wrists up, directing her to lace her hands together on top of her head.

He slid between her body and the edge of the bed and took a seat occupying the space where her shoulders and head had rested only moments ago. He stretched out one leg so it was between her still spread ones.

His gaze slid down her body, an unhurried study. Nomi fought down the need to either cover herself or say something mildly disparaging. The throbbing pain from the spanking and the plug in her ass helped. It kept her quiet as he looked her over.

“You took that spanking beautifully,” he praised. Tareq stood, their bodies so close together his chest almost brushed against her. He toed off his shoes, kicking them aside, then sat on the bed once more, sliding to the center and mounding up the pillows so he could lean back against them.

Tareq’s dark eyes regarded her, and Nomi felt terribly vulnerable standing there with her arms up, legs spread, ass throbbing and plugged.

Then he patted the bed beside him. “Come here.”

Nomi dropped her arms, crawled onto the bed, and into his arms.

CHAPTER 7



Nomi rested her cheek on Tareq's shoulder, her naked body tucked up alongside his fully clothed one. There was a bulge in his pants, proof that he'd been turned on by what they just did, and the relief she felt from seeing that was acute.

His one arm was tucked around her back, his hand resting at her natural waist. Because of her position half reclined and on her side, his hand rested right where her skin formed two rolls. She shifted a little, trying to move his hand, but he tightened his hold and she settled. She reminded herself that even very skinny people had rolls when they sat down.

And then a random throb from her abused ass yanked her attention away from the worn worry pathways of her internal monologues about herself and her body. She shifted, sliding her legs against one another, which made the plug shift just enough to send a little wave of pleasure through her.

Tareq reached over and tapped her top leg. "Let's keep these spread."

Nomi went still, raising her face to his. He looked down at her, all cool-eyed Dom. Laying on her side she couldn't think of an elegant, attractive position for this. Hesitantly she raised her upper knee, swiveling her leg at the hip and planting her foot on the bed.

Tareq raised his head off the pillows, looked at her spread legs, at her pussy. “Good.”

“We’re still...in the scene, Sir?”

“Of course.” He looked at her face. “Normally for you aftercare is after you’ve closed down the power exchange?”

She opened her mouth to say yes, but that wouldn’t have been accurate. “No, I guess not. It just feels different.”

“How?”

Now she was frowning. “Actually, everything about this feels different. I don’t know why I reacted so strongly to the spanking.”

“Probably because I whaled on that pretty ass. My hand hurts.” He held up his right palm to show her.

“Poor baby,” she murmured, then before she could think better of it, grabbed his hand and kissed the center of his palm.

Tareq made a pleased noise, traced her lips with his finger, but then slid his hand down to grip her neck, forcing her face up to his.

“Mocking me, Nomi?”

“No, Sir. Well, maybe a little. I mean your hand hurts but my ass is throbbing.”

He grinned. “Good.” His thumb touched her lower lip. “Tell me what you meant.”

“About?”

“You said everything feels different.”

She tucked her chin to her chest, rubbing her cheek on his shoulder as she did so. “I’m not...not really sure.”

He waited, quietly stroking her shoulder and side.

“I’ve been spanked plenty of times before. I’ve had impact play that was more aggressive—harder—than that. Not to say that it wasn’t a hell of a spanking, because it was.”

“Thank you.” She could hear the grin.

“But I don’t normally... Normally, I can hold perfectly still. Normally, I don’t start crying and wiggling and all that.”

“You’re saying normally you’re more controlled.”

“I guess so.”

“Because you feel like you have to be?”

“Oof,” Nomi said, then sat up. “That’s probably right, and are you going to keep hitting me with these accurate truths the whole weekend?” She almost made a joke about that being her job.

“Probably.”

She’d dropped her upraised knee when she sat up, and he tapped her leg in silent reminder. She spread her legs, watched his attention drop to her pussy, as if making sure he had complete access, before he returned to her face.

“My reaction to the spanking was stronger, and less controlled than normal,” she concluded, though she wasn’t sure if she was talking to him or to herself.

“Might be chemistry. Our chemistry.” Tareq crooked his finger at her.

Nomi raised her brows but got up on both knees, not sure what he wanted. She was right next to him, how much closer to him could she get?

He showed her when he guided her so she straddled his thighs. She hissed out a breath when her abused ass came to rest on his hard legs.

“Hands behind your back.”

Nomi carefully laced her fingers together at the small of her back. Here she was, naked, spanked, plugged, legs spread, breasts outthrust, while he reclined, fully clothed and looking like the cat that ate the canary.

“You needed that spanking, both as punishment, and to release some of that tension you were carrying around.” Tareq gripped her knees, sliding his hands up her thighs until his thumbs hovered near her pussy.

“Yes, Sir.”

“I won’t lie to you and promise I won’t spank you again, because putting you over my knee was fucking fantastic.” He grinned, and she couldn’t help but return the smile.

“But now it’s time to talk about our game items.”

“Q is for...” she let her voice trail off.

“Two odd ones. The first of which is questions-slash-questioning.”

“Questioning like...interrogation?” Nomi’s blood heated at the idea of a little torture interrogation roleplay.

“We could interpret it like that,” he agreed. “But I’ve decided it means that I get to ask you questions.”

“And I answer them?”

“Or pay the penalty.”

“What penalty?”

“TBD.”

She gave him the look that deserved, then switched tactics. “What kind of questions?”

“I’m not going to ask for your email password.” He cupped her ribs, his thumbs grazing the underside of her breasts. “I’ll keep it to sex and BDSM.”

“So, we’re going to have a conversation? That doesn’t exactly seem like a kink.”

He flicked her nipples. “We’ll see.”

Nomi let her head fall back as he toyed with her. “Thank you, Sir.”

He cupped her breasts as if testing their weight. “There’s a second item, but I have a feeling you’re going to get... squirrely...about that one.”

“Squirrely? What is it?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?”

“Yes...yes I would.”

“Well, you’ll have to wait.” He grinned, looking almost boyish.

“Argh,” Nomi knew she was smiling even as she made the aggrieved noise.

“But first... Food.”

“Food?”

“Yep. We need to eat.”

Nomi looked to her discarded dress.

“Nope, you’re not wearing that. There’s usually robes in here.”

Nomi closed her eyes, stomach tight with potential embarrassment. “It would probably be better if I went to get my own robe,” she said quietly.

She really didn’t want to have to spell this out for him, to tell him that whatever robe was in here probably wouldn’t fit her.

Tareq touched her cheek, and she opened her eyes, meeting his gaze.

“Is your locker locked?” he asked.

“No.”

“Good.”

He patted her thigh, which she took as a signal to let him up. Nomi swung her leg over then sat, remembering too late that her ass was tender. She sucked in a hard breath. Even the expensive, soft duvet cover felt rough against her abused skin. That jolt of pain was followed by pleasure when the plug shifted inside her. Nomi repositioned so she was half reclined, resting on one hip rather than fully sitting.

Tareq sat and pulled on his shoes, then stood, turning to eye her before circling the bed so he could see her ass, cupping it with one large palm. “You’re giving off heat. Hurts when you sit?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Even on a nice soft bed. Dinner is going to be fun.”

She eyed him over her shoulder, but when he raised a brow in challenge, she dropped her gaze. “Yes, Sir.”

“Lay on your stomach.”

Nomi rolled, lying prone, her ass feeling very exposed.

The next thing she heard was the sound of his belt sliding free of his pant loops.

Nomi jerked her head around, eyes wide. “Sir, I’ve been good?!”

His belt dangled from one hand, the brown leather menacing. Tareq brushed her hair back from her face.

“You have been good.” He doubled the belt, holding the end and buckle in one hand.

Nomi whimpered, that whimper turning into a scream when he slapped the belt against the bed, the sound of the strike making her jerk. And when she realized he’d smacked the bed and not her, an odd emotion rolled through her.

“Sir, please...”

“Please what?”

If he took his belt to her already throbbing ass, it would be agony. Her skin felt hot and raw, like she had a bad sunburn. Add the focused pain of being whipped by a belt to that...

It would hurt, but if he wanted to hurt her more...if he thought she needed it.

Submission rolled through her, turning black and white to every shade of gray.

“Please don’t, or please do?” he asked.

“Please use me as you see fit,” she whispered.

“Ah...” His hand traced her spine down to her ass. She whimpered when he squeezed her cheeks.

“What a good girl you are, willing to take more punishment just to please me.”

Her pussy pulsed and now she wanted the belt. Wanted him to beat her until she screamed.

Hours. It had taken him only hours to maneuver her deep into her submission.

“But I have other plans for your pretty backside. Hands.”

It took her a moment to process the command in the last word. She had her arms up by her head, hands gripping the duvet. Now she lowered her arms so they were stretched out along her sides, her palms face up.

Tareq gently placed one end of his belt into her left hand. “Hold tight.”

She gripped the leather as he lay the belt across her throbbing ass, placing the other end into her right hand.

“You hold on to my belt,” he commanded. “Until I get back. But don’t worry, I’ll give you something to focus on while I’m gone.”

Tareq spread her ass cheeks with one hand, his fingers digging into her. She breathed slow and deep as he worked the slim plug out of her ass with his other hand.

“I saw something interesting earlier, and now I think is the perfect time to play with it.”

“What’s that, Sir?”

She watched as he first took the plug into the bathroom, then went to the small desk tucked into the corner. It looked like any hotel room desk except for the O-rings screwed into the bottom of each leg. He picked up something from the corner of the desk, unplugging it.

He turned, holding it casually by his side. Not showing it to her, but not hiding it either.

Another plug. This one was a bright blue color, longer than the last one, with a gradual taper, but a thicker neck.

Why had it been plugged in? Did it vibrate?

Tareq returned, dropping to sit on the bed beside her. She heard the click of a lube bottle, then his slick fingers were once more pushing her cheeks apart. It felt odd to have him using her ass while she lay flat like this, legs closed. It was somehow more intimate. Or maybe it was that she wasn't in a classic "now I'm going to play with your ass" position of kneeling, legs spread, that made this feel somehow more illicit.

The plug touched her anus, the tip smooth, but not as cold as the glass one had been. Nomi moaned as he pressed the tip against her.

"Push out," he commanded, and she did, as if she were trying to expel something from her ass, which actually made it easier for the tip to breach.

"Damn, but that's sexy." His voice was low and rough with need.

He kept up the pressure, the plug sliding deeper. She wiggled as her anus was forced open, the muscle unable to keep him out, unable to keep him from using her.

Nomi moaned as the stretch edged towards a burn, but then it was in, her body tightening down around the neck which felt...lumpy.

"Sir? It feels...odd."

He released her butt cheeks, then tapped the base of the plug a few times, sending little jolts of pleasure through her.

"This is a rimming plug."

“A what?”

“There are a couple rings of metal beads inside the neck. And when I turn it on...”

The toy buzzed to life. Nomi clenched her hands so hard around the belt that the edges dug into her palms and fingers.

“It vibrates too,” he said unnecessarily. “But the fun part is this.”

The neck of the plug started to move. Nomi yelped at the unfamiliar sensation, but a second later that yelp became a moan of pleasure. The beads under the thin skin of silicone rotated, the little bumps of the beads massaging the inside of her anus itself.

“It’s meant to mimic getting a rim job. How does it feel?”

“Good,” she gasped. “Weird. Unfamiliar, but really good.”

Soft waves of pleasure rolled through her, and Nomi’s nipples hardened against the duvet.

“I’ll take the control with me, we’ll see how good the range is.”

Nomi tried to hold still but the sensitive nerve endings of her anus were being stroked in a way she’d never experienced before. Helpless against the unfamiliar pleasure, she rocked her hips against the mattress.

“You may not touch yourself,” he commanded, voice hard with warning. “Do not let go of my belt.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“If you come, that’s fine, but you have to tell me when I get back.”

“Will I be...punished...for coming?”

“Maybe.” His weight lifted off the bed. “But I don’t want you to fight it. Accept the pleasure, just as you’ll accept any punishment I decide you deserve.”

“Yes, Sir,” she whispered.

Tareq leaned over and kissed her hair, and Nomi was glad he’d already turned away and didn’t see the tears that gathered on her lashes.

When the door closed behind him, Nomi gave in and let out a guttural sound of pleasure. Her ass throbbed, her nipples ached to be touched, and the plug in her ass vibrated and massaged her to the point of madness.

He’d be back soon, and then...

Nomi didn’t need to finish that thought. Right now, she trusted Tareq completely, despite him being effectively a stranger. She didn’t need to worry about what came next, or what she should do. All she had to do was obey, and accept.

TAREQ STOPPED OUTSIDE THE DOOR. HE HADN’T CLOSED IT all the way, and he put his ear to the crack, listening to the needy sound she made now that she thought he was gone.

He grinned, fingering the remote in his pocket, then headed for the front of the club and the Subs’ Garden.

That whole scene had been wildly intense. Topping Nomi was like lighting a candle only to find out it was a firecracker. Intense, dangerous, and addicting. Watching her go from stiff to thrashing and crying made him feel like he’d witnessed something special. Something too-few people got to see.

And the way she seemed to understand him, even when he used words or phrases that weren't exactly right, allowed him to relax and lean into his dominant needs.

He wasn't foolish enough to think that he'd somehow magically overcome her hang-ups with one spanking, but now that he'd experienced a vulnerable Nomi, he wouldn't settle for anything less.

He managed to flag down a sub who was headed back into the garden, and asked her to grab Nomi's robe. A few minutes later Gabriela, Master Leo's sub, returned holding two different robes.

Tareq examined both of them, then with a grin picked the one Gabriela said she'd found in the very bottom of the locker, still in a tissue-lined box.

Carrying the robe, Tareq headed for their room. When he was ten feet away from the door, he pulled the plug's remote from his pocket, and increased the speed.

He heard her yelp even from outside.

Tareq eased open the door, watched as she ground her hips into the mattress, listened to her heavy breaths. Her arms were tense, the belt digging into her reddened ass as she pulled it taut. Most of her exhales turned into needy moans.

He closed the door, loudly enough to draw her attention. Her eyes met his, and Tareq thumbed off the vibrator.

Nomi went limp on the bed, eyes fluttering closed.

He couldn't keep his hands off her any longer. Tareq put one knee on the bed, taking the belt from her tight grip, then nudged her until she rolled onto her back.

Nomi's hair was damp with sweat and sticking to her forehead. Rolling must have shifted the plug inside her, because she arched up, those big tits rising.

"Let's keep those legs spread," he reprimanded gently.

Nomi parted her thighs, her pussy visibly wet. He wanted to taste her there, but held back.

"Did you come?"

"No, Sir. I don't...think so? I don't know. Maybe? Maybe like a low-grade anal only orgasm?"

"Reach down and spread your pussy open for me."

She watched him, a question in her gaze, but she obeyed, her fingers sliding against her wet labia. She had to use two fingers of each hand, pressing them flat along the inside of her pussy lips, in order to spread herself open.

"Your clit is lovely," he told her, eyeing the little nub.

"Thank you, Sir."

"How sensitive is it?"

"Sir?"

"Do you enjoy having it pinched or slapped?"

She held her breath a moment before answering. "Not... normally. But I think..."

"Think what, Nomi?"

"I think I might like it if you did it."

It was probably just arousal talking. A needy sub would say and do almost anything. But part of him wanted to take it as gospel. To believe that she trusted him enough to allow him

to both hurt and pleasure her in all the dark, delicious ways he was dreaming of.

“What’s the—” he started to ask the question, then stopped himself. They had the rest of the night for questions. Now they needed food.

“Hands and knees,” he ordered.

Nomi looked at him, a mildly outraged look stamped on her features.

“No, I’m not going to touch your clit yet,” he scolded.

She blushed, but then released her pussy lips and rolled onto her hands and knees.

Tareq took his time removing the butt plug, toying with her as he did, then took it to the bathroom, giving it a quick cleaning before washing his hands.

Nomi was right where he’d left her, on her hands and knees in the middle of the bed, pretty breasts dangling down, just begging him to fondle.

He gripped her waist, guiding her off the bed, then pulling her back to rest against his chest once she was standing. She leaned into him, her head falling back alongside his. He stroked her belly, then cupped her breasts, their weight in his palms making his cock twitch.

“Are you steady?” he asked after a moment.

“Yes, Sir.”

He squeezed her breasts, then released her and went to pick up the robe he’d dropped near the door. Nomi turned, saw what he held and frowned.

“That’s not my robe.”

“It’s not?” It wasn’t like Gabriela to make a mistake.

Her frown deepened. “It is, but it’s not the one I meant.”

“There was a solid black one,” Tareq said. “I picked this fluffy one.”

He held up the sheer gold material. The robe was floor-length with long sleeves. The neckline down to the waist and cuffs were trimmed in fluffy beige feathers.

“You picked the husband-killing robe?”

Tareq blinked then laughed. “What did you just call it?”

“That’s the robe you wear when the cops show up to question you about killing your first husband. It’s a husband-killing-rich-widow robe.”

Tareq gripped it by the shoulders and held it out like a coat. “Your confession robe, madam.”

She turned her back, sliding her arms into the sleeves. He pulled it up onto her shoulders, then tugged her hair out from under the neck.

“You don’t confess,” Nomi informed him. “You absolutely deny killing him.”

“Ah, so this is the ‘despite all appearances I didn’t murder my husband’ robe.”

“Totally innocent, but now wealthy widow.” He watched as Nomi closed the robe, which fastened with two buttons, one hidden inside, the other on the outside edge. She wrapped the very long, wide fabric sash twice around her waist, hiding the buttons, and then tied it in a bow near her hip. He took mental notes so he’d know how to unwrap her later.

Now technically covered from shoulder to ankle, the sheer material did nothing to hide her body. There was slightly more coverage in the front where the edges overlapped, but it only made her pussy slightly harder to see.

The outline of her breasts was clearly visible, as were her nipples. Tareq leaned to the side, and she obligingly twisted to show him the back.

Even through the fabric, the faint flush of the skin on her ass was visible.

Tareq ran his hand down her butt and she shivered.

They had to get out of here before he changed his mind, lost his self-control, and bent her over the bed.

He held out one elbow. “How about you tell me how you murdered your husband over dinner?”

“As long as you let me make you a drink. My drinks are to die for.” She added a theatrical evil laugh.

Tareq grinned as he led her out, and tried to remember the last time he’d had this much fun during a BDSM scene.

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CHAPTER 8



Nomi shivered and leaned into Tareq's warmth.

“Cold?”

“Not really.”

It wasn't a lie—the nights were temperate right now, so even in a sheer robe she wasn't truly cold.

The shiver had more to do with the situation, with walking to dinner on the arm of a man who caused unexpected reactions to known stimuli.

She realized she was probably analyzing this more than was necessary, that she was applying clinical thought processes to something she should concentrate on just enjoying.

The dining room was nearly full, something she'd never seen before. There were heavy-dark wood tables and chairs as well as several sunken seating areas. Tareq found them a small table for two on the far side of the room, tucked into a corner.

Tareq pulled out a chair for her.

Nomi eyed the wood, then him.

“You'll have to sit at some point.”

Nomi gingerly lowered herself onto the chair, hissing in pain as her abused ass made contact.

“Do you want me to help center you?”

The question was one she'd never been asked before, and she wasn't even sure what he meant, but Nomi jerked her head in a nod, eyes screwed closed. She needed his touch, and she hoped “centering” would include some physical contact.

Tareq's hand came around her neck, forcing her chin up and squeezing just enough to make her moan, not enough to restrict her breathing or make her pulse pound in her ears.

“Harder,” she pleaded.

Rather than tighten his hold on her neck, Tareq's other hand reached down for one nipple. He slapped it with three fingers, then pinched, twisting hard, the fabric grinding into her skin.

Pain flared in her breast and she tried to hunch her shoulders, but his hold on her neck kept her still. Nomi gripped the edge of the table as he twisted her nipple the other way, his fingers hard and merciless.

“Spread your legs.”

She parted her legs, the robe falling open, smooth fabric slithering over her thighs.

He released her breast, petting her with gentle fingers as he slowly removed his hand from her neck.

The pain had been a good physical distraction, while his uncompromising commands and control over her body stoked her submission, turning the throbbing pain in her ass into a sweet reminder of her punishment.

He stayed behind her for a moment, hands now on her shoulders, before asking “French 75?”

Nomi cleared her throat. “I don’t need it to be complicated. Maybe some Moscato if they have it?”

He bent over the back of her chair, his lips near her ear. “I have no problem with complicated.”

“Thank you.” When she turned her face to his, her lips brushed his cheek.

She wanted to kiss him, really kiss him, his lips on hers.

“If they have a nice Moscato, I’ll bring you that. If not, I’ll duck over to the library and make you a proper drink.”

“Thank you.”

“One thing before I go.” His hands settled on her shoulders, then slid down to cover her breasts.

She arched up into his hands as he palmed her. One nipple still ached from the rough pinching, and she wanted him to do the same to the other tit, to even out the pain and pleasure. She loved how handsy he was with her. It made her feel wanted.

Tareq’s fingers hooked the marabou lined edge of her robe and spread it open. The feathers dragged over her nipples. He tucked the fabric carefully along the outside of her breasts, baring them and framing them at the same time.

“Now that is lovely,” he murmured, rolling her nipples between his fingers even as he straightened.

Nomi let her head fall back against his waist, her hands gripping the edge of the table.

“I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

He left her then, her nipples hard and alert, breasts bare and pussy very, very wet.

The faint draft from people constantly opening and closing the door cooled her wet folds. Made her aware that though she was mostly hidden by the table her legs were spread, pussy on display.

It jangled her confidence a little bit that he hadn't yet really touched her pussy. There had been people in the past who hadn't been interested in her sex, because they weren't attracted to her, and not touching her sexually was a sign of that.

Nomi closed her eyes, forced her thoughts away from that. She hated this. Hated the doubt that she couldn't ever escape. It was naïve to pretend that her body type wasn't a factor in how people treated her, but at the same time she did consider herself sexy. When she looked in the mirror, she saw soft curves and found them beautiful.

And not just her own larger than acceptable body. She loved images and videos of plus size women enjoying sex. One of the things she liked least about Las Palmas was the homogeneity of body types. Due to the high price point, many people here were wealthy. Body type wasn't just about lifestyle, genetics played a factor, but there were also clear links between weight and socioeconomic factors. Wealthy people could afford the luxury of time to prioritize their physical appearance, and make changes to their lives in order to get and maintain the body they wanted.

Nomi was wealthy—that was as much a fact as her body size was—but she'd done her years of trying to shape herself into something her genetic code didn't agree with. It had been

misery, so she'd stopped, and focused instead on accepting and then loving herself.

During that journey she'd already realized that she not only loved her body, but she loved the female form, both aesthetically and sexually.

Nomi considered herself bisexual, though up to this point she hadn't had a romantic relationship with a woman. She hadn't had much in the way of romantic relationships full stop. Even before she identified as bisexual, she had regularly scened with women both at Las Palmas and in her early years exploring the lifestyle.

Nomi closed her eyes, slumping a little so she could rest her head on the back of the chair. She was tired of this. Tired of fighting with herself and the world about how she looked. About being alternately—and sometimes simultaneously—defensive and proud of the space she occupied.

Being assigned a partner, someone who hadn't actively picked her, had brought all this up once more. And despite everything he'd said and done, on some level she doubted that Tareq was really attracted to her.

“Tired?”

Nomi opened her eyes as he placed a tall flute of something bubbly on the table in front of her, then set down a plate.

He dropped down into the chair across from her, his own glass cupped in his palm to warm the red wine.

“No. Well, yes. Tired of thinking and worrying.”

He watched her, and as she reached for her glass, he sat forward. “Cheers.”

“*Yiomas.*” She touched her glass to his.

He cocked his head. “Greek?”

“I’m impressed you knew that. My great grandmother was Greek, so there’s a few random words and phrases my family keeps handing down. That and our first names.”

“Nomiki. Now that you tell me it’s Greek, it seems obvious.”

“What about you? Tareq is...” Nomi shook her head. “I don’t want to guess based on probably racist stereotypes.”

“Moroccan. North African really. I was born here, but my parents still speak Darija at home.”

“Is that the Moroccan language?”

“I don’t know if it’s technically its own language, or if it’s just a dialect of Arabic.”

“Do you understand standard Arabic?”

Tareq sat forward and nudged the plate towards her. “Starters.”

Before she could comment on that, he launched into a story about trying to translate Arabic that ended with a rather hilarious mistranslation thanks to pronunciation issues.

Nomi was grinning by the time he finished, and her glass was nearly empty. They’d both picked at the appetizers plate he’d brought, and the salty olives were a delicious counterpoint to the sweet, dry sparkling wine.

“Shall we get some food?”

Tareq rose and came around to pull out her chair. He stopped her after she stood, then took a moment to adjust her robe, making sure the edges were tucked back, her tits

completely exposed. The front had fallen closed, the two layers of fabric overlapping to give her some frontal coverage.

His fingers barely brushed the edges of her breasts and Nomi shivered in reaction.

“Cold?”

She looked up into his eyes. “No, Sir.”

“Worried about showing off these lovely breasts?”

“Not really. Though I do feel rather exposed.”

He leaned in, his next word puffing against her ear. “Good.”

Tareq offered her his arm, guiding her through the maze of tables and people to the buffet. This time when Nomi felt eyes on her she was very certain it was the outfit, based on the smiles from mostly other women.

Tareq passed her a plate, and Nomi realized that she was hungry. There was a momentary flinch of discomfort at the idea of eating in front of him—she knew there would be people who would judge what she ate since everyone liked to judge the diets of larger individuals—but she pushed it aside and took what she wanted.

Tareq filled his own plate, then detoured to get them each a fresh glass. She grabbed silverware rolls, and led the way while he skillfully carried two glasses in one hand and his plate in the other.

They settled in and ate in silence. While not uncomfortable, it wasn't an easy silence either. The tension between them was heavy with promise and anticipation.

The other diners provided plenty of entertainment, and once they were mostly done, Nomi and Tareq leaned in close

so no one could overhear and spent some time trying to guess what letters people had been assigned, based on what they were doing.

Watching other subs being used—thoroughly and mercilessly—had Nomi’s already aroused body throbbing. She winced in sympathy a few times as a bare bottom was cropped or slapped.

“Butt hurting in sympathy?”

“Yes.” Nomi took the last sip of her second glass. “I was thinking about this, and you did exactly what you said. At least most of it.”

“Of course I did.” He raised a brow. “But what exactly are you talking about?”

“Earlier you said that if I called you a liar or insulted your taste, you’d put me over your knee, then you’d cuddle me, bend me over the bed, and put a plug in my ass.” Nomi’s mouth went slightly dry and she couldn’t look at Tareq. “Actually, you reversed the order of two of those. You bent me over the bed then cuddled me.”

She heard the chair creak as he shifted his weight. “And don’t forget that I took my time examining your pretty pussy and ass while I had you there.”

Nomi raised her glass but there was nothing in it. She set the flute down, fingers trembling a little.

“The one thing you said that you haven’t done is to ‘fuck the brat right out of me’.”

“Are you asking me something, Nomi?”

“No, Sir. Just making an observation.”

“Really, because I think that you’re thinking about the fact that I haven’t yet touched your pussy. I’ve looked at it, I make sure you keep those legs spread so I can access it, but I haven’t touched you there.”

“No, you haven’t,” she breathed.

“And I’m betting it’s driving you nuts. I’m betting that you’re so wet right now that the back of your robe is going to get wet when you stand up.”

Nomi’s cheeks heated and she closed her eyes.

“I didn’t fuck the brat out of you, because I was wrong about that.”

Nomi’s stomach clenched and she felt sick. “Wrong about wanting to fuck me?”

“Look at me.”

Nomi stared at his chin.

“Come on pretty girl, look at me.”

The coaxing was somehow harder to respond to than a command would have been. She felt on the verge of tears as she met his gaze.

“I still want to fuck you. I’ve wanted to fuck you from the moment I looked over and saw you in the conclave.”

She wanted to doubt him. Wanted to say there was no way that was true.

“I was wrong about you being a brat. You’re not. You’re smart, fun, and witty. That comes off as sassy, which I mistakenly identified as brat.” He paused, as if debating continuing, then said, “Even now you have some damn-fine

emotional walls up. You're not sassing me in hopes of being forced into your submission or inciting a punishment."

The fact that he got her, really understood her, did nothing to negate her teary feelings.

"We negotiated an agreement for full sexual contact, and that's what we're going to do. I'm going to fuck you. That's not in doubt."

"Is there something that is in doubt?"

Tareq smiled and it was that cat that ate the canary grin.
"When."

"When?"

"When will I fuck you. How long will I make you wait?"

"Oh, that's...that's diabolical."

"Why thank you."

Nomi shook her head, the last of the tears drying up without ever falling. "Normally being denied just means my mind wanders, or I end up bored, but I don't think that's what's going to happen with you."

"You definitely won't be bored."

"Is that a promise or a threat, Sir?"

Tareq grinned as he brought his glass to his mouth.

She watched his throat as he swallowed, and she wanted to run her tongue down it. Wanted to bite him and leave a hickey like they were teenagers.

He set his now-empty glass down.

"Are you ready to play our portion of the game?"

"Yes, Sir."

“Good.” Tareq stood, coming around behind her chair. He palmed her breasts, lifting and squeezing them before stepping aside and offering his elbow.

Nomi slid her arm through his and followed her Dom out of the room.

TAREQ HAD THOUGHT ABOUT THIS NON-STOP SINCE YESTERDAY. Not getting a proper playroom impeded him somewhat, since he didn't have any bondage furniture at his disposal, but he'd make do.

Last night he'd chatted with Julen Morton, who'd mentioned that Nomi was one of his favorite rope subjects. He'd asked Julen's advice about restraining her, asked if there was anything he shouldn't do to her, or with her, related to her body type. The main thing had been to protect her joints and be mindful that weight equaled force. Practically that translated to being mindful of how long she was in the “kneel down” position, making sure that if she was bent or had her legs to her chest that she had enough room to fully inhale, and to never put her in bondage that forced her heels against her ass as that could put stress on her knee joints.

He was glad he asked, because he had thought about folding her legs and binding them in rope or vet wrap before using a spreader bar between her knees.

The spanking hadn't been part of his plan for the night, but her having a sore ass would add a nice element to what came next.

Tareq opened the door, preceded her in, then held it for her. Nomi murmured her thanks, but stopped just inside, looking

back at him.

Tareq closed the door, then leaned against it. She looked so damn sexy, with those pretty tits on display, her nipples hard from the cool night air. Her expression was soft and needy, and he wanted to do terrible things to her.

Tareq's cock twitched. His balls were in serious danger of turning blue. He could hold out, but he didn't want to feel rushed with what came next, and as long as his cock was throbbing, he would feel rushed.

Time to make a second modification to the plan.

They'd talked about this during negotiations, and she'd agreed to being used, fucked, in every way. Tareq slipped a hand into his pocket and pulled out a condom, holding it between two fingers.

Nomi looked at it, and immediately dropped to her knees. She gazed up at him, hands raised but hovering, not yet touching him.

“Sir, may I?”

“Yes, pretty girl. Take out my cock.”

Nomi struggled with the button—his pants were tight thanks to his dick—then slowly lowered the zipper. He wasn't wearing anything under them, and the moment she opened the fly, his cock jutted out.

She started to pull down his pants, but he grabbed her wrists.

“No. I'm going to zip my pants up as soon as I'm done fucking that lovely mouth.”

She looked up, meeting his gaze, reading his mood in the tone of his words and the rough way he handled her.

Nomi lowered her eyes. “Yes, Sir.”

He released her, and she took the condom, tearing it open. She pinched the tip and carefully positioned it on the head of his dick. His cock jumped in response to the gentle touch. Fuck, he wasn't going to last long.

Nomi gripped his thighs, then leaned forward and put her mouth on him. She sealed her lips around him then slowly took him in, rolling the condom down as she did. Tareq watched, his upper body flushed, as she carefully worked the condom onto his shaft with her lips. She got the condom about half way before retreating and using her hand to finish rolling it on.

Her fingers drifted down to caress his balls as she studied his cock.

He drank in the sight of her there, on her knees, dark hair spilling over her shoulders, lips a pretty soft pink, her breasts thrust out and naked because that's the way he wanted her.

“Spread your knees,” he commanded.

She obeyed, and though she couldn't see her pussy, knowing she'd spread for him, made herself vulnerable for him, was enough.

Nomi cupped his sac, then bent and twisted to tongue him, his cock laying on her cheek. Damn, that felt good, but it wasn't what he wanted.

Tareq gathered her hair, gentle until he had a good fistful. Then he tightened his hold and yanked her head back.

Nomi gasped, arching back, her gaze flying up to meet his.

“Keep looking at me,” he commanded.

Tareq guided her face to his cock, holding his dick with his free hand as he forced the tip into her open mouth.

Tareq held her gaze as he pulled her onto his cock. The tip hit the roof of her mouth then slid down, bumping the back of her throat. Her tongue squeezed him, and then her throat tightened as she tried to swallow.

Tareq didn't stop. He watched her eyes water, felt her gag around him. She was breathing heavily through her nose, her eyes wide and now brimming with tears.

He forced his cock in deeper. Now he was in her throat, and she made a choked noise, drool running from the side of her mouth over her chin.

"That's my good girl," he praised, his other hand stroking her cheek. "Just a bit more."

Nomi's eyes widened, but she nodded, a tiny motion that was enough to convey her consent.

Tareq cupped her head with both hands and thrust in. Her nose hit his pelvis, his cock slid down her throat and she gagged hard for a moment before he felt her swallow as she mastered the need to gag and swallowed him down.

He could feel her heavy breathing through her nose, felt her desperate grip on his thighs, and finally released her, letting her pull back.

He stopped her before she could take her mouth all the way off his dick. When she looked up, eyes meeting his, there were tears trailing down her cheeks. He wiped the tears away with his thumbs.

Her eyes fluttered closed, and then she started to work the head of his cock, her tongue rubbing the underside, where the vein made him sensitive. She sucked, sealing her lips around

him and sucking as her cheeks hollowed. The pull on his dick was delicious, and Tareq massaged her scalp in silent praise for her efforts.

But soon that wasn't enough. He wanted, needed, to feel her throat tight around the head of his dick.

“Hands on your head.”

When she laced her fingers together on the back of her head, he laid his own hand over the top of her fingers and applied pressure, pulling her mouth onto his cock.

This time, Nomi took him almost all the way before she gagged. He rewarded her by letting her pull back and catch her breath before thrusting in again.

“Next time I do this, I'll have clamps on your nipples,” he growled. “So I can pull on them while I fuck your face.”

Nomi's tongue rubbed side to side on the bottom of his dick as he pulled out.

Tareq kept up the slow, deep strokes for as long as he could. But this felt too good. Seeing her on her knees for him was too arousing.

“I'm going to fuck your mouth now,” he warned. “All you need to do is take it.”

She met his gaze, mouth full of his dick, and nodded.

Tareq gripped her head with both hands, fingers in her hair.

Then he fucked her. He fucked her hard and fast, using her mouth. Sometimes he went deep enough to make her gag, other times only hitting the back of her throat.

It was the sight of her that pushed him over the edge. He looked down to see his cock sliding in and out of her mouth,

her tits bouncing, and found her looking up at him, her eyes wide and wet with tears, and totally trusting. In that moment she was perfectly submissive to him, not just willing to be used, but finding her own pleasure in it.

Tareq growled her name and shoved his dick deep, the tip of his cock twitching within the tightness of her throat as he came.

He pulled out reluctantly, not wanting this to end but knowing her jaw and throat had to ache.

Yet after he pulled out, she stayed just as he'd left her. Kneeling, arms up, mouth open, tongue slightly extended.

He could make her clean him up—first a washcloth, then he'd make her lick him clean and dry his cock with those tits—but they had other things to do. And most importantly, he wanted to get his hands on her again.

“That was perfect.” He touched her cheek, her flushed lips. “What a good girl to take my cock like that.”

Her lashes fluttered and she turned her face into his palm. “Thank you, Sir.”

“Now it's time to stand up.” He offered her his hand, but she rose on her own, the same way she had before.

Her hair was ruffled, the robe slightly askew, one breast half covered. He took her wrists, placing them at the small of her back before slipping into the bathroom to clean himself up. When he returned, she was just where he'd left her, hands submissively at her back.

“Nomi.” He waited for her to look at him, keeping his voice hard as he gave the next command. “Strip.”

CHAPTER 9



Nomi cocked a hip as she dropped her shoulders, the robe slithering to the floor. Tareq was leaning against the wall, his hands casually in the pockets of his pants, his eyes skating down her, lingering on her breasts.

He really was a tits guy.

When he pushed off the wall, anticipation slid down her spine like warm honey, heating her blood.

“Ready to answer some questions?”

“Yes, Sir.”

He held out his hand. Unsure what he wanted, she placed her own in his. Tareq squeezed her fingers and led her over to the desk. Nomi frowned, wondering if he was going to ask her to write out her answers to these questions he was about to ask.

“Stay here.” He gave one breast an affectionate squeeze before sliding over to the bed to grab a few pillows.

At that Nomi’s gaze dropped to the floor under the desk. Maybe he’d be the one sitting at the desk and she’d be tucked under the desk answering questions in between sucking his cock. Or having him fuck her mouth again. That had been

rough and hard, and there had been those few moments where she couldn't breathe thanks to his cock down her throat.

She'd loved it. Loved it in a way she never had before.

The temptation to start analyzing was there. Had she enjoyed having her mouth used and fucked because of the way he'd done it? Because of the level of submission he'd brought her to? Because she trusted him in a way she hadn't trusted others before?

And why did she trust him, given the shortness of their acquaintance and the fact that this whole thing was a forced proximity trope.

She shut down the mental analysis and watched as Tareq propped two pillows on the desk, leaning them against the wall. Next, he lifted down the framed picture mounted above the desk. The frame was thick—deep, not wide, so the picture itself was several inches off the wall. The reason for that was apparent when he took it down. The frame was actually a shallow box, covering a set of black metal O-rings mounted into the wall.

He set the picture aside, then reached into a drawer. Was this the same drawer where he'd kept the rimming dildo? She craned her neck, catching a glimpse of a tangle of black and a few brightly colored toys, but didn't get a chance to really identify anything before he closed the drawer.

Tareq spilled a pile of black leather cuffs and straps onto the corner of the desk.

“Wrists.”

Nomi held out her arms, turned so her palms were up. Tareq bent to kiss the pulse point on the inside of each wrist before applying the cuffs. They were thick and padded, but not

suspension cuffs because they didn't have safety breakaway mechanisms. He carefully bound her wrists, adjusting the orientation so that the metal D ring built into the cuff was on the outside of each wrist.

He tested the tightness, slipping two fingers under the cuff—it was a snug fit, because his hands were big, his fingers thick. She eyed his hands and her pussy clenched. She wanted to feel his fingers inside her. Fucking her, twisting. He'd start with one, then two. Three fingers would stretch her open. Make her ache.

His hands gripped her waist, bringing her back to the moment. He shifted her around until her back was to the desk. When the edge pressed into her butt, right at her sit spot, Nomi hissed.

“Still tender?”

“Yes, shockingly I'm still tender since it's only been a couple hours since you spanked the crap out of me.” Nomi spoke without thinking, but it wasn't meant as backtalk or sass. She spoke with wry, dry humor.

But her gaze cut to him, her body tensing for the reprimand.

Tareq considered her for a moment, then smiled. “Maybe I was wrong about you not being a brat.”

“That was more...chagrin than bratty.”

“Was it?”

“I didn't mean any disrespect, Sir.” She lowered her lids, watching him through her lashes.

“I know you didn't. Because you know that if you need it, I'll take my belt to your ass.” His hands cupped her breasts,

thumbs running over the nipples.

She was sensitive due to the prolonged, heightened arousal. Even the gentle touch on her breasts made her jerk in reaction, her shoulders hunching, arms coming up in an instinctive move to cover herself.

“Arms down.” His voice cracked with command.

She jumped, dropping her arms. “Sorry, Sir. I’m sensitive.”

“And?” His cool words made her look up. “Does being sensitive mean this body isn’t mine to play with?”

There was no quarter, no mercy in his gaze. She’d given him control of her body, and that meant he could and would touch her however he pleased.

Nomi lowered her gaze to his feet. “No, Sir. My body is yours to touch and play with however you want.”

“That’s right.”

He slapped the outside of her right breast, then the left. Her flesh jiggled. Nomi kept her hands at her sides, pressing her fingertips into her thighs.

Tareq leaned in and kissed her forehead, then dropped his hands to her waist. He urged her back, the desk digging harder into her ass, then gripped her and started to lift.

Nomi braced her hands on his forearms. “Sir, please... Please don’t try and lift me.”

He raised a brow, started to say something. She rushed to explain before he could. “I’m not saying that because I think I’m too heavy or you’re not strong enough.”

“Don’t lie to me, Nomi.”

“Okay, fine. I do think I’m too heavy, though based on the size of your arms maybe you could lift me. I just think it would be awkward and painful and the idea is giving me all kinds of anxiety. Not fun anxiety either.”

Tareq eyed her, his thumbs rubbing across her torso, feathering against the bottom of her breasts.

“Okay,” he agreed after a moment. “Nomi, I want you sitting on the desk.”

He didn’t let go of her as she braced her hands and wiggled and hopped up. Any self-consciousness about being awkward or how she jiggled as she moved was muted by the fresh throbbing in her ass. Damn but that hurt.

“Oww.”

Tareq grinned. “Always gratifying when you hear reminders of a spanking well done.”

“Well done is about how my butt feels.”

Tareq palmed her breasts, not as if he were trying to elicit a reaction, more as if he simply wanted to play with them.

She liked being Tareq’s plaything.

After he’d palmed and kneaded her breasts for a minute, he reached for the pile of restraints. He selected a short strap with a small circular carabiner on each end. The strap itself was made out of braided black paracord. He leaned into her as he reached up, clipping one end of the strap into the anchor point sticking out of the wall. Nomi spread her legs, his hips sliding between her knees. He repeated that with the second strap, then braced his hands on the wall behind her. That meant he was leaning over the desk, his upper body forcing hers back. Nomi planted her hands behind her hips and leaned back into the pillows.

Their breath mingled, his face kissably close. She could see striations of lighter brown in his irises.

“You have beautiful eyes,” she whispered.

Tareq cupped the side of her neck, fingertips in her hair, his thumb nudging her chin up. “So do you. There’s gold and maybe a little green.”

Nomi lowered her gaze to his mouth. He should kiss her right now. If this were any other situation, she would have kissed him, but her submission held her back, made her wait for him to choose, for him to decide.

Tareq ran his hand from her neck, over her shoulder, down her arm to her wrist. He tugged on the cuff and she shifted so she wasn’t bracing her weight on that hand. He stayed in place, leaning into her, looming over her, as he brought her wrist up and, without looking, clicked the cuff to the strap.

The back of his hand slid down the inside of her arm to her breast. He lifted her tit and bent his head to drop a kiss to it before straightening. Now restrained, her arm was raised, wrist in line with her shoulder, a comfortable bend in her elbow with the back of her hand resting against the wall.

Nomi pressed her lips together, lowering her gaze as she came to terms with the lack of kiss. She didn’t have a reason to expect it. Often scenes that involved incredible intimacy, including sex, didn’t involve a traditional romantic kiss. She couldn’t actually remember the last time she’d wanted to kiss her scene partner. Maybe she never had.

Nomi’s introspection lasted until he clipped her other arm in place. The bondage yanked her into the moment.

Her arms were above and slightly behind her head. The position lifted her breasts and exposed the soft skin of her

inner arms.

Tareq grabbed another pillow off the bed, eyed her, then shoved it behind her lower back. He stuffed it in there, pushing her butt an inch closer to the edge of the table.

“Lean back. I want you to rest your arms, let the cuffs hold them up.”

Gingerly, Nomi relaxed against the pillows, the crown of her head touching the wall. He'd done a good job with the pillows—her back was well-supported. Her arms dangled, resting against the wall. Her wrists were higher than her head, and in line with her shoulders, but there was a comfortable amount of bend at both elbow and shoulder joints.

Tareq stepped back, grabbing the desk chair. It didn't roll, and could have doubled as a dining room chair, but was comfortable looking, with a slightly curved back, padded seat, and smooth wooden arms.

Tareq positioned it directly in front of her, then took a seat, his body brushing her knees. Once he was seated, he eyed her, and Nomi was acutely aware of both her nudity and vulnerability.

Her ass was at the edge of the desk, legs spread. Her upper body was totally exposed and vulnerable.

Tareq scooted the chair closer, until his knees were tucked under, the arms of the chair practically touching the edge of the desk. He had good desk posture, which would matter if she were a laptop open on the desk, rather than a sub. The thought made her throat tight with a weird, nervous giggle.

Tareq reached down and grabbed her ankle, guiding her foot up to rest on the arm of the chair, bending her knee. He did the same with the other leg, and Nomi made a small noise

as she realized that moving her legs had adjusted the angle of her hips, tilting her pelvis up, exposing her pussy more fully.

“Feeling exposed?” he asked with a raised brow.

“Yes, Sir.”

“Realizing that I have an up-close, front row view of your pretty pussy?”

The words made her clench, and she felt fresh moisture seeping out of her, sliding down to her anus, which, while not as exposed as it had been when he had her bent over and spreading her cheeks, was nevertheless on display.

“Yes, Sir,” she whispered.

Tareq plucked a long strap from the small pile on the corner of the desk. It was soft leather, probably a yard long. He looped it several times around her ankle, then crossed it on the top of her foot, before looping it around the arm of the chair. He bound her foot in place, creating a figure eight with the strap, one loop around her ankle, the other going under the arm of the chair before crossing over the top of her foot.

When he was done, she couldn't lift her foot, but could move her knee side to side.

He did the same to the other leg, and in a way it was a relief not to have to try to hold her legs in position. Then Tareq gripped her knees and pressed them open, spreading her wide, wide, wider.

Nomi's back arched as her inner thigh muscles stretched and pulled. She closed her legs a little, trying to alleviate the slight burn, but Tareq pressed down on her knees.

“I won't make you hold it forever, but right now I want you spread. As wide as you can go. Really show me that pretty

pussy.”

Nomi looked down at herself, and she had a momentary wincing reaction to seeing her belly squished into plump rolls. But she looked at her legs, at how lewdly wide she was spread, and then she looked at his face.

There was no doubt where he was looking. His gaze was fastened on her pussy, his expression intense and focused. He'd made her vulnerable, pushed her to a place where she was quite literally helpless, and in turn she was the center of his attention.

But not just her, or not all of her. Her pussy. A pussy that was aching and wet, but that he hadn't touched. Hadn't played with. She'd had Doms who were casually finger-fucking her within two minutes of starting a scene, and she'd enjoyed that.

Tareq might be handsy when it came to her breasts, and he hadn't been shy about playing with her ass, but he'd avoided her pussy. It was making her crazy with need, which she was sure was his plan. Damned diabolical Doms.

Her thigh muscles twitched from the strain and she shifted, pulling against the cuffs.

Tareq ran his palm over her inner thighs, making long oval passes. When he slid his hands toward her pussy, his thumbs almost, almost touching her labia, Nomi held her breath.

Instead, his thumbs pressed into the skin at the crease where pussy met inner thigh, and he pulled, opening her further, still without touching her.

Something inside her popped, that tight, pressure-filled bubble of anticipation deflating. It wasn't that she wanted or needed her pussy played with any less. No, it was a release of

control. She'd held herself coiled tight as she willed him to do what she wanted.

But that wasn't what this moment was about. It was about her accepting her own submission. Acknowledging that even if she could will him to finger her, she shouldn't, because when and how he touched her sex was up to him.

Nomi closed her eyes, shoulder and arm muscles relaxing. Her thighs still burned and ached from being spread so wide, but the rest of her was soft and accepting.

"Good girl." He cupped her knees, gently raising them, helping her close her legs just a little.

"Show me how wide you can keep them spread comfortably. And for an extended period. I have a lot of questions."

Nomi butterflyed her knees together then apart, letting them fall open to a comfortable point. Even with her fleshy thighs, she was spread enough that her pussy was visible.

Tareq wrapped his arms around her knees, chest wedged between them. He eyed her, from bound wrists down, his gaze lingering on her tits before sliding back to her face.

"There always comes a point," he said softly, and though he was looking at her, she had the odd feeling that he was almost talking to himself, "once my sub is in bondage, especially if they're also post-impact play, where I sort of want to rescue them."

"Rescue them...from themselves?" she asked. Her arms tightened, her fingers wrapping around the straps that tethered her to the wall.

"No." Still holding her legs, he leaned in, his body forcing her thighs wider apart. His lips feathered over the inner curve

of her breast and then his teeth closed on her flesh. He bit her.

Hard.

Nomi yelped. He'd taken a mouthful of tit, so at least he wasn't pinching a fold of skin, but the compressive pressure of his sharp teeth—at least they felt sharp—was a shock.

Tareq released her, tongue running over the impressions he'd made in her flesh.

“No,” he repeated. “Rescue them from myself.” He sat back, resting his chin on her left knee. His gaze lingered on her breast, on the bite mark. “It took a long time to come to terms with being a sadist.”

Nomi kept silent, listening. She needed to make sure she didn't flip into work mode. He turned his head and kissed the inside of her knee. The feel of his hot breath and damp lips against her flesh grounded her in this moment. She wasn't his therapist. She was his sub—

No, not *his* sub. At least not in the permanent, possessive interpretation of the phrase. He'd called her his sub, but he'd meant for the game, for tonight.

“The first time you spank a girl's ass it's okay. It's slap and tickle. But you realize that you don't want to stop at one spanking. You want to keep spanking her until she's crying, and you feel like a monster.”

The metal on her cuffs clinked against the carabiners as she instinctively reached for him.

“You swear off porn in case it's turning you into a psychopath. You try to recapture that white-knight urge you felt when you were younger. You go the other way and become the gentlest lover ever.”

He touched the bite mark on her breast.

“But that need comes back. You get into the lifestyle, use the rules about the power exchange to alleviate the worry that you’re a fucking bastard.”

“You’re not a bastard.”

His gaze slid up to her face. “Thank you, but I’ve accepted that I am, in fact, a bastard. I’ve also accepted that my desire to give consensual pain, to have control, is rooted in a need to have a deep, intense connection.”

“It’s the intensity, and intimacy, that you crave,” she said.

“Exactly.” He smirked. “But I still love the sight of a well-spanked ass.”

“Really?” She blinked in mock shock. “I would never have guessed.”

He sat back, gripping her knees. “I want to spread you open and spank this pretty pussy and bite your nipples.” He forced her knees wide.

Nomi sucked in air, braced for him to do exactly what he’d just said. Braced not in fear, but anticipation.

“But there’s this point where I also want to rescue a pretty girl from that cruel fate.”

“Would you rescue me?” She’d meant it to be teasing, but the words came out soft and vulnerable.

Tareq met her gaze, and it felt more intimate and intense than anything else they’d done.

“I would.” He shifted in the chair, bending to kiss her ankle just above the bindings. “I’d rescue you and kill the man who hurt you.” He kissed her shin, her knee.

His touch felt almost reverent.

“I’d carry you off on my white horse.”

This was all silly nonsense, so why did it make her throat tight with longing and give her butterflies.

He kissed his way up her other leg with soft, open-mouth kisses.

“I’d take you to my castle and lay you down in a big bed. I’d pleasure every inch of you.” He spoke the words against the inside of her knee. Firm hands gripped her inner thighs.

Nomi caught and held her breath, caught in the spell woven from words and touch.

“And when you were wet and needy...” His palms slid down her inner thighs, his thumbs brushing her labia.

Nomi let out a desperate gasp, her legs tensing as she braced her feet and tried to lift her hips.

“Then I’d bite and spank and hurt you. I’d do things to you the villain never dreamed of.” His thumbs spread her labia, his elbows on the insides of her knees forcing her legs wide until her thigh muscles burned.

“And you’d beg me for more.”

Tareq bent his head between her legs. His tongue stroked her clit with one long, slow lick.

Nomi shrieked, the pleasure so acute she almost came from that single touch.

Then his teeth pressed against her clit, top and bottom. His nose was buried against her mound, his teeth not biting, not yet, but the hard pressure was there.

She tensed, whimpered. He slowly closed his mouth, his teeth raking her flesh.

“Sir, please. Sir... Tareq. I can’t. I... Oh god.” The words tumbled from her mouth, a desperate monologue meant to stop him...or encourage him.

She wanted him to bite her, wanted his teeth to clamp down on her clit until the pain wiped away every stray thought.

Yet she was terrified of the pain, of her own helplessness to stop him.

She squeezed her thighs together, as if that could force him away from her. His arms tensed and he shoved her knees down. Her thigh muscles were no match for his biceps.

The reminder of her own helplessness made her whimper, and tears of need and fear and arousal made her eyes burn.

Tareq closed his teeth around her clit, not exactly a bite, but the pressure of the hard ridge of his bottom teeth against her clit was like being touched with a live wire. She bucked, screaming.

He rewarded her with a long, slow stroke of his tongue.

Pleasure ripped through her, spinning her fear and anxiety until they too fed her dark need and desperate arousal.

Tareq sat back, his mouth and chin glossy.

She was panting, her chest heaving. The dark look in his eyes was pure Dom, and she lowered her gaze.

He touched her clit with one finger. Her hips jerked, her thighs trying to slam together only to clamp him.

“Did you come?”

“No, not...not quite, Sir.”

“Good. I got slightly off track telling you about my white-knight moment—”

“I liked it,” she said softly. “I...I know what you meant. I sometimes feel the same. I mean from the other side.”

He petted her legs and smiled. “Good. But I distracted us from our assignment.”

She blinked, her brain blank.

“Questions,” he clarified, clearly reading her expression. “Now that I have you spread out just the way I want you, it’s time to ask some questions.”

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CHAPTER 10



He couldn't keep his hands off those tits. Tareq cupped Nomi's heavy breasts, squeezing them together. Luckily, he didn't have to keep his hands off her breasts. She was his to play with, and she was quite literally helpless to stop him.

The part of him that worried about his deviant needs, that constantly questioned his desires, pointed out that she wasn't helpless. That one word from her and this all stopped.

He pushed that voice aside. Of course, he'd stop if she used her safe word. He'd found that ninety percent of the time he put on the brakes long before a sub did.

She was both helpless, and completely in control of what happened. She could stop this at any time.

That might be the reality, but that was not what the situation looked like. She looked...

Helpless. Deliciously so.

She looked like a fucking feast of soft flesh that was his to touch, pleasure, and abuse.

"Is this...I mean are the questions an interrogation?"

She was watching him from under her lashes and it made him want to kiss her.

“It could be, I guess. It just says ‘questions’.” He sat back, keeping his hands on her ankles above the straps just to maintain contact. “I’m going to ask a question, and you’ll answer it.”

Her brows rose. “That’s it?”

“Yep.”

She looked dubious and he smiled.

“Asking and answering questions is what normal people call a conversation,” she pointed out. “But conversations usually don’t involve one person being naked.”

“And helpless,” he added in a low voice. “Naked and helpless.”

She swallowed, back arching just a little bit.

“So that’s why this isn’t a conversation. It’s questions.”

She eyed him, and he wondered if she’d ask the question he could see on her face. Would he punish or reward her based on her answers?

He’d thought about doing it that way, but that was too obvious. He wanted to do this a little differently.

Tareq slid his hands up to her knees, spreading them a little as a reminder that she wasn’t allowed to hide her pussy. A reminder that he was in control of her body.

“What was your first real BDSM experience?”

NOMI’S BODY HUMMED WITH ANTICIPATION, SO MUCH SO THAT it took a moment for her to process his question.

“My first real...?”

“Yes. However you define it.”

The first tinge of remembered embarrassment slipped through her. Thinking back on the early days of exploring the lifestyle made her cringe. There had been so many mistakes.

“I met someone at a club,” she started. “Not a BDSM club. I mean, not one like this. There’s this bar in Hollywood that had themed nights, all sort of dark and alternative themed. Friday nights were BDSM, though they didn’t call it that. Everyone wore fet wear and danced on the ground floor. The second floor, which was more of a loft, had performances. Mostly girls tied to St. Andrew’s crosses with electrical tape on their nipples getting flogged. A low-speed, leisurely flogging.”

“You went and watched?”

“I did. I used to go every week. I’d gotten into it thanks to reading—first romance novels with BDSM in them, then fetish fan-fic and blogs of people who were in—or at least claimed to be in—the lifestyle.”

She wasn’t sure why she was giving all this backstory. Why she wanted him to really understand her.

“Going to this club was my safe way of seeing it in person.”

Tareq rubbed small circles on the inside of her knees with his thumbs. “All you did was watch?”

“Yes, for months. I mean it was only once a week so probably eight or nine times.”

His hands glided down until his fingers were splayed along the insides of her thighs, gentle pressure urging her to relax

her legs, let them fall open a little more.

Having her legs forced open, knowing exactly how exposed her pussy was, had her aching with need and the desire to be used.

“One night I saw this guy looking at me. I ignored it. Figured he was being an ass and judging me. Or pissed that I was in the club, in fet wear.”

Tareq frowned. “What do you mean?”

“If he came there to ogle pretty half-naked women, seeing me, me who probably didn’t match his vision for what a submissive should look like, would piss him off. I wasn’t part of whatever fantasy he’d created.”

This conversation was raw emotional vulnerability. Tareq seemed to like the way she looked. Maybe he was just being polite, but either way, once again having to remind him how the rest of the world thought “fat” was a dirty word, and found her unacceptably unattractive, had something close to shame heating her face.

“I figured he didn’t like that I was showing skin—I had this corset bra that was black with crisscrossing straps over the chest and black leggings that laced up the side. I wore a sheer shirt over it at the beginning of the night, but as I got more turned on, I always ended up taking it off, so my stomach was bare.”

He nodded slowly, but was frowning.

“So this guy is looking at me, and I’m both pissed—because how dare he try to make me feel like I didn’t belong in that space—and a little turned on, because the way he was watching me, all focused and intense, made me think that if he wasn’t pissed, he was interested.”

“That’s...”

“I know, but sometimes all we can actually read in another person’s expression is intensity, and anger and desire are both intense emotions.” She could have continued lecturing on that topic, but decided to be smart and stop now.

Tareq’s gaze was steady, his attention flicking from her face to her tits, pussy, and back. As if he was constantly checking just to make sure he could see and access her body, his slight frown a sign of focus, but it could easily be mis-read as a different emotion.

“Yes, just like that,” she murmured dryly.

Tareq froze, then grinned. “So he was looking at you like he was thinking about all the things he wanted to do to you.”

“Yes. Well, like I said, at the time I wasn’t sure. But after this one scene ended—the Dom was flogging this blond woman’s breasts and she was moaning and jerking on the St. Andrew’s—he came and sat next to me.”

Tareq reached up to cup her breasts, his thumbs on her areolas, but not touching her nipples. The intimate contact made it easier for her to tell the rest of this story.

“This guy sat down right next to me—they had these long black couches. I remember being so tense, braced for him to say something horrible, but hoping he’d say something sexy.”

“And did he?”

“He didn’t say anything at all. He grabbed my hair, just grabbed a handful, and pushed.” She leaned her head forward away from the wall, mimicking that long-ago interaction. “It took me a minute to realize what he was doing, for me to figure it out and let him urge me off the couch so I was kneeling on the floor.”

“No discussion, no clarification, no permission?”

“Nope. And looking back that was completely fucked up. But at the time...” Nomi winced as she said the next part. “At the time it was the hottest thing that had ever happened to me. I’d read enough to know that it was probably wrong, but I was so desperate to try this thing I longed for that I didn’t care.”

His thumbs slid across her nipples and back, twin spikes of pleasure.

“And what did he do once he had you on your knees?”

“He moved over so that his legs were on either side of me and then he reached over and down and slid his hands into my top. I hadn’t said one word to him and he was playing with my nipples. And not just playing, he was pinching and twisting. Really abusing them.”

Tareq kept up the soft back and forth strokes of his thumbs, and the gentle touch was an odd counterpoint to sweet pain in her memory.

“It only lasted a few minutes before club security came by and told us to knock it off. The guy stood up, grabbed my wrist and tried to bring me with him. I was tempted, seriously tempted, but my common sense prevailed and I shook my head. He looked at me, disappointed, then walked off. Never saw him again.”

“I’m glad you didn’t go with him,” Tareq said.

“For months after that, I regretted it. No one else at the club ever approached me, and I thought that was my one shot at having a Dom, and I’d fucked it up because I listen to too many true crime podcasts and knew that if I left with him and ended up dead, everyone who heard the story would think I was a dumbass.”

Tareq's head dropped back as he laughed, his hands squeezing her breasts.

"You know I'm right," she insisted, adjusting her position on the desk. "If I let a stranger lead me out of that club and ended up dead, right or wrong I'd get blamed for my own murder."

He was still grinning as he sat forward. "You're right. It's wrong, but you're right."

"So now you know my shameful BDSM origin story."

"It wasn't shameful. Dangerous, yes. But the idea of being able to walk up to a woman, take her by the hair, and have her obediently kneel and submit to being touched and abused is hot. The fact that it's against the rules of the lifestyle and dangerous doesn't make it any less hot."

Nomi's defensiveness melted away under his words, his understanding.

"Follow up question. You said he played with your nipples, but you were specific. What was it? Pinching, twisting... 'really abused them'?"

His hands had gone still on her breasts and Nomi tensed. "Yes, Sir. That's what...that's what I said."

"Like this?" Tareq gently gripped each nipple between finger and thumb, then pinched down hard.

Nomi yelped, torso twisting in an instinctive move to throw off his hands. It was futile as he easily kept hold of her nipples, still pinching.

"Back into position," he barked.

She hissed out a breath between her teeth and slowly turned, back flat against the pillows.

“Good girl. Now I want you to look down. See how hard I’m pinching these pretty nipples.”

She obeyed, looking at his fingers, at her flesh compressed and white in the vise of his grip.

Tareq released her nipples, and there was a beat before the returning blood flow brought with it a different pain. It was fast, there and gone, nothing so prolonged as the pain of having clamps removed.

“No,” he commanded. “Keep your shoulders relaxed.”

She hadn’t even realized she’d hunched them, hollowing her chest, until he said something.

He flicked each nipple, fast up and down motions of his index fingers catching her nipples on both the up and down strokes.

“What is your sexiest fantasy?”

“Sexiest?” The pleasure of having her nipples played with made it hard to think.

“Yes. It doesn’t have to be realistic. Doesn’t have to have anything to do with BDSM or submission.”

“Can I...Can I ask something?”

Tareq stilled his flicking fingers. “Of course.”

“Is this one of those things where I tell you and then you try to make it happen?”

“Would that change how you answered?”

Nomi had a terrible feeling she was about to fuck this all up, but he’d asked for, demanded, honesty and communication. “The correct response would be ‘no.’ It

shouldn't matter because it's your decision what happens next."

"But in reality..." He raised his brows, inviting her to finish the statement.

"But in reality, I could answer a dozen different ways and it would still be an honest answer. Sexy is relative to how I'm feeling."

"That's fair."

"But if I thought you were going to use whatever I said as a guide to what to do next, I'd pick one that was..."

"That was what?"

"I'd pick one that wouldn't have a high risk of damaging one of us, either emotionally or physically."

Tareq considered her for a long moment, then scooted forward. The width of his shoulders forced her knees wider.

"First of all, I assure you I don't need suggestions. I have plenty of plans for this pretty body."

He stroked her stomach—which made her wince—her breasts, and then slid one hand up to her neck, fingertips painting circles on her neck under her ear.

"Second, I specifically said it didn't have to be realistic, didn't I?"

"Yes, Sir." The feel of his fingers on that sensitive skin was distracting. It was just short of ticklish, and made the occasional shiver run down her spine.

"If your fantasy is to be the captive of a two-dicked dragon... That's not a fantasy I can fulfill." He paused, considering. "The best I could do is DP."

His fingers stilled on her neck, his thumb sliding into place so his hand circled her throat.

“I’m glad you asked your question. Glad you were honest about your answer being dependent on what I’d do with the information.”

His hand tightened, a firm pressure that didn’t restrict either air or blood, but hinted at the possibility.

“But I made my question specific and clear.” His tone was deeper and scolding. “I asked you for your sexiest fantasy, no matter how outrageous or unrealistic.”

“I’m sorry, Sir.”

“What are you sorry for?”

“I’m sorry for not listening more carefully.”

His thumb moved, pressing against the corner of her jaw. He kept pressing, forcing her to tip her head back so she was looking up at the ceiling.

“And for not trusting me,” he prompted. “But we barely know one another, so I can’t fault you too much for not trusting me.”

She did trust him. She trusted this man. She trusted him not just with her body, but with her stories and secrets.

He released her neck, and Nomi dropped her chin, looking at him through her lashes.

“I’m sorry, Sir.”

“No need to be sorry.” He sat back, lounging like a king on his throne. “Just answer my question.”

Nomi closed her eyes, thinking. Fantasies were odd things, made both of wanting and fear. Fantasies were pleasure in the

safety of imagination, but brought out into the light and placed in the context of reality, the horror of them shone through.

“I like to read,” she said after a moment.

“Nomi, I didn’t ask for caveats and justifications.” The words were a reprimand, but the sentiment behind them was acceptance. He didn’t need or want her to justify her fantasy.

It might have been easier if he put his hands on her, but he didn’t. His elbows were braced on the arms of the chair just past her toes, chin propped on his fist. He surveyed her bound, naked, and exposed body with a sort of lazy interest.

Nomi knew exactly which fantasy she was going to tell him.

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CHAPTER 11



The cruel king looked down on me as I knelt at his feet, the cold stone of the throne room floor making me shiver. I jerked at the chains, trying to rise, but they were too short. The heavy manacles around my wrists dug into my hands as I strained to rise.

One of the king's guardsmen grabbed me by the hair, ignoring my cry of pain, and forced my head towards the floor. He didn't stop until my forehead touched stone, my body bowed forward and helpless.

"Defiant." The king's voice was dark, but tinged by a hint of amusement.

Weird, Nomi thought, there'd never been a hint of amusement in the king's voice before. Normally he was all cruelty at the beginning of her fantasy.

"You may have forced my father to give me to you, but I'm not yours." My words were spoken to the floor, since the guard still held me down, his hand gripping my hair.

"That is where you are wrong. You absolutely belong to me. Body and soul."

The king's words stole my breath.

"But especially your body."

Fear made my eyes sting, but I refused to cry.

“Strip her,” the king commanded.

I froze in fear as another guard approached, his footsteps heavy. He bent, unlocking my manacles. Only then did the first guard use his hold on my hair to drag me to my feet.

I shoved at their hands, but they stripped my outer dress, leaving me in my shift.

“What’s a shift?” Tareq asked.

“It’s like an under-dress thing. Honestly, I’m not sure, but in the fantasy I definitely have one, and it’s sexy and maybe a little see-through.”

“I can picture it. Please go on. You’re an amazing storyteller.”

I break free of the guards’ hold for a moment and try to run, but they catch me. They force my hands behind my back and pull my hair so my back arches. I’m helpless before them, and I can feel the guards looking at me. I wonder if the king will let them use me, and the thought makes me sick.

But the king is sitting up, taking in every inch of me. I look at him, our gazes meet, and the cruelty I see there promises dark things.

“Take her to my rooms.”

The guards haul me through the palace.

“Palace or castle?” Tareq asked.

“Palace. Castle implies no indoor plumbing, so I go with palace.”

“I was picturing a medieval castle.”

“As long as it has indoor plumbing.”

Tareq's lips twitched, but he nodded for Nomi to continue.

The king's rooms are unexpectedly beautiful, with a massive bed covered in gold fabric and pillows. The tall windows look out over the rugged coastline. I can see the harbor where some of his pirate ships are parked.

"He's a pirate, too?" Tareq grinned.

"Are you making fun of me?" Strangely, his smile didn't make Nomi feel stupid or silly. He seemed to be enjoying her story, her fantasy, even if he also teased her.

"Not at all. Just wanted to clarify that this is a pirate king."

"No, a king who was a pirate and now has an army of pirates." Nomi raised her chin, adopting a lofty tone. "Pirate king is a different fantasy."

"Ah. That...makes sense. Also, not sure you 'park' boats, but please go on. What happens in the king's room?"

The guard is smiling cruelly as he drags me to a tall, ebony door. There's a matte black key hanging on a long chain on the wall. He uses it to unlock the door, and shoved me into the dark room on the other side.

I think that maybe this is a cell, a small prison within the king's rooms, but then the guard follows me in and ignites the lanterns. The room is filled with an odd, dark light tinted blue instead of the gold.

I look around and fear has me stumbling towards the door, right into the guard, who grabs me by the arms and smiles.

"He'll do things to you that will make you weep."

The guard spins me around, pulls me back against his chest, one arm around my waist, pinning my own arms to my

sides.

“See that rack? He’ll tie you to it so he can whip you. And it won’t be your back that he whips.”

The guard’s free hand slides under the neckline of my shift. His gloved hands are rough on my breasts and I cry out, but that only makes him pinch my nipples until I beg him to stop.

“And over there, see those glass things? Those are dildos. He’ll use those to prep you so he can fuck you in every hole.”

He shifts his hold so the hand that was abusing my breasts is now sliding up the back of my thigh. He squeezes my ass, then pulls at the cheeks of my bottom. The tip of one gloved finger touches my anus, and I gasp as I realize what he’s saying.

“N-no. He wouldn’t...”

“He will. He will fuck you here.” The tip of his finger presses harder, until I think he’ll shove his finger into me. “And here.” His hand comes around the front, and he casually slaps my mound. “And here.” Finally, he grabs my face, squeezing so my lips purse.

“But it might not be the king who fucks you. He might tie you face down over that table and let his personal guardsmen use you.”

Before I can react, he shoves me back, towards the corner of the room where a small mattress waits on the floor. I see a narrow doorway with no door that leads to a small bathroom.

A long chain is coiled on the mattress, one end bolted into the stone wall. The other end has a padded manacle.

The guard shoves me down on the mattress. I kick but that doesn't stop him from grabbing my ankle and locking the manacle around it.

The guard steps back, and I stay on the mattress, shock and fear and resignation making me too weak to stand.

The guard considers me for a moment, then goes to a cupboard. He returns with a handful of restraints. I'm too numb to fight as he jerks my arms behind my back, forcing my elbows together and locking them in place so my shoulders are pulled back and my chest thrust out, my nipples visible through my shift.

He locks a spreader bar between my knees, the hem of my shift riding up to the tops of my thighs. If he decides to touch my pussy, there's nothing I can do to stop him.

Finally, he forces a studded metal ball into my mouth. The studs are long enough to be spikes, and the tips blunted enough that they don't immediately pierce my tongue and the roof of my mouth, but if I try and close my jaw they'll dig in, and it's only a matter of time before I have to swallow, or forget and move my head in a way that causes the spikes to pierce my flesh.

Then he wraps a length of stiff leather around the bottom half of my face, tying it in place. It stops me from spitting out the spiked ball.

The guard looks down at me, smiles cruelly, and then turns and walks out, leaving me there.

Nomi looked at Tareq, wondering if he'd comment, but he's silent, sprawled in the chair, his attention on her. She checked the urge to apologize for the too-long and elaborate set up to the fantasy.

She wondered if she'd shocked him. This was essentially a rape fantasy, with a lot of window dressing. Tareq had been so easy to talk to that it hadn't occurred to her that this might not be an okay thing to share.

She could lie, rewrite it from this point forward to make it palatable, but...

But she didn't want to. She wasn't going to apologize for existing, or for her fantasies. He'd asked. She would answer.

I try not to cry, because I don't want the king or his guards to know they've won, but as hours pass, I realize it's hopeless. He *has* won. I'm his. No one is coming to rescue me from this room. No one will stop him if he decides to let every guard in the palace fuck my pussy or mouth, or apparently my ass.

I remember the guard touching me there and stare at the collection of slender glass rods, only now realizing that the rounded tips make them resemble cocks.

My shoulders hurt and my chin is wet with what I hope is drool but might be blood.

When the door opens, the light from the room beyond seems to yellow. I glimpse the window, enough to see the sun setting over the ocean.

Then the king is there, his shoulders filling the doorway, the spikes of the iron crown on his head backlit by the setting sun.

When he steps in and closes the door I catch my breath, the realization that I belong to this man sinking in.

He pauses, looking around, and when he sees me, he frowns.

Despite my earlier tears and hopelessness, I raise my chin and meet his gaze.

He stalks over, then stands by the mattress, once again looking down at me. He crouches and unties the leather gag. He frowns as he examines the spiked ball in my mouth.

“Open.”

I try, but the tips of the spikes feel embedded in my skin. He grips my jaw, forcing my mouth open as I scream, and gently removes the cruel gag.

I close my mouth and swallow, but he won't let me keep it closed. The king squeezes my face.

“Open your mouth.”

“Please,” I mumble. “Please let me—”

“Open,” he commands.

When I still don't obey, he slides his finger between my lips and along the line of my clenched teeth. He pushes at the hinge of my jaw, forcing my mouth open, the same way one would force a horse to take a bit.

His hand in my hair jerks my head back so he can examine me in the light.

His finger touches the roof of my mouth, the divots left there by the blunted spikes.

“Didn't break the skin,” he says.

The king stands, his face unreadable. He walks towards the door, and while I'm glad to have the gag gone, the idea of being left here again, my shoulders screaming in pain, my knees spread, has me fighting not to cry.

The king opens the door. “Who brought her here?”

There's a murmur from someone standing guard in the bedroom.

"Throw him in the dungeon. I'll kill him myself tomorrow. He touched what's mine."

I'm shocked but when the king turns back, his face is unreadable.

He kneels before me, our faces nearly level, though he's taller than me even when we're on our knees. He reaches for my face, his finger between my lips.

I close my teeth, trying to bite him, but he shoves his finger into the back corner of my mouth once more, forcing my jaw open. Drool slides out of my mouth and over my already wet chin.

His other hand rubs my chin, sliding through the spit coating me. Then he smirks and rises, his hands going to his pants.

I stare up at him in shock, and when he pulls out his huge cock I lean back, but my bound arms and spread knees make it hard to move. He grabs fistfuls of my hair, jerking me forward until his cock rubs my cheek.

"If you bite me, I'll hurt you."

It's a simple threat, but hours spent helpless in this room softened my will to fight. My shoulders ache, my arms are numb.

"Open," he commands.

Tears slide down my cheeks but I obey, and he shoves his cock into my mouth. My tongue is throbbing and my jaw aches after being forced open for so long. The king doesn't

care. His thick cock rubs my tongue and the roof of my mouth before bumping against the back of my throat.

He doesn't stop there. His cock slides in deeper, filling me until I can't breathe. I try to struggle, but I'm helpless, and for a moment I think this is how he'll kill me.

But then he pulls back, not all the way out, but I can breathe. I'm crying as I suck in air.

His hands soften on my head, massaging my scalp.

"This time when my cock is in your throat, I want you to swallow. Make your throat squeeze my cock."

I hear the command and then he's pressing in. I'm scared to have my air cut off, but I obey, doing my best to swallow around his cock.

He fucks my face for what seems like hours. I learn to swallow him down, to rub my tongue along the vein on the underside of his cock.

Finally, he pulls out, his cock glossy with my spit. I expect him to bend me over or force me onto my back, but instead he reaches down and lifts me up. I brace my feet, my legs spread thanks to the bar between my knees. He keeps hold of my arms and I hiss in pain, then cry out as his big hands squeeze and release my shoulders.

"Do your arms hurt?"

"Yes."

He forced my chin up. "Yes, what?"

I realize he wants me to use his title.

"Yes, your majesty," I force out.

“No.” He touches my lips. “That’s not who I am to you, is it?”

I feel the tears on my cheeks as I look up at him.

“Don’t make me say it,” I beg.

“You will.” He grips the top of my shift and rips it down the center. I cry as he pushes it open, exposing my nakedness. “You’re mine, and you won’t leave this room until you understand what that means.”

“And what does it mean?”

“This body is mine.” He runs his hands down my front, pausing to toy with my breasts, pinching and tugging my nipples. He bends, taking my nipple in his mouth, and I brace myself for the bite, but he sucks, and there’s unexpected, delicious pleasure. He straightens, eyeing my body in a way that I don’t understand.

He cups my pussy and I look away in shame.

“I can use you, hurt you, pleasure you, however I want.”

“Pleasure?” I shake my head. “Don’t pretend you care about my pleasure. Don’t try to make me believe you’ll do anything but hurt me.”

“I will hurt you,” he promises. “Both as punishment, and simply because I want to.” But as he says it his other hand tugs gently on my nipple, the touch delicate.

“Because you’re cruel,” I spit.

“I am,” he agrees. “If I were you, I’d work to remember that.”

“I’m not likely to forget.”

“You might.” His fingers part my pussy lips, and he touches my clit. I gasp, because as invasive as his touch is, there is pleasure when he touches me there.

“I knew when I saw you that I had to have you,” he murmurs. “If I hadn’t been in a position to force your father to give you to me, I would have kidnapped you.”

“Why?”

“Because you’re mine.” His fingers keep touching me, soft and gentle. It’s almost enough to offset the pain of my bound arms. “You’re meant to kneel before me. Submit to me.”

“No, I’m— I’m...” But I can’t think as his fingers dance over my pussy.

“Had you realized yet that you need pain in order to feel the deepest pleasure? Had you realized that you wouldn’t be satisfied until a man took you in hand and turned you over his knee?”

“Over his knee?” I can barely think, and the things he says don’t make sense.

“Over *my* knee. That’s how I’ll spank you.

“Beat me, you mean.”

“No, spank you. I’ll turn your ass red with my hand, or a brush, or a paddle. It will hurt to sit for days after I’m done spanking you, but when it’s over, right after the sting of the last blow, your pussy will be sopping wet.”

His hand dips and one finger slides into my body. I gasp, and nearly lose my balance. He steadies me, then grips me by the throat.

His palm cups my pussy, the heel of his hand against my clit as he shoves another finger into my pussy.

He's holding me by the throat and pussy, his fingers so deep in my body that the rest of his hand is grinding up against me.

No wait, I'm grinding down on his hand. I realize what I'm doing, how wanton I am, and still myself.

The king smirks down at me. "You can fight it, if you want. But soon all I'll have to do is look at you and your pussy will be wet for me. And it will stay wet whether I decide to pleasure you or hurt you.

"Why, why would you hurt me?" I cry out.

He leans in, lips by my ear. "Because I can."

His thumb slides into place against my clit, his fingers thrusting up into me in a smooth rhythm.

"Because I want to."

He releases my throat to reach behind me and free my arms. They drop to my sides and I scream in pain as blood returns to my hands and forearms, my shoulders burning after so long in the unnatural position.

His fingers don't stop working my pussy, and the pain blends with the pleasure.

"Because you're mine."

He grips my neck, jerks me forward. I fall against his chest as his hand moves to my hair, forcing my head back.

The cruel king looks down at me, his fingers working my pussy until I'm poised to explode with pleasure. My eyes flutter, and I shouldn't want to touch him, but I do. I lay my head on his chest, panting as he drives me closer to the edge.

"Do you want to come on my fingers?"

“Yes.”

“Do you want me to put you over my knee and spank you?”

God help me, but it was the truth when I respond, “Yes.”

“Do you want me to use you however I want? To do every base and forbidden thing I can think of?”

I start to shiver. “Will you give me to the guards? The one who brought me here touched—”

“No one but me will ever touch you again,” he growled. “Now answer my question. Do you want me to use you? Do you want me to do things to you that will pleasure you to the point of pain?”

It was the height of insanity, but I say, “Yes.”

His fingers still, his thumb moving away from my clit.

“Yes, what?”

“Yes, your majes—”

His hand tightens in my hair, forcing my head back so our gazes meet. “Yes, what?” His eyes are cold and merciless.

I hate him for making me say it, but I do. I speak the truth and seal my fate with the words.

“Yes, Master.”

CHAPTER 12



Tareq stared at Nomi. There was a long moment of silence, and then his patience ran out.

“Then what happened?”

“That’s it.” She arched her back a little, adjusting her arms.

“That’s it?” He gripped her knees. “I need to know the rest of the story.”

“I’ve usually gotten off by then.”

“That was just the set up! Where’s the story?”

Her lips twitched. “Why are you so outraged?”

“I’m not—” He stopped. “Actually, that’s exactly the right word. I am outraged.”

“If I had more, I’d tell you more.”

“I’ve been cheated,” he declared.

Now she broke and smiled. “All the build up with no satisfaction? Oh no, how frustrating. I, a submissive, have never experienced anything like that.”

“Brat.”

“Am not.”

“If I didn’t already have you tied up just the way I want you, I’d put you over my knee.”

Nomi laughed. “You’d never survive edging.”

“Edging doesn’t sound like fun from your side,” he agreed.

“Then why do you do it?”

“Well, it’s lots of fun from this side. Making your sub crazy with need. Getting them to the point that they’re actually fighting you because they’re so fucking frustrated.”

Tareq ran his palms down the insides of her thighs. For a moment she squeezed her knees together, but he pushed, shoving her legs apart. Her eyes widened before her lashes lowered. Tareq fitted his fingers to the crease where belly met thigh, his thumbs sliding along her pussy lips.

She was swollen and wet, her pink parts nicely on display.

Her labia were tacky rather than slick. Being exposed to the air had dried her body’s natural lubricant. He dipped his thumb into her vagina, then spread the fresh moisture over her pussy lips.

This time when her back arched it was arousal rather than shifting position.

“I still have questions to ask you.”

“Yes, Sir.”

He took a beat to mourn their banter of a moment ago. As much as he enjoyed the sweet sound of submissive responses, he liked talking to her too. He took a moment to wonder if it could be like this, a seamless flow back and forth between more formal submission and casual conversation. Usually for him a scene was a scene, and even if he wasn’t as formal or

rule driven as some, there was a clear division. With her that line was blurred and he liked it.

“What’s something you tried once and will never try again?”

“Changing my own oil.”

He pinched her pussy, and she yelped.

“That’s not what I mean and you know it.”

“Sorry, Sir.”

“You tried it once, and said never again,” he prompted.

“Interested in seeing my trauma?”

“Is that what it was? Traumatizing?”

“No, Sir. Well...not exactly?” She tipped her head to the side, resting it against her arm.

He stroked her legs, but didn’t ask again. If she didn’t want to answer, that was her right. He might spank her, taking her pain as payment for passing, but hell, he’d spank her anyway.

Though her lashes were lowered, Nomi met his gaze. “I could just tell you about my hard limits, but I don’t think that’s the point of the question.”

He petted her legs, staying quiet to let her talk.

“You want to know about a time I tried something, or had something done to me, and I ended up adding it to my hard limits, or just made sure it wasn’t a part of any future scenes.”

Her gaze shifted away from his face, so she was looking into the middle distance. Remembering.

“But sometimes I don’t know if... if the problem is me, or the execution.”

“Is it a problem at all?”

“Maybe not.”

“How about you stop speaking in the hypothetical and tell me what happened?”

“Tell you a true story this time?”

“We’ll be coming back to your fantasy, because you’re going to tell me the rest of the story even if you have to make it up on the spot, but for now, yes, tell me a true story.”

“I don’t want you to think badly of me.” She almost whispered the words

“No judgment,” he promised.

She looked dubious then shook her head slightly. “It’s natural to add value, or judgment, to the things you see or hear, but I appreciate the sentiment.” She took a breath and started speaking, her attention on something behind him, as if she couldn’t bring herself to look at him.

“There was this scene...we negotiated it for weeks in advance, because we were going to use an Iron Court room.”

The idea of some other Dom taking Nomi to one of the hardcore spaces in that particular courtyard made Tareq’s back teeth grind.

“It was supposed to be a full slave-style scene, if you know what I mean.”

Terminology in BDSM rarely had universal definitions, but he understood.

“You were going to be used and abused rather than played with,” he said.

She nodded. “Exactly. Chains and metal rather than padded cuffs, no clothes, had to crawl, expect heavy impact play.”

Tareq wrapped his arms around her knees. “Did he beat you?”

“Yes, but—”

“Tell me his name.”

“It was a long time ago.”

“I don’t care. Give me the name of the man who hurt you.”

Nomi was looking at him now, and for a moment there was something soft and surprised in her face, before she raised her brows. “I’m okay, Tareq.”

He lowered his gaze to her breasts, getting his reaction under control.

“I agreed to it,” she said after a moment.

“But he hurt you.”

“He did...for a while. Then he locked me in a cage.”

“And you panicked because you were trapped.”

Her lips pressed together. “No. I got bored.”

Tareq blinked and sat back. “Bored.”

“It was so boring. He’d been dragging me around by the hair, paddled my ass, put manacles on me, spanked my pussy, and it was intense, frightening in the way I wanted it to be. Then he locked me in the cage and ignored me, which was part of the scene, part of the experience...but it was so boring.”

Tareq couldn’t help it, he grinned.

“For the first ten minutes it was hitting all my submissive buttons, knowing that I was trapped there, naked, chained up.” Nomi shook her head. “See, even saying it now, it sounds hot, but the reality was boring. My ass hurt, but not enough. The main thing I felt was cold, then bored, then cold and bored.”

Tareq leaned his head against her leg as he cracked up.

“My fantasy story used to involve days waiting for the king, and a cage,” she admitted. “But after that Iron Court scene I had to delete the cage and go back to just chains, minimal waiting around.”

Tareq rested his chin on her knee. “You are not the kind of submissive that should be left to her own devices.”

She stiffened. “What does that mean?”

“I’d bet good money that you have at least one advanced degree in something book-smart.”

She stared at him. “I have a doctorate.”

“You need submission to get out of your own head.”

She opened her mouth, then closed it and nodded.

“If I were going to make you wait, I’d make sure I’d either spanked that ass hard enough it was all you’d be able to think about.”

Tareq reached down, and gently pinched the part of her butt available to him.

“Or I’d have you plugged, gagged, or filled in a way that wouldn’t let you forget your submission.”

He slid a finger into her pussy. Nomi arched up, gasping. The intensity of her reaction told him exactly how aroused she was.

“Or you’d be in such tight bondage that you’d feel the pressure of my control on every inch of your skin.”

“I like ropes, because they make me feel exactly like you just described.”

“Master Morton mentioned that.” Tareq palmed her breasts. “A few more questions, then we have somewhere to be.”

“We do?”

Tareq turned his hand palm up, and gently slid two fingers into her pussy. She gasped and jerked as if he’d slammed into her, but after so long with nothing filling her sweet pussy, he was sure the penetration felt good. More than good based on the way her eyelashes were fluttering.

“What’s one thing that’s not on your hard limit list that you’ve always wanted to try but no Dom has ever done?” He curled his fingers, probing for her g-spot.

Nomi sucked in air, eyes closed.

“And so you’re not tempted to use this to top from the bottom, I promise I will not add whatever it is to our checklist game scenes.”

If she was listening carefully, she’d hear that he hadn’t promised not to do it, he just wouldn’t do it in conjunction with their game scenes.

Given that they only had one other item after questions, that wasn’t saying much. Tareq had every intention of sceneing with this pretty submissive again. Every time he thought to himself “we’ll do that next time” or “save that for a future scene,” it felt right. It allowed something in him that had been tense at the idea of their time ending, to relax.

“Serving other Doms,” she gasped finally.

He brought his thumb into play, pressing against the bottom of her clit. “Explain.”

“I guess it doesn’t work, because I don’t have a regular partner. Not like...oh god that feels good...not one that I belong to enough for it to be a thing.”

He worked her pussy, thrusting gently, his fingers curled to hit her g-spot. When she didn’t say anything else, didn’t explain more fully, he slowed his pace.

Her eyes, which had slid closed, opened a sliver. He raised a brow, telling her without words he wasn’t satisfied with her answer.

“Being sent to serve another Dom, by my own Dom. It’s sexy but scary. It’s not on my hard limits, but I worry if anyone ever did do that, it would just make me feel shitty and worthless, but still the idea is sexy.”

“Not given away to another Dom,” he clarified.

“Is that on the list?”

“It is.”

“Poor ‘G’...” She paused, gasping when he pressed hard on her clit, prompting her to go on. “No, not given away. More like...my Dom commands me to go suck another Dom’s cock.”

“But it has to be your Dom. Not just the Dom you’re sceneing with.”

“Yes.” The word was a hiss of air as she arched her back in reaction to his thumb making a slow, firm circle over her clit.

“Last question.” His voice was rough with need, and his cock hard to the point of pain. He was fairly sure there was a wet spot on his pants.

“Yes, Sir,” she whimpered.

“Would you like me to lick your pussy?”

Nomi’s eyes flew open, her gaze met his. Her mouth opened, closed.

Tareq smiled, slow and wide, his hand still working her, two fingers inside her, thumb on her clit. “You’re welcome to say ‘no’.”

“No!” Her eyes rounded. “I mean no to what you just said. Yes, to you licking my pussy. Please.”

“Ask nicely,” he chided, just to be an ass and prolong her torment.

“Please, Sir. Please lick my pussy.”

Tareq yanked open the drawer, grabbing the thin, flexible silicone dildo he’d stashed there.

He shoved it unceremoniously into her pussy.

Nomi yelped before an expression of bliss fluttered over her face.

He could have teased her, or said something to reinforce that she was his to do with as he pleased. The urge to use her until she was wholly his and fully submissive ate at him, the dark need rising along with his arousal, and cock.

Instead Tareq wrapped his arms around her thick thighs, then bent his mouth to her pretty pussy. She tasted tangy and hot. Her legs squeezed his head with the first pass of his

tongue over her clit. He could feel the base of the dildo nudging his chin. It would probably fall out, but that was okay.

Tareq pressed his lips to her flesh, creating a seal, and sucked.

She shrieked, so he did it again.

The suction on her clit would pull blood to the already tender flesh. Would make her even more sensitive. He flicked her with the tip of his tongue, a hard touch, and her thigh muscles jerked. For a moment he couldn't breathe as she squeezed him. Tareq used his hold on her thighs to spread them, drawing in air through his nose while his mouth stayed on her clit. There would be time for her to suffocate him, but that was later.

Tareq stopped fucking around and got to the work of eating her pussy.

He adjusted his mouth, his lower teeth pressing just below her clit, his tongue flat on the little pearl of nerve endings.

He kept the pressure firm, but not hard, and started to work his tongue in a circle.

“Oh my god.” Her gasp was a sweet reward for his efforts.

“How...what...Oh Sir that feels so good.”

To hear this articulate woman ramble was deeply satisfying.

He worked his tongue over her, pausing every so often only to rest and re-wet her flesh with his saliva. The flat tongue circle method was one of his own invention, and he liked to think he was the only one who'd ever figured out how to please a woman this way. Realistically he knew that wasn't

true, but the reaction from every woman he'd done this to was gratifying. And telling.

Her breathing changed, her body no longer moving in time with his tongue but held perfectly still. She was close to coming and he was experienced enough to know that now was not the time to change anything. He didn't speed up, or alter the rhythm.

His jaw needed a break, his tongue muscles were sore, but he didn't stop. He wouldn't stop until she orgasmed.

She gasped on each inhale, holding her breath for a moment. The exhales were tight and controlled. She was on the edge, but it sounded like, felt like, she was having trouble tipping over into orgasm.

It was just as he was considering what stimulation he should add—pinching her nipples was top of the list, but forcing her legs to spread wider, or toying with the dildo, were also options—that she peaked.

Nomi came apart under the pressure of his tongue, her legs clamping so hard to his head that his ears rang. He kept his tongue against her clit as she came, no longer working it in a circle, as he knew that would be painful given how sensitive her body was in these moments. Instead, he let his tongue rest on her clit, a gentle but firm contact.

She sobbed out each breath, her pleasure sounding almost like pain. Because it wasn't just pleasure, it was release. A release that lasted for a long minute, making her quake and shudder.

Tareq's jaw and tongue muscles were screaming at him, so he relaxed his mouth, resting his lips on her clit.

With his chin no longer keeping the dildo in, it slid out of her, thudding against his lap before rolling to the floor. He didn't want to leave that pretty pussy empty, so he pressed three fingers into her, filling her up but also allowing himself to enjoy the final tightening pulses of her orgasm.

When she'd stopped clenching around him and her breath had evened out, Tareq sat back.

He spread her pussy lips with his thumbs, enjoying the view of her orgasm swollen flesh. He leaned down and kissed her clit, noting the way she tensed.

"I could keep playing with this." He touched her clit with his index finger. "There's nothing you could do to stop me. You're physically helpless, but more importantly you've yielded control of this sweet body to me."

"Yes, Sir," she whimpered.

"Would you like me to do that? Would you like me to follow up that pleasure with some pain?" He toyed with her labia, gently gripping one fleshy lip and then running his pinched fingers up and down. "It wouldn't be a spanking pain. It would be my-clit is-too-sensitive-this-is-like-touching-a-raw-nerve-ending pain."

"I would like..."

He looked up when she didn't continue. Their gazes met and it was a shock of pure need to see the vulnerable submission in her gaze.

"I would like," she said again. "To please you, Sir."

"No matter what that looks like?"

"No matter what," she agreed. "Pleasure or pain. Whatever you're willing to give me."

The fact that she said ‘willing to’ bugged him. It wasn’t about what he was willing to give her. That made it seem like she had to accept bare minimum effort. Nomi was the kind of woman who inspired a man’s best effort. Anyone who didn’t agree was a fucking idiot.

He rose to his feet, holding her legs to steady her, since his standing meant the chair was pushed back, her legs straightening, though her knees were still bent. Her eyes followed his hands as he reached for his pants, quickly and unceremoniously unfastening them and pulling out his cock. He rolled on a condom with impatient fingers. The avarice in her gaze as she looked at his dick was deeply satisfying.

The desk wasn’t the perfect height, but it was close enough. He fitted his cock to her entrance, reaching out and bracing one hand on the wall just to the left of her head.

He stared down at her pussy, watched his cock press her body open. Watched her now-plump inner pussy lips hug his shaft.

He gritted his teeth to keep it slow, though he wanted to echo her moan of need with one of his own.

He shoved in until his thighs hit the desk. It wasn’t enough. Tareq grabbed her hips, pulling her ass towards the edge of the desk.

“Sir...” There was worry in her voice.

“I won’t let you fall.” He grinned at her. “My dick will hold you up.”

With a little tug he jerked her forward another half inch. She hissed out a breath.

“Problem?”

“The edge of the desk is digging into my ass.”

He leaned in, his face inches from hers. “Still sore from the spanking.”

“A little.”

“And the edge is making it hurt again.”

“Yes, Sir.”

He held her gaze. “Good.”

Maintaining eye contact he shoved the last inch of his cock into her, his balls against her ass. He bent over her, angling his hips so his pelvis ground against her sex. She was spread wide enough that he was touching her clit, and given how sensitive he'd left her, she'd feel every little touch.

Her lashes fluttered, her eyes closing for a moment, and when she opened them again, she kept those lashes submissively lowered.

His cock twitched inside her.

It wasn't just that she kept her gaze down. Her expression was pure submission. This odd combination of soft, but anxious, but needy.

He wanted to see that expression on her face while she knelt at his feet, his hand tangled in her hair.

Wanted to see that expression as he put her on a wooden horse and tortured this sweet pussy.

Wanted to see that expression as he laid her back on the bed, foregoing restraints because he didn't need them. Because she would obey simply for the pleasure of being obedient to him.

Tareq pulled back and thrust, a long, hard thrust that slammed his hips against her. He gripped her knees, forcing them down and open, spreading her just a little bit more. He wished he'd put a plug in her ass. While it wasn't pleasant to have his balls banging against a plug, he liked feeling it there, knowing he'd put it there and that his sub would stay plugged until he said otherwise.

He was too keyed-up for this to last long, and it didn't need to last. Tareq kept one hand braced by her head, the other gripping her tit, squeezing in order to enjoy all that soft flesh.

Then he fucked her. He didn't have the patience for long, slow strokes. He pounded her with quick, hard thrusts that made the tit he wasn't holding jiggle and bounce. He let his attention roam over her body as they fucked. When he met her gaze, there was worry there, vulnerability. He frowned. Why was she worried? He was so caught up in the feel of his cock pistoning in and out of her that he couldn't figure it out, not right then.

He thrust in hard, wanting to fuck that expression off her face. Her mouth opened, the tip of her pink tongue appearing between her teeth.

“You're so fucking beautiful,” he growled, squeezing her tit.

Her eyes opened, and that worried look faded to be replaced by something that might have been relief.

“You really think that.”

What?

Tareq's balls twitched, and the pressure at the base of his cock was almost painful. He needed to come, and now.

With a growl he sealed his mouth over hers, sucking until her tongue slid between his lips so he could bite it. She made a soft sound of pain and need and that was what did it, what pushed him over the edge. He kept his mouth sealed to hers, their tongues dancing as he tasted her, while his cock twitched and pulsed as he came.

When it was over, Tareq shifted to rest his forehead on hers. Her breath fanned his face, and he liked the unexpected intimacy of it.

“You doubted that I thought you were beautiful?” he whispered as sanity returned and he slotted together pieces of what had just happened.

“I was scared,” she replied with matching quiet. “Usually men close their eyes.”

“Men are trash,” he said.

She laughed, as he’d intended. Reluctantly he pulled out, looking at her well-fucked pussy for a moment. He touched her clit, watched her jerk in reaction.

“If we didn’t have somewhere to be, I’d keep playing with this.” He fingered her clit.

“I’m really sensitive, Sir.” The words came from between clenched teeth.

“I know.” He kept touching her clit, even flicked it, which made her shriek.

“Lucky for you we have somewhere to be.”

She blinked at him. “May I ask where?”

“You—” He leaned in, unclipped her arms, cradling them as he helped her lower them. “—have a date with some rope.”

CHAPTER 13



Nomi half sat, half leaned on Tareq. They were only a few feet away from Masters Ben and Morton, and their checklist-assigned subs.

Master Ben turned out to be Tareq’s friend Ilias.

Nomi hadn’t recognized the man who’d spoken to Tareq in the parking lot as Master Ben. Partially because she was used to seeing him radiating intense focus and a sort of coiled violence. The kind of expression and posture that was like a drug to subs. You knew sceneing with him was probably dangerous, but were going to do it anyway.

The man standing here now was definitely Master Ben—shoulders back, body stiff, one hand on his sub’s head in what was decidedly not a casual manner. His sub looked sort of shocked, and trembled occasionally under his hand. Every time she so much as shifted, Master Ben looked down at her, his gaze not exactly cold, but assessing. This man was night-and-day from the easygoing guy she’d noted in the parking lot.

Tareq had told her that Ilias used “Ben” as his club name because those were the first three letters of Ilias’s last name, and easier to pronounce than his actual last name.

Master Ben had “R,” hence him organizing this rope scene. Master Morton had “S” and though Nomi assumed that had

been done specifically so Master Morton could do a shibari scene, Tareq told her that shibari was actually not one of the “S” checklist items. It was listed with “R” as “Rope, Shibari.”

The overseers hadn’t assigned the club rope expert to “R,” proving they were sadists. Which was hardly news.

Master Morton was actually one of three Doms who had the letter S, and Tareq had whispered to her that there was some drama with the letter S group, but hadn’t elaborated.

They were waiting off to one side of the wide platform, Tareq perched on a rolling stool that was braced against one of the support posts for the pergola above them. The pergola served triple duty. During the day it shaded the courtyard, and it provided a structure for the climbing vines and desert roses the club grew in massive pots. The third use was as a frame for bondage and suspension. Metal glinted among the leaves overhead—heavy rings and brackets bolted into the wood.

Nomi stood between Tareq’s spread legs, her back against his chest, one butt cheek hitched up so she was half sitting on his thigh. His chin rested on her shoulder, his arms around her, his hands casually, if possessively, cupping her breasts through the sheer “murder robe” as he now called it.

Nomi tipped her head to the side, resting it against Tareq’s. It wasn’t until she’d done it that she realized it was too casual, too intimate. She felt comfortable with Tareq, and that made it easy to forget that he was only here because he’d been assigned to top her.

His smiles and genuine appreciation of her body made it too easy to read into their interactions. To think there was more here than the camaraderie of being game partners.

Equating or conflating the intimacy of BDSM with romantic intimacy was an amateur mistake. She knew how to separate what happened here from what happened outside the club. But Tareq was blurring that line in a way she hadn't experienced in years.

Maybe it was because he was unique in the way he slid seamlessly from strict, masochist Dom, to smiling make-her-laugh boyfriend material.

She grimaced at the thought, hating that term no matter how accurate it was. Tareq's personality and actions made him feel like boyfriend material, and she needed to get it together and control her emotions and reactions.

"You okay?" he asked.

"Yes, why?"

"You made a face."

Whoops. Since he was behind her, she hadn't thought he'd notice. "Sorry, mind wandered."

He made a low sound of disapproval and her stomach fluttered. "I know waiting around makes you bored," he said, "but given that you're about to go into suspension rope bondage, I really don't want to have to take action right now to bring you into focus."

She remembered what he'd said back in the bedroom, when he'd had her bound, helpless and spread.

"No, Sir. I'm sorry. I'll stay in the moment."

His reply was to pull the edges of her robe open, exposing her tits to the air which felt especially cold after the warmth of his hands. The feathery edges tickled, and she shivered.

He cupped her breasts once more, but now it was skin to skin and she arched into his hands.

“You really like having your tits played with.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Then it’s a good thing I enjoy playing with them, isn’t it?”

“Fortuitous,” she breathed.

That made him chuckle and press a kiss to her shoulder.

She almost asked him to stop. To not kiss her because it was making it so much harder to remember that he was just here as an assignment.

His thumbs flicked her nipples. She jerked, attention firmly rooted in the present thanks to his touch. He flicked them again, not gently. She jerked, and her hands came up on instinct.

“No.”

That was all he said, just “no,” but it was enough to stop her.

“In fact, why don’t you lift your arms, hands on your head, to give me better access to these pretty things.” He squeezed her breasts.

Nomi raised her arms, putting her right hand on the back of her head. He hadn’t moved, hadn’t lifted his chin from her shoulder, so she slid her left hand into his hair, gripping it just hard enough to give him back a small measure of the pain he’d given her.

“I thought of a question I should have asked you.” His thumbs flicked her nipples a few more times, hard enough to

make her jerk, though she obediently kept her hands in place.

“What’s that, Sir?”

“Do you like to be played with when you’re in rope, or is it meditative for you?”

Nomi shifted, feeling the slickness in her pussy. “Normally it’s meditative for me, though I’m always aroused at the end. It’s not that ‘I need to come right now or I’ll die’ arousal.”

“Have you ever been played with during suspension? I mean sexually.”

“Of course.” She turned her head enough to glance at him. “Being touched drives home the fact that I’m helpless.”

His thumbs began to circle her areolas, just barely touching her nipple. “And what kind of sensation do you like when you’re in rope?”

“What do you mean?”

“Pain or pleasure?”

She opened her mouth, closed it.

“Nomi...” There was a warning in his voice. A warning not to lie to him, not to ignore his question.

“I’m not actually sure, and that’s the truth. I don’t think I’ve ever gotten off while in rope. Maybe it’s too much. Too much sensory input so it makes it hard to concentrate.”

“I’m trying not to take this as a challenge.” He placed his thumbs right on her nipples and rolled them like her tits were a game controller.

“Oh god, that feels good,” she breathed.

“Depending on how Julen, sorry, Master Morton, ties you, I’d like to play with you, not just touch you, properly play

with you. But not if that's more than you can, or want to, deal with."

"Normally I'd say no, but if you're the one touching me, yes."

The words were out before she thought them through, and when he paused, thumbs going still, she cringed inside. That had sounded way too needy, and a little guileless. She hadn't meant it to be either. It had been truth spoken while her attention was focused on the pleasure of his hands on her breasts.

She wanted, needed, to rush past this moment before he said something that made the awkwardness already burning through her flare into white-hot embarrassment.

"Why are we doing a rope scene, Sir?" She rushed out the question, one she'd been wanting to voice, but had been too caught up in enjoying being with him to risk asking.

"Ilias has a vision. Not sure what's going on with him and his sub, but he wants multiple subs in suspension at once."

"And you offered me up?" The words came out breathy.

"Hmm." Tareq's hand slid from her breast, over her belly and the belt of her robe, to the apex of her thighs. "Spread for me."

Though most of her weight was on her feet, her butt was halfway on his thigh, so she transferred her weight to one foot, and hooked the other leg over his. She started to tip her hips as she realized in this position her belly would make it hard for him to reach her pussy, but he wasn't shy or hesitant. Tareq shoved his hand between her legs, cupping her sex, his middle finger slipping between her labia.

“Do you like the idea of me offering you up to another Dom to play with?”

He stroked her clit with the pad of his index finger and Nomi clutched her own hair hard enough to make her scalp hurt.

“You know I do. I just told you so.”

“You also said the idea scared you. So if I told you to get on your hands and knees and crawl over to Master Morton, then tell him that I’ve ordered you to serve him in whatever way he sees fit...how would that feel?”

Nomi licked her dry lips, her hips rocking against his hand. He’d actually stopped moving his finger, instead letting her rub herself against him.

“Scary,” she said. “But hot. You’d stay? You wouldn’t go away?”

“Of course I’d stay. You’re mine.”

The orgasm took her by surprise. One moment it was building, her abdominal muscles starting to tense, then she was gasping as much in shock as pleasure as she came.

Tareq jammed his hand deeper between her legs, the heel of his hand braced against her clit, one finger shoved up inside her. The penetration triggered a second wave of pleasure.

She was gasping, shocked and a little trembly from the intensity, when she finally opened her eyes and turned just her head to look at him. Her arm was still up and back in a slightly awkward manner, her hand fisted in his short hair, his face mere inches from hers.

“I...I didn’t know that was going to happen,” she breathed.

Tareq arched a brow.

“I really didn’t.”

“I think you really like the idea of being sent to serve another Dom.”

Nomi didn’t think that was what had triggered it. She was fairly certain it was hearing him say “you’re mine.” She wasn’t sure if the intensity of that reaction could be blamed on her submission or her love of spicy fantasy romance, but either way, she’d had a strong reaction.

Now the problem was that she was in that post-orgasm state where things that had sounded sexy and fun a few minutes ago sounded far less appealing.

She bit her lip, eyeing him as she debated what to say.

Then his arm tensed, and he pulled up on her pussy. He was holding her tight, two fingers inside her, her labia spread wide by his palm.

The ownership and command of that gesture, a visceral reminder of the power exchange, wiped away that post-orgasm reluctance.

Her body went soft, her head fell back in submission. His free hand curled around her neck, squeezing gently. She gasped, which only highlighted the pressure against her throat.

“You look pretty like this,” he murmured. “Soft and fuckable after coming.”

“Thank you, Sir.”

“But you don’t get to be fucked. You have to earn it.”

“I’ll be obedient,” she whispered.

“Of course you will. I won’t let you be anything else.” His voice was pure dark command, absolute authority.

Nomi rocked her hips into his hand, grinding herself against him.

“First, you’re going to get on your knees and suck my cock in apology for coming without permission. I’m not going to punish you, because I enjoy your pleasure too, but I think we’ll both feel better if I gag you with my dick again.”

Nomi sucked in air and the crude, visceral words.

“Then I’m going to take you over to Master Morton and offer your services to him. And you’ll be obedient. You’ll obey him, serve him, because I ordered you to.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“And when you’re tied up, dangling in the air, and helpless, I’m going to touch you however, wherever, I want. If I want to shove three fingers in your ass, I will. If I want to suck your nipples until they’re hard and pink, I’ll do that.”

If she hadn’t just reached orgasm, that would have done it. Made her come.

“Yes, Sir.”

His hand tightened on her neck, cutting off her air for a brief moment, and it was glorious. When he released her neck she gasped, already missing his hand. She could feel the imprint of it against her skin, like a brand.

“Up.”

He gave the order even as he pulled his fingers from her pussy. He wiped them on her breasts, being sure to coat her nipples. The combination of moisture and the warm night breeze had her areolas rucking tight from the cold.

He held her for a moment once she was on her feet. Then his warmth disappeared from her back, only to reappear a

moment later. He tossed a floor cushion on to wood boards of the low stage before reaching out and undoing the belt of her robe. Nomi took care of the buttons, then dropped her hands to her sides.

“On your knees.”

Nomi turned, her sheer robe hanging open, her naked body framed and presented rather than veiled.

Tareq had resumed his position on the rolling stool, but this time he wasn't leaning back against the post. Instead, he had his legs spread, feet braced.

She nudged the cushion into place between his feet and dropped to her knees.

He smiled down at her, but it was a dark smile, not one of his friendly grins.

Nomi put her hands on his thighs, needing the contact, as she watched him undo his pants and free his cock.

He was hard, the tip glistening. She leaned in, flicking him before dipping down to use the tip of her tongue on the underside of the head.

He hissed in pleasure, then shoved her hands off his legs. For a moment that worried her, but then he grabbed her robe and yanked it off her shoulders. The fabric slithered down to pool on her calves.

“Hands behind your back. I'm going to fuck your face.”

She obediently laced her fingers together, joined hands resting at the top of her ass. She licked her lips, doing her best to prepare herself.

Nothing could have prepared her for the first hard thrust of his cock into her mouth. He grabbed handfuls of her hair,

moved her head until her mouth brushed his dick, then shoved his cock in. It hit the back of her throat, making her gag. She struggled for a moment, instinct fighting submission. He pulled out, adjusted his grip until he cupped the back of her head, and slammed her head down on his cock. He went deeper this time, the tip entering her throat, pushing past her gag reflex. Her forehead hit his lower stomach and she swallowed, fighting the panicky need to breathe.

“Good girl.” He stroked her cheek with his thumb, wiping her tears.

Finally, the pressure on the back of her head released, but Nomi stubbornly stayed in place, tears running down her face, swallowing reflexively.

He gripped her hair and eased her back.

“Look at me.”

The tip of his dick was still in her mouth when she raised her gaze to his.

“There’s no prize for passing out from lack of oxygen. Understand?”

She nodded, his dick bobbing.

He stared down at her for a moment, gaze hooded, and then he pressed gently on the back of her head. This time he let her control it, and she swallowed him down, taking him as deep as she could. It wasn’t as deep as he’d gone when he controlled it, but she felt the overwhelming girth of him in her throat, felt achy and used as he nudged her back once more.

“Eyes up and open,” he commanded.

She raised her gaze to his, even as he cupped her head and started to fuck her in earnest. He worked his cock into her

mouth with a steady, shallow rhythm. His hands covered her ears, his fingers curling around the back of her head.

His palms muffled outside sounds, his gaze held hers. It was a form of sensory deprivation, which wasn't something she'd ever wanted before this moment. The rest of the club faded away, until it was only the two of them, in this moment.

Tareq's gaze flicked away from hers, a slight frown making a line between his eyebrows. She had a moment to worry she'd done something wrong and then he nodded, clearly responding to something behind her.

Tareq eased his cock out of her mouth and nudged her to sit back.

“Thrust those nice fat tits out for me,” he growled.

She didn't balk at the term “fat tits” the way she would have with someone else. From him it was a compliment, a little degrading, yes, but that made it better.

He stroked his cock, his grip so tight it looked painful. He kept his gaze on her as he stroked himself. As if looking at her would help him come.

Maybe it would. Maybe he enjoyed her body, the way she looked.

He grimaced, his expression stark and almost pained, before his semen splashed across her chest.

He let out a groan as he came, his cock twitching in his hand. She drank in the sight of him lost to his own pleasure.

It didn't last long. Tareq grimaced and quickly tucked himself into his pants and straightened. Reaching back, he grabbed the stool, hauling it around and pushing it off to the

side. Except it wasn't off to the side. He'd passed the rolling stool to someone.

Master Morton spoke from just over her shoulder. "Thanks so much, I hate to interrupt your scene." The slight emphasis on "your" made it clear he was irked.

"Maybe if you had hurried the fuck up..." Tareq held out his hands to her.

Nomi unlaced her fingers, then placed her hands in his. This time she pulled on him as she got to her feet, letting him help her up.

Tareq eyed her breasts and smiled, then spun her around to pull her back against his chest. "My girl here doesn't like to be bored."

Nomi arched up into Tareq's hands when he gripped her tits, spreading his sticky come over them.

"We had things to figure out," Master Morton said in a flat voice.

"Going that well?"

Tareq didn't seem bothered by Master Morton's clear irritation. The other Dom took the stool and stalked off.

"That's okay," Tareq called out in his easygoing voice. It was almost enough to give her whiplash after the dark tones and intensity of "thrust your fat tits out so I can come on them" from a moment ago.

Master Morton returned, brows raised in question.

"I'll still let you and Ilias play with my sub." Tareq released her breast and wrapped an arm around her waist. She tensed as he touched her round belly, but then relaxed in his hold.

Master Morton shook his head, then stepped back, gesturing to a compact square table he'd placed on their side of the stage. On the opposite side of the stage was the rolling stool. Master Morton's sub, a slender woman with her hair pulled back in a tight tail, perched on it.

In the middle was another sturdy little table, the sub currently kneeling on it, knees spread, tracking Master Ben as he prowled in front of the stage, a few loops of smooth red nylon rope hitched on his shoulder.

"Ready?" Master Morton asked her.

"Yes, Sir," Nomi said.

"Good, then please get in position."

Nomi seated herself on the edge of the sturdy little table. The sub at the far end must either be a rope virgin, or have been ordered to assume the kneeling position, because at the start of a rope tie it was all about being stable and comfortable.

Tareq brushed her hair back off her shoulder, and leaned in. "Don't forget what I said I'll do once you're flying." He dropped a kiss to her shoulder and stepped back.

Nomi watched him, heart in her throat and what might be panic biting at her as she watched him step off the stage. She'd never met someone she could picture fitting into all the corners of her life. But Tareq was different.

He certainly was an excellent Dom, and could be creative, commanding, and cruel in turn.

She could also see herself lounging on the couch beside him, or sitting across from him at dinner. Normally she compartmentalized out of both necessity and design, but right now that skill had deserted her.

Master Morton stepped in front of her, blocking her view of Tareq, who'd stopped Ilias and was speaking to him in what she assumed was Darija, the language he'd mentioned earlier.

Master Morton held a doubled length of rope in his hands. Nomi gathered her hair up, holding it in place on the top of her head so he could slide the rope around the back of her neck.

Nomi forced herself not to obsess and worry about her maybe-feelings for Tareq. First of all, it was possible the second she was off the Las Palmas grounds her compartmentalization would snap into place and she wouldn't think about the man her traitorous heart had decided to classify as boyfriend material.

But as Master Morton began to tie her, another terrible thought popped up. He'd said that Q had two items. They'd finished the first one, questions, which meant they had only one more item, then they'd be done. She'd been so worried about starting the game, she hadn't thought about the ending.

She was saved from panicking by Master Morton—who was switching his attention between the three of them. Nomi was now securely wrapped in rope, the constriction familiar and welcome. Master Morton stood on a small stool and threaded the four separate rope leads dangling from her body through two different pulleys. The pulleys, in turn, were attached to a single large bolt above her.

Master Morton pulled and her body, contorted and wrapped in rope, lifted off the table.

It took a moment to adjust to the added pressure as her bodyweight pressed into the ropes, but then she was floating, both mentally and in space, and stopped worrying about her time with Tareq coming to an end.

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CHAPTER 14



Tareq helped Julen Morton move the tables and stool out of the way. Ilias hauled the mats onto the stage, sliding them under the women. If the ropes broke or they had to do a quick release, the mats would cushion any landing.

Tareq eyed Nomi and fingered the rescue hook resting on his chest. He, Ilias, and Julen each wore one—the curved tip of the palm-length tool was lined with a dangerously sharp metal blade that would cut through the nylon rope in two seconds.

Tareq studied Nomi and struggled with twin urges. The first urge was unexpected—he wanted to get her down. Not because he thought Julen had fucked up the bondage, or because he didn't like seeing her like this. No, he wanted to cut her down because...

She looked uncomfortable.

Not her expression, which was blissed-out. But the way she was tied up, the way the ropes pressed in tight to her body, her flesh plumped out between them, *seemed* uncomfortable. He'd seen dozens if not hundreds of women in more general rope as well as shibari-style bondage, but somehow, he'd never really considered how uncomfortable proper rope

bondage must be. Or maybe he hadn't cared enough, been emotionally invested enough, until Nomi.

And this wasn't the concern of a Dom making sure the bondage was safe. Because he knew it was safe, he mostly trusted Julen. He just didn't want Nomi to experience any discomfort. He wanted her pampered and smiling.

Unless, of course, he was the one making her uncomfortable. That was, obviously, entirely different.

"You're sure she's comfortable?" Tareq asked Master Morton.

Julen looked at him. "Comfortable? It's rope bondage, not yoga pants."

"Is that a yes or a no?" Tareq asked.

Julen shook his head and stepped onto the stage to speak to Ilias's sub, the one in the middle.

Tareq went back to looking at Nomi. She was positioned so she was "laying" on her side, though she was tilted forward and down. Her body was tipped slightly onto her front, placing her at more of a 45-degree angle to the ground than ninety degrees.

When he'd first lifted her, Julen had her inverted, but left her that way for only a few minutes before using the set of ropes attached to her chest harness to raise her upper body. He said that this position was sustainable for a longer period of time than inverted.

A complex harness of rope passed over her shoulders and chest, banding her body all the way to her natural waist. The ropes squeezed above, below, between, and along the outside of those lovely breasts—per Tareq's request. Julen had looked

outraged at the implication he hadn't already been planning some good tit bondage.

A second harness passed around Nomi's hips and thighs. Julen had told him that between the two rope structures, she was essentially wearing a safety harness. Admittedly one she couldn't undo herself.

Nomi's lower arms and legs were actually relatively unfettered. Her elbows were bound to her body by four passes of rope that weren't part of her harness, meaning her arms weren't taking any of her body weight. She'd actually tucked her fingers under some of the rope on her thighs, so her arms were pressed along her sides.

Her ankles, and thighs just above the knee, had rope cuffs. Long tethers connected all four leg cuffs to the main lower-body support lines. The lead from her upper leg was much shorter, with the result of that leg being higher up, her thighs nicely spread.

Julen had helpfully threaded a metal ring into the front and back of the hip harness, giving Tareq anchor points if he wanted to add to the art. How thoughtful.

Putting aside the issue of her comfort, Tareq grappled with his second urge, which was to use and abuse her utterly helpless body. The dichotomy of those two instincts were not lost on him, but too much self-analysis during a scene didn't help anyone, so he put it aside. Now that he saw her like this, he was nearly overcome with ideas for using and playing with her. Luckily, he'd had time while Julen was tying and forming the harnesses to plan and prepare.

Tareq wouldn't leave Nomi, not when she was this helpless, but he'd asked a Dom in the small audience to go get

him a few things from the Den, and just as Tareq was getting antsy to touch Nomi the other man returned.

“Here you go, Zine.”

“Thanks.” He peeked into the bag. The toys he’d requested had been taken out of their packages and smelled vaguely of the brand of toy wash the club kept in stock. “Washed too?”

“I’m helpful like that.” The other Dom clapped him on the shoulder.

Tareq thanked him again, then pulled out the blindfold. Setting the bag on the stage, he walked over to Nomi, bending to meet her gaze. Her hair was loose and falling over her face so he tucked it back behind her ear. It wasn’t until he touched her that she opened her eyes though surely she’d heard him walk over.

“How are you doing?” He kept his voice low, not wanting to startle her out of the moment she was having.

“Good, Master Zine.”

He considered that. She’d been calling him ‘Sir’ most of the time. Switching it up could be a sign that she was upset, the equivalent of someone addressing you by first and last name. Which was one step below your parent using all three—or four—names. But he didn’t think that was happening here.

For submissives, switching to a top’s formal title—assuming they didn’t always use it—could be a sign of how deep into their submission they were.

Tareq cupped her cheek. Nomi rested the weight of her head in his hand. Julen had a forehead rest ready to go for her if needed, but Tareq didn’t think that’s what this was about.

“Anything pinching?”

“No, Master Zine.”

“Do you still have feeling in your fingers and toes?”

“Yes, Master Zine.”

“Show me.”

She untucked her fingers and wiggled them in a little wave, then curled her toes.

Tareq stroked her cheek with his thumb. “If you want to just enjoy this, tell me.”

She frowned, turning her head to look up at him. “If you’re bored—”

“No.” He cut her off, not wanting her to wander down that mental path. “I’m worried you’re uncomfortable, but that might be my relative lack of masochism speaking.”

She smiled. “And all this rope and helplessness isn’t making your sadism happy?”

He bent to whisper in her ear. “It’s making me want to do things to you.”

She caught her breath, then released it on a long slow exhale.

“But I know rope and suspension are important to you, so I don’t want to interfere with that.”

Her eyes were half closed, and this time he didn’t know if it was a sign of submission, or if she was just tired of looking up at him.

“I want you to touch me. Please, Sir.”

Tareq’s stomach muscles tightened with need. His arms and shoulders went tense in anticipation. That dark instinct

that drove him to give her pain in order to bring her pleasure wanted to get a crop, a tawse, a whip.

Tareq stroked her hair one more time, then gently released her head. Her hair fell back over her face.

He could fix that.

Tareq tugged the blindfold from where he'd tucked it in his waistband. It was a sleep-mask style, nothing fancy. Slipping it over her head, he carefully positioned it to cover her eyes, then pushed her hair back, adjusting the mask as he did so, the elastic strap helping to hold it in place so it didn't fall back over her face.

“Wouldn't want you to know what's happening.”

“Of course not, Sir.” Though her tone was still a bit dreamy, there were hints of her usual wit and sass in her voice. He winced, worried he was fucking this up by not letting her just to dangle there and enjoy the bondage.

But keeping his hands off her was out of the question. Plus, as far as he was concerned, she was here as a favor to Julen and Ilias and they could fuck off if they thought he'd just sit back and let his sub be part of the scenery.

Tareq went back to the bag, aware that his time was limited as there was a definite expiration to her time in the ropes.

He withdrew the plug. It was sizable. Long enough to have a gentle taper, this was an anal-training style plug, with a thick neck, rather than one of the long-wear style skinny-neck plugs.

He carefully lubed it, trying to keep everything quiet so as not to tip his hand. He was fairly certain that Nomi would be listening to his every step, now that he'd made it clear he was going to play with her.

The next moment proved that hunch right. This time when he walked over, Nomi's head came up, and she turned her blind face towards him.

Tareq circled to stand behind her hips, and eyed her ass. The combination of the position of her legs and the ropes meant that her butt cheeks were actually squeezed together. Her ass looked incredibly spankable.

Gripping one buttock in the hand that wasn't holding the lubed-up plug, he pulled on her ass, spreading the cheeks. It wasn't enough for him to see her anus, and she started to turn in the air.

Tareq released her, and realizing he needed to brace her so she wouldn't spin, he instead slipped between her legs, ducking under her upper knee. The width of his body forced her thighs further apart, and he had a lovely view of her pink pussy.

Gripping her ass again, he once more pulled her cheeks apart. This time he pressed the plug between them. He might not have a perfect view of her rear entrance, but he was a Dom. He knew how to find a sub's asshole.

He angled the plug, sliding it until he felt the faint give that meant the tip was positioned on her anus. Nomi's low moan of pleasure was another good indicator he was in the right spot.

Tareq put the heel of his hand on the base of the plug and pushed.

"Master Zine." It was high and breathy.

"If it's hurting you, tell me." He'd slathered the thing in lube, and she was probably still a little lubed up from earlier, but some of the lube might have ended up on the inner curves of her butt cheeks rather than anus. "Does it feel dry?"

“No, Master Zine. It feels thick.”

He grunted in approval and applied more pressure. He pulled it back and started again, this time pushing it deeper. He kept doing that, a slow-motion fucking of her ass while she made delicious sounds, until the plug was halfway in.

He paused, indulging for a moment by looking her over, examining all this naked, bound flesh. Then he put the heel of his hand on the base of the plug. She was helpless and she'd take this plug in her pretty ass because he wanted her to.

She was letting out continuous sexy little whimpers by the time he pushed it all the way in. He wiggled the base to get it fitted in between her ass cheeks.

“I like the look of your ass when it's plugged.” Tareq gripped her cheeks, digging his fingers in. “I like the look of your ass, full stop.”

“Thank y—”

Her words were cut off with a yelp when he reached down and bit her.

Tareq bit her hard, wanting to feel the soft flesh of her spankable, biteable butt between his teeth.

When he straightened, there were teeth marks in her skin. He rubbed his thumb over them. “Did that hurt?”

“Yes, Master Zine.”

“Good.”

He bent and bit her other ass cheek, wringing a shriek out of her. Master Morton eyed him, but he had his own drama going on, and Ilias...

Well, Ilias was the reason that very few people were watching him and Nomi until her scream drew their attention.

“You have two sets of teeth marks.” He cupped her butt and traced the arches of marks with his thumb. “Here and here.”

“Thank you, Master Zine.”

“You’re welcome.”

He could stay here between her legs and enjoy himself. Play with her ass—bite, spank (as long as he held her so she didn’t sway), pull out and reinsert the plug.

But if he did that he’d never get to the rest of his plan. It would be time to take her down before he was finished.

Tareq ducked out and went back to the toy bag.

The wearable g-spot and clit vibrator resembled a purple V, with one of the arms thick, round, and slightly curved, while the other was flat and wide. The thick internal piece was ribbed to help stimulate her g-spot, while the flat tongue designed to fit between the labia and cover the clit was smooth and soft. Tareq quickly lubed it up, though he doubted that was necessary.

This time he knelt, looking up at her pussy. Her sex was glossy, she was so wet. He separated her inner labia, examining her entrance, then slid his fingers down, scissoring them along the sides of her clit.

Nomi’s body jerked, and she started to spin in the air. Tariq pinched one pussy lip, using that to stop her spin. She cried out again at the pain.

“I’d suggest you hold still,” he scolded. “But don’t forget your safe word, or to tell me if anything starts to pinch or go

numb.”

“Yes, Master Zine,” she said in a thin voice.

Tareq fitted the fat tip of the g-spot vibrator to her vagina and slid it in.

Nomi’s moan held notes of relief.

“Pussy feeling empty?”

“Very, Sir.”

Tareq pushed the external section of the vibrator into place, making sure it covered her clit, and then tugged on her pussy lips so they were on either side of the wide tongue. It looked deliciously obscene.

“What...what is that, Sir?”

“You’ll see.”

He left her only long enough to grab a small length of rope. He wasn’t an expert by any means, but he knew his way around. He doubled the short length of rope, slid the loop through the ring just above her pelvis, fed the ends through the loop, and then passed both pieces of rope between her legs. The rope settled against the flat part of the vibrator and base of the plug. He fed the rope ends through the ring in the back. Holding them with one hand he checked her pussy, adjusting her flesh so nothing was pinched between the rope and the vibrator. Once he’d checked her ass, he tightened the rope, forcing both the vibrator and plug deeper into her, as well as adding a constricting pressure to her sex and ass.

He quickly tied it off, then went around to her head. He pulled the blindfold off and studied her face. Her cheeks were pink, her lips parted.

“How are you doing?”

“I’m...It feels good but it’s not enough.”

“What isn’t enough?”

“Everything. Or maybe it’s too much.” She licked her lips, shaking her head gently. “The rope, being in the air, you touching me.”

He slid two fingers into her mouth, just because he could, because he wanted her to feel his control and ownership in every orifice.

She sucked his fingers, and he used his free hand to fondle her tits, feeling the tacky residue from where he’d come on her. Fucking this woman’s mouth was something he could become addicted to, and when she’d looked up at him, his dick in her mouth...

He’d been sporting a semi since just after they moved the tables out of the way. Only his worry that she was uncomfortable kept him from getting a full erection. Now his cock hardened fully, and for a moment he was tempted to have Julen help him adjust the ropes until her mouth was at the right height for him to fuck.

No, he’d fucked her face twice, and no matter how much he enjoyed it she deserved more creativity than that.

Pulling his fingers from her mouth, he went back to the toy bag for the last time. With the blindfold off she could see what he held. Her gaze darted from the thin chains spilling between his fingers on one hand to the small oval of plastic he held in the other. She frowned, then her eyes went wide.

“Is that...a remote?”

Tareq mock-frowned. “I don’t know. I’ll press the buttons and see what happens.”

He turned on the vibrator, both the clit and g-spot vibrators on their lowest intensity. Nomi jerked again, gasping.

This time he grabbed a handful of her hair to stop the swaying spin her sudden movement had caused.

“Hold still,” he warned, knowing full well that was an almost impossible command.

“Sir, may I come?”

Already? Fuck, that was hot.

In response, he turned the clit vibrator to its highest setting. Nomi shrieked, teeth gritted, her body tight and tense.

“Please, please, please turn it down, Sir.”

“Did you come?”

She shook her head, as much as his grip on her hair would allow. “No, it’s too much.”

He bent so she could see his face. “I know. That’s why I did it.”

“You stopped my orgasm with the vibrator.” Her expression was trembling between outrage and a wince since he still hadn’t lowered the intensity.

He winked at her. “Secret Dom trick.”

Tareq turned the clit vibrator off, leaving the g-spot vibrator on its lowest setting. She relaxed, the ropes creaking softly.

Tareq knelt, and opened his other hand, showing her the nipple toys.

Instead of clamps, he’d asked for, and received, four-point nipple presses. Four small screws, tipped in a tiny pad of

silicone, were mounted in a flat, flower-like metal piece about the diameter of a golf ball.

The nipple went in the open space in the middle, the lacy looking frame covering the areola. Each screw could be tightened individually, compressing the nipple on four sides rather than two. This set had a thin chain connecting them, which would add a bit of weight.

“You’ve worn this kind before?”

“Yes, but it was a while ago, Master Zine.”

He set down the remote and reached up, squeezing first one breast then the other.

“Because of the breast bondage, your tits are sensitive, especially your nipples.”

“Yes, Master Zine.”

“That means when I pinch them with these clamps, it’s going to hurt.

Her lashes lowered for a moment, her breathing heavy. “Please.”

“Please no, or please yes?”

“Please yes, Master Zine.”

“That’s my good girl.”

Tareq flicked the clit vibrator on, raising it to level two out of ten, then shifted so his mouth could reach her tits.

He kissed the heavy, dangling globes, then ran his tongue along the tight flesh. He could taste the salt of her skin and his own come. When he took her nipple in his mouth, he sucked long and hard, making it as sensitive as possible, before he bit.

Holding her nipple between his teeth, he flicked with his tongue even as he reached up to grab a hold of her hair to anchor her.

Still biting her nipple, he lowered his head, pulling even as he pinched.

Her cries of pleasure-laced-pain made his cock twitch.

He treated the other breast to the same abuse—licking, sucking, biting, pulling.

Her nipples were an angry pink when he was done, her breasts glossy both from the bondage and from his saliva.

Tareq picked up the nipple presses, made sure the screws were out enough to leave a good opening, and positioned the first one.

He took a moment to enjoy the sight of her nipple in the center of the metal, the sweet little tip helpless. If she wasn't in ropes, he could have taken his time, but maybe that was why this was good. It forced him to move fast, to layer sensation on sensation.

He tightened the screws on the sides, just enough that they touched her nipple. Still holding it in place with his fingers, he screwed in the top and bottom, again until they touched her.

Nomi whimpered when he returned to the first set, adding a half-turn of pressure.

Carefully, he released the nipple press. The weight of it pulled on her nipple, drawing it both down and slightly to the side given her halfway-on-her-front position.

He leaned in and kissed her captured nipple. A reward for accepting the pain.

“How does that feel?”

“It hurts. It feels good.”

Tareq clicked the clit vibe up to three, and the g-spot vibe to five.

This time her moan was pure pleasure.

He applied the second nipple press, but this time he added a full turn to each of the four screws at the end. She cried out, eyes squeezed shut in reaction to the pain.

“Master, please.”

His cock twitched at hearing her call him “Master.” Just “Master,” not “Master Zine.”

Everyone had different preferences, but for him “Master” meant ownership. If she called him master it was because he was *her* master.

That wasn’t what she was doing right now, he told himself. She was suffering from so much sensation that she probably wasn’t aware of what she was saying.

Maybe it was as simple as brevity. “Master” was a whole word and syllable shorter than “Master Zine.”

But he would have this woman. He would possess her as his submissive. She’d wear his collar and call him master. That idea had been a vague desire in the back of his mind, but this was the moment it solidified into a need, a goal.

He’d work on all that later. For now, he added half a turn to the four screws on her first nipple.

Another piteous cry of sweet pain.

“You’re taking this so well.”

As he praised her, Tareq shifted so he was closer to her face. He stayed on his knees so she wouldn’t have to twist to

see him. She blinked and there were tears on her lashes. He brushed them with his thumbs.

“Look at me,” he commanded. “You’re going to look at me and listen as I tell you how sexy you are. What a good, obedient submissive you are.”

For a moment her gaze slid away. Of course it did. For some reason most subs were more uncomfortable with genuine compliments than they were with having things shoved up their butts. Nomi was apparently no exception.

“If you knew all the things I wanted to do to this body, you would run screaming into the night.”

“No, I don’t think I would, Master Zine.”

“That’s because you like the way I hurt you, don’t you?”

Her eyes had that glossy look that made him think she was close to orgasm. Her jerky nod confirmed it.

“I want to hear it,” he told her.

“I like the way you hurt me. I like it when you use me and torture me, and fuck me.”

Tareq gripped the back of her neck, holding her tight as her words ripped through him.

“I like the way you fuck my face, and that you look at me when you come, like looking at me gets you off.”

“Oh, it does,” he assured her, even as he hated whatever dumb fuck had made her think that her partner closing his eyes during sex was a sign that there was something wrong with her body.

“I’m a visual guy,” he said. “I like looking at you, all of you, when I play with you.” He fought the urge to tug the

chain between the nipple presses. It would be too much, and wasn't fair to her, because at this point he knew she didn't need any more sensation.

“You like the way I pleasure you too, don't you?”

“Yes, I haven't come so hard in...in a long time,” she admitted.

“You want me to make you come again, don't you?”

“Yes, Sir.”

He bit down on the urge to say something about how he'd make her come next weekend.

A good Dom didn't let a sub commit to anything—be it changing a hard limit or agreeing to future plans—mid-scene.

Right now she probably wouldn't say no to him, even if she didn't want to scene with him again once they were done with their game items. She was in intense bondage, riding the knife edge of pain and pleasure, and probably only a few minutes away from orgasm. Trying to get her to commit to something now would be inappropriate and manipulative.

But damn if he didn't want to.

“How does your pussy feel?”

“Full.”

“And your ass?”

“Fuller.”

“You're going to come for me,” he said, holding her gaze. “The vibe I put in your pussy and on your clit is going to make you come. As you come, you're going to scream and everyone is going to look at you.”

Her expression trembled, but he didn't stop.

“They’re going to look over and see an obedient, helpless submissive with her pussy and ass full, her nipples clamped, her whole body helpless. They’ll watch as you come without me touching you anywhere but here.” He squeezed her neck again.

“Then I’m going to get you out of these ropes so I can rub you down. I’ll check your pussy and ass and nipples. Check and see how they handled the pleasure and the pain.”

“As...as aftercare?” The tension in her face told him that she was scared of the answer.

“You done for the night?”

“I...I want to say no, but I might be.” She lowered her gaze. “But if you want to finish, if you want to be done with... the game.”

“Oh no, we’re not done.” He leaned in, whispered in her ear. “You’re still mine.”

He sat back in time to see her expression, an open-mouthed shock of pleasure. He reached for her breasts, squeezing them in turn without touching her nipples or the toys. Still, that must have been enough to cause fresh pain, which in turn pushed her over the edge into orgasm.

Her expression went slack and then she squeezed her eyes closed, her body shaking with pleasure. “Oh my god. Sir, Master, please pleasepleaseplease.”

Tareq snatched up the remote, amping up the g-spot vibrator, but turning down the clit vibrator to prolong the orgasm. Her slow inhale was followed by a high, thin scream of pleasure.

Fifteen minutes later, she was out of the ropes, and ten minutes after that he led a naked Nomi, ass still plugged,

nipples still held in the metal cages, back to their room.

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CHAPTER 15



Nomi felt weepy, and couldn't pinpoint why. Not that she didn't have reasons. There were plenty of reasons.

Rope bondage always made her feel soft and vulnerable, and tonight had been even more intense than normal, so it made sense that she had cathartic tears.

She'd just had one of the top ten most intense orgasms of her life. Another good reason she might cry.

Tareq had once more used the word "mine" and she was reading way too much into that. That alone had her emotions running high with a fucked-up combination of hope and self-disgust. He'd meant mine for the scene. Mine for the night, the moment. Nothing more. If that was the reason, they were tears of self-directed frustration.

On the physical side, he'd decided not to take out the plug or take off the nipple clamps, though he'd loosened them. Still, both were enough to keep her in a constant state of awareness and throbbing ache, and these might be tears of sexual frustration.

Any one of those emotional or physical elements was probably enough to justify some cathartic tears. Altogether, it was no wonder that as Tareq closed the door she stood there with tears sliding down her face.

He turned, examining her from head to toe. She winced, realizing she hadn't been thinking about how she was standing, so she was probably hunched and frumpy looking, especially since she was naked. If she didn't stand the right way, her body went from ancient goddess curves to lumpy dough. With the next breath her self-confidence reared up and smacked that thought down. Her body was good and beautiful no matter how she stood. She raised her chin, refusing to apologize for existing.

Tareq's gaze finished assessing her, and he reached for her breasts.

They were tender, and Nomi instinctively flinched back. He paused, silently eyed her, then gripped her shoulders.

He forced her to square up, then pushed on her shoulders until they were down and back, her chest up.

He watched her as he slowly reached for her breasts. He was giving her time to react. Daring her to deny him access.

She held his gaze, both defiant and submissive.

He cupped her tits, thumbs pressing up on the edge of the nipple clamps. The sweet pain was sharp, and she bit her lip even as her pussy throbbed.

"Just a little more," he encouraged her before using his thumbs to rotate the metal flowers, which in turn twisted her nipples.

Nomi bit her lip harder.

"No, open your mouth. Relax your hands, I don't want you making a fist. Now relax your shoulders."

Body part by body part he made her release the physical tension she was using as a counterbalance to the pain. He

twisted the clamps further. With her mouth open, she couldn't muffle the moan.

“You're so fucking submissive, and yet so fucking smart and defiant.”

Nomi hadn't expected the compliment, and blinked. Before she could reply, he released her breasts, and the clamps falling back to their starting position had her panting in pain.

“Grab your own ass and hold on.”

Nomi obeyed, but used this as an excuse to feel for the bite marks. She found them with her fingers, wincing when she touched the tender flesh. That small sensation was quickly subsumed when he unscrewed the nipple clamps. Though they were loose enough she could have safely continued to wear them, there was still a painful tingle when he removed the restriction.

He took care of her, placing his palms over her nipples and massaging them before bending to examine each one carefully.

“I want you to appreciate the self-restraint I'm using,” he said.

“What are you stopping yourself from doing?” She knew the answer, she just wanted to hear it.

“The fact that I'm not sucking these pretty things like lollipops qualifies me for sainthood.” He touched each nipple carefully with his thumb.

“Thank you, Sir,” she said dryly.

Tareq grinned and straightened. “Bend over the bed.”

Nomi moved carefully—the plug's neck was too thick for her to move around without worrying it would slip out. He'd kept his hand on the base during part of the walk to keep it in.

The fact that he would do that rather than taking it out was so weirdly hot it made her like him more. Not that she needed to like him more. Liking him less was what she needed.

Nomi dropped her elbows onto the bed. As she bent, she felt the plug start to slide out. Before she could warn him, Tareq was there. He grabbed the plug and casually fucked her ass with it for a few minutes. It felt deliciously good, as did the cool duvet cover against her aching nipples.

Finally, he pulled the plug out, and the relief of having it out was tempered by the emptiness.

“On the bed on your side, facing the middle.”

Nomi looked back, assessing where this was going.

During the rope scene he'd asked if she was done. It was late, and they'd had two complete scenes tonight, plus the initial punishment. It was reasonable of her to say she was done.

Reasonable, but not the full truth. Because she craved more from him. Both now and in the future. That was the problem. She wanted to end the scene for tonight because that would mean they'd scene again tomorrow when they woke up, or next weekend. Stopping play now guaranteed she'd get to submit to him again, because they still had one mystery “Q” item.

Once they finished their portion of the checklist, their time together would be over. She wanted so much more time with him.

Nomi carefully slid onto the bed. She was lying on her left side in order to face the center. In the ropes she'd been on her right, and she was glad she didn't have to lie on the tender skin that bore the deepest impressions of the coils.

Tareq circled around and then to her surprise he stretched out on the bed facing her.

He'd kicked off his shoes and removed his belt. He looked comfortable and a little ruffled.

Then he smiled, and Nomi's heart melted.

And this was why no matter what she wanted, she needed to end her time with Tareq as fast as possible. He was dangerous on multiple fronts, but the most alarming was how comfortable she felt with him.

This moment here?—lying on the bed face to face, intimate and casual—it was pure boyfriend material.

She already had feelings for Tareq, and while she was fairly sure they'd fade once she got away from him, she needed to actually put that distance between them sooner rather than later.

No matter how much she craved his dominance.

Tareq tucked a lock of her hair back, his fingers lingering on her cheek. "Do you feel up to doing our last checklist item?"

Nomi's heart cracked.

TAREQ EXPECTED HER TO SAY NO, OR ASK WHAT IT WAS. HE was fairly certain they weren't actually going to do it tonight, because she had to be exhausted, but he wanted to tease her.

Instead, an odd expression crossed her face and she lowered her gaze. "Yes, Sir."

He frowned, gripped her chin. "Look at me."

She obediently met his gaze.

“You have to be tired.”

Now she frowned. “A bit... Was I supposed to safe word out of the scene when you said that?”

“What? No. I never push a sub to safe word. That’s forcing them to control the scene, which isn’t their job.”

The hint of a smile touched her eyes. “Perceptive.”

“Control issues,” he corrected.

She laughed, a really whole-body laugh that made her tits bounce and it took everything in him not to bury his face between them. But the sound of her laugh relaxed something inside him that had turned tense.

“Are you done for the night?” he asked. “I’d like to finish with our Q item.”

Her expression closed down, her lashes lowering once more.

Again he frowned, cupping her face. He could push, figure out what was going on in that big brain.

Or he could eat that sweet pussy until she was limp with pleasure and then tuck her into bed—naked of course—and fall asleep with his hands full of Nomi’s luscious tits.

“On your knees,” he ordered.

NOMI SWALLOWED THE PAIN AND DISAPPOINTMENT. ONLY A minute ago she’d resolved to get this over with as fast as possible. The fact that Tareq felt the same, that he wanted to

rush and be done all in one night, made her throat tight with tears.

She was also mad at him, which wasn't fair to him. If anything, she should be grateful.

She didn't feel grateful as she pushed up onto her knees, the soft duvet warm from her body.

Tareq scooted over until he was right up against her, then rolled onto his back.

She raised her brows, eyeing his body. Was their last item sex? Was there a "Q" synonym for sex she didn't know?

Her heartbreak and anger didn't exactly disappear, but the prospect of dick made her feel quite a bit better about the situation.

"Like what you see?" he asked.

She realized she'd been staring for too long and jerked her attention to his face. "Too many clothes, Sir."

In response he sat up, his shoulder brushing her, and stripped off his shirt. He did it in that hot way guys did by grabbing the back of the collar and pulling it off.

His bare chest was delicious. No flat six pack abs or cut pecs—that would have been intimidating. Instead, he was nicely muscled with a thick waist. A physique reminiscent of a heavyweight boxer.

"Better?" He lay back, adjusting the pillows and then stacking his hands under his head.

"Definitely."

He grinned. "Ready to hear about our last item?"

She ignored the word "last." "Yes, Sir."

“Queening.”

He was still grinning, his eyes sparkling in a way that made him ridiculously attractive.

Sadly, she had no idea what queening was.

“Um... Queening like ‘queen’ as in monarch, but make it a verb?”

“Yep.”

“I don’t even remember that from the list.”

“Probably why you put a question mark to the left of the word, but officially you marked it as ‘willing to try’.”

“Okay, now that’s ringing a bell. There were a few things I meant to look up later, then go back and adjust my list once I did my research.”

“Looks like you forgot this one. Good for me.”

“Is it femdom?” she asked. “I’m not really much of a switch.” She’d of course done her due diligence and tried topping a gentleman or two in her exploration of BDSM, but while it had most definitely been fun, she hadn’t enjoyed it the way she enjoyed submitting. More importantly, topping hadn’t fulfilled the emotional need that bottoming did.

“Not necessarily. Though I bet Dommies do this a lot. You’re going to do it because I tell you to.”

He pinched one nipple, tugging until she arched her back and whimpered. Apparently satisfied with the reminder that her body was his to play with, he kept speaking.

“Queening is, at least as far as this club is concerned, one particular sex position. A sort of throne if you will.”

He was grinning up at her in a way that said this was a hint, but for the life of her she didn't know what he was referring to. Plus, she was distracted by the word sex. They were going to have sex, thank God.

As fun as it was to tease and banter with him, the curiosity was going to kill her. "Are you going to tell me what it is, Sir?"

In response he grabbed her right knee, tugging. He didn't have the angle or grip to actually pull her leg, but she followed the urging of his hand and swung her leg over his body to straddle his bare waist. Nomi knelt astride him, kneeling up so that her wet pussy wasn't grinding against his bare stomach. Not that he hadn't touched and tasted and played with every inch of her.

Tareq gripped her thighs, thumbs rubbing in an arch, and his eyes turned hot, desire stamped on his features. The fact that he wanted her, really wanted her, made her blood hot.

"You're going to sit on my face while I eat your pussy."

NOMI'S EXPRESSION WENT SLACK WITH SHOCK. THEN SHE blinked. "No."

"No?"

He stared up at her, his Dom sense tingling. That didn't sound like a hard limit "no." This was something else.

"Why, no?" he asked when she didn't say anything more.

"I'll suffocate you."

Tareq arched one eyebrow.

Nomi waved her hands in the air. “I can’t sit on your face, you’ll die.”

“I’m pretty sure I won’t die.”

“I’ll break your nose or something, but it won’t matter because you’ll be dead because you’ll have suffocated.”

Her alarm seemed genuine so he stifled the laugh that tickled his throat.

“Do you want your tombstone to read ‘smothered to death during sex?’” she demanded.

“It would say ‘died doing what he loved’.”

She laughed, but there was an edge to it. “Tareq, I’m serious, we can’t do oral this way.”

“Why not?”

She moved her hands through the air, emphasizing each word even as she enunciated. “You. Will. Suffocate.”

“I’ll come up for air when I need to.”

“You won’t be able to, because I’ll be sitting on you!”

“I assure you, I’ll manage.”

“No, because I have a belly.” Nomi gripped the soft roundness of her lower abdomen. “So if you’re thinking you can just slide me down out of the way it won’t work because then instead of my pussy on your face you have my fat stomach.”

Tareq stared at her. “You done?”

“You aren’t listening!”

“I am. You’re just wrong.”

“I’m not.”

“How many men or women have you killed by sitting on their face?”

She bared her teeth. “None, but—”

“Is queening a hard limit? I’ll let you change your answer to a hard no if that’s how you feel.”

She opened her mouth, and he held up a hand.

“But if you change it simply because you’re worried I don’t know what I’m doing, and you’re trying to save me...”

He half sat up and reached around to slap her ass before lying back.

“I’ll paddle that ass until you can’t sit for a week and you’ll be on orgasm restriction until you learn to trust me.”

She looked shocked, then confused, then shook her head. “Tareq, I just...I don’t have the leg strength to hold myself up, especially if I’m enjoying it, which I’m sure I will, so I would end up putting my weight—”

“I didn’t say hover that pussy an inch above my lips.” He reached up and spanked her breasts, two swats to each tit. They bounced prettily. “I said, sit on my face.”

Nomi swallowed. He watched her throat work. “If you...I don’t want to hurt you.”

“Really? Because I quite enjoy hurting you.” He grinned, and finally she laughed, the sound a little exasperated.

“I noticed.” She cupped her breasts, palms covering her nipples.

Tareq grabbed her wrists, tugging her hands away in a gentle reprimand.

“I’m an adult,” he said. “I’ll come up for air when I need it.”

He sat up, arms wrapping around her as she leaned back. His mouth was in the perfect position to kiss her nipples so he did, pleased at the way she tensed and moaned.

Then he cupped her face, waiting until her gaze met his. “When I say sit on my face, I mean sit, because this pussy is mine.”

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CHAPTER 16



Nomi watched in alarm-laced anticipation as Tareq adjusted the pillows. She was still straddling him, but now she was down by his knees.

She should have made this a hard limit, but he was right, she would have done it to protect him, not because she didn't want it.

He'd tongued her pussy earlier when he had her on the desk, but that had been precise and controlled.

The idea of grinding down on him, of having his mouth buried in her pussy, was incredibly hot. The fact that he was not only willing, but wanted to do it, was so fucking hot.

And a minute ago he'd threatened to punish her, and the way he'd said it, combined with the words, made her hopeful that maybe they could still scene after this.

Don't read into someone else's words. Don't assume meaning.

Something she'd said to patients a thousand times during her practicum.

She looked at this man who fit her, understood her, and anxiety nipped at the corners of her mind and heart.

Tareq positioned two pillows long ways under himself. One supported him from waist to head, the other was under just his shoulders and head, raising his face up off the bed so he was laying down with his head raised.

He test wiggled, then looked at her and cocked a finger.

Gingerly, Nomi knee-walked up his body. He kept his arms tucked in at his sides until she was even with his shoulders, then his hands came up from behind to cup her ass.

He kept urging her up until she couldn't see him. When she looked down, all Nomi saw was her own tits and stomach.

“What about a safe word?” she asked. “I mean gesture. Like you tap my leg and I'll know to get off?”

“How about, I'm a grown-ass adult who can take care of myself. Now sit on my face and stop worrying.”

A near-hysterical giggle bubbled up.

Nomi let him urge her further up, until the backs of her thighs were against the tops of his shoulders.

“Down,” he commanded, and she felt the puff of the words on her pussy.

Nomi gingerly wiggled her knees apart, until she felt the brush of what she thought was his nose. Then his tongue licked the seam of her sex, and Nomi's whole body quivered in response.

Tareq wrapped his arms over her thighs from the back, and pulled, forcing her body down. Nomi's pussy ground against his face, her ass half resting against his chest.

Tareq used his tongue to part her pussy lips, then licked her clit. She could feel the hardness of his chin near her

entrance. The goofy-looking chin dildo she'd seen once on a toy site seemed genius in this moment.

His nose was buried in the plump mound of flesh at the top of her pussy as his tongue and upper teeth teased her clit. When he drew in a long breath, she felt the passage of air as he inhaled through his nose.

Nomi was focused on the arrangement of their bodies, unable to let go of her worry she'd hurt him.

Then he used his tongue to pinch her clit against the edge of his teeth and she stopped worrying about the logistics.

Nomi yelped, trying to rise up, but his arms wrapped around her legs held her down. He licked her in long, flicking strokes that were almost punishing. Nomi cried out, her hands, restless, coming down on either side of her body, one braced on his chest, the other gripping his hair.

Tareq worked her clit, flicking, then sucking, then licking. Just as she was sure she'd come he changed tactics, forcing her to rock forward until he could fuck her with his tongue, his nose against her clit.

He thrust his tongue in, then curled it, and it was a shocking, unexpected sensation. He turned his head ever so slightly side to side, his nose rubbing her clit. Nomi gasped, but just as she was about to come, he shifted her back.

His long inhale was noisy, and she realized that he probably actually hadn't been able to breath while tongue fucking her.

His lips closed around her clit, a kiss, soft and sweet, before he forced her to grind down on him, creating a seal that allowed him to suck her clit, actually drawing it away from her body and into his mouth.

He flicked with his tongue, and the first orgasm ripped through her.

Nomi gritted her teeth, body hunched forward as pleasure made her muscles cramp. This was one of those orgasms that was so intense, pleasure wasn't the correct word, but she didn't have another term for it.

He kissed her clit as she came, the gentle, rhythmic pressure not enough to irritate the sensitive nerve endings, but enough to keep her focused, to remind her that just because she came didn't mean they'd stop.

When she took her first steady, normal breath, he too inhaled, then used his hands on her ass to rock her pelvis until he could fuck her pussy with his tongue. This close to orgasm, the penetration, shallow though it may have been, rocketed her through another wave of pleasure.

“Tareq, oh god that's...I can't—”

His mouth slid between her wet labia and then he was tonguing her clit. It was soft, gentle, and if she hadn't already been primed, it would have taken her a long time to come from this slight motion and gentle pressure.

She was screaming through an orgasm in a matter of minutes. As she came, she ground down on his face, so caught up in the moment that she didn't care if he could breathe, cared only about the feel of him buried between her thighs.

She caught sight of the top of his head, his hair a wild mess, her fingers still clenching a handful, when he tugged on her legs, shifting her back enough that he could nip and lick her mound. She wished she could see his face, wished she had the visual stimulation of seeing his tongue on her, his white

teeth sinking into her pink flesh as he bit her mound as he was doing now.

The mirror in the corner caught her eye. Maybe next time.

He jerked her forward so hard she almost toppled. She caught herself against the headboard, her body bent at the hips.

Tareq mumbled something, and then his hand lifted off her leg, one finger finding her pussy entrance. He fucked her with a finger and Nomi couldn't help but rock back on it, her pussy sliding and grinding on his face as she did.

He pulled his finger out, and she cried out at the loss. But then he was urging her to sit up, back into her previous position, his tongue and teeth at her clit.

He started slow, which was what she needed. Anything more would have been too much.

But he didn't stop.

She came, a long, slow pulse of pleasure, that made her head fall back.

He licked her through the orgasm and kept going.

She heard his heavy inhales, his nose buried against her mound, but apparently able to still get air. When she realized he wasn't going to stop, Nomi shifted back, but he just gripped her hips tighter.

"Sir," she gasped.

His response was to flick her clit with his tongue, before settling into long, soft strokes of his tongue interspersed with the occasional circular motion.

She came again, before she could gather the air and focus enough to beg him to stop.

This time she didn't make a sound as she came, hips jerking in desperate little motions.

Again, he didn't stop, though he slowed, his tongue barely moving.

"Sir, I don't know if I can come again," she whispered, then repeated herself louder when she realized he probably couldn't hear her.

His response was to grab the wrist of the hand planted on his chest. He pinned her wrist to her thigh so he could control both her limbs at once. When he slapped her other thigh, she knew what he wanted. Nomi reluctantly released his hair, and brought her hand to her thigh. He gripped her wrist.

With her limbs now bound by his hold, she could only wiggle and moan as he continued to play with her aching, needy clit.

Nomi vaguely wondered, as she ground her pussy against his face, what his goal was. Did he want to see her come a certain number of times? Did he want to keep playing with her until she couldn't come anymore and every touch became an intimate pain?

She didn't have answers, but she did come again, arms straining against his hold, her body hunched, teeth gritted.

This time he didn't slow down or gentle his touch. He kept tonguing her clit, circles and flicks and then long hard licks. It was as if he'd ripped her open and found the center of her pleasure.

Nomi wasn't sure if she came again, or it was another level to the same orgasm, but her legs clamped around his ears, and this time she screamed, a high thin note of pleasure that would have neighbors calling the cops if they'd been anywhere else.

Nomi's leg and stomach muscles were trembling, she was breathing as hard as he was, and when he urged her off him, then tumbled her back on the bed it was relief tinged with masochistic disappointment.

His mouth glistened, and his eyes were hot with his own desire.

When he stripped off his pants, Tareq's cock was rock hard.

She bent her knees and spread her legs, ready, so fucking ready, to feel him inside her.

Instead, he straddled her waist. "There's something else I need to fuck."

Grabbing her wrists, he brought her hands to her own breasts. With his hands on hers, he squeezed her tits together. He lifted one hand, but paused, waiting. She kept squeezing her breasts together.

He made a satisfied noise then reached down and back between her legs. He casually fucked her pussy with two fingers. She arched up, needy and aching to be filled, but he pulled his hand free, spread her body's lubricant over his cock, drawing some of his own wetness from the tip of his dick.

Then he positioned the tip of his lubed dick at the underside of her breasts.

"I've been wanting to fuck these breasts since I saw you in that corset." He thrust between them, his dick hot and hard. "Hold your tits tight while I fuck them."

"Yes, Sir."

"Open that mouth," he almost snarled.

Knowing that, seeing that he was on the ragged edge of his control made her feel powerful. She opened her mouth, sticking her tongue out, and when he thrust forward, she licked his slit.

“Fuck. I’m too close.” He was snarling, lips pulled back from his teeth. His gaze was fixed on her tits. He had one hand on the headboard, but the other hand he brought to her breasts, pinching and pulling her nipples.

Nomi lapped his dick, whimpering as he abused her nipples to get himself off. Her pussy was still throbbing in pleasure, her legs splayed wide so that every air current was a jolt of sensation. This was sexy and raw and she loved it.

“I’m going to come.” His gaze met hers. “Keep that mouth open.” He snarled the command, the tone almost angry though she knew he wasn’t mad at her.

This time when he thrust forward, Nomi lifted her head, chin on her chest, and took the tip of his dick in her mouth. His hand caught the back of her head, holding her in place as he came. She swallowed over and over, the uncomfortable angle of her neck not nearly as important as feeling and tasting his orgasm.

With a groan, Tareq pulled out of her mouth and then flopped down onto the bed beside her.

They lay side by side on their backs, both panting.

Nomi knew she should be worried. Knew she needed to mentally and emotionally prepare, but she just...didn’t give a fuck. She was pleasantly numb thanks to overwhelming orgasms.

Tareq rolled off the bed, and when he returned, he made her get off too. She groaned in protest, and when he put a

warm, damp washcloth between her legs she obediently spread them so he could clean her. She drank a bottle of water as he pulled back the covers, and when he urged her back onto the bed she went gratefully.

He was checking her right side, carefully examining the faint impressions of rope still stamped into her skin, when she fell asleep.

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CHAPTER 17



The loss of body heat woke her. Tareq slipped out of bed and though they'd moved apart as they slept, he'd had a hand on her hip as she slept on her side, and when he moved away her body protested the loss of that warm hand by waking up.

Nomi turned onto her stomach, burying her face in the pillow as she seriously considered going back to sleep. Then her brain came fully online, and worry and anxiety surged up. Nomi opened her eyes, heart racing when only a moment ago she'd been happy and sleepy. She sat up on the side of the bed and rubbed her eyes. She heard the faucet, and then the bathroom door opened.

“Hey.”

Nomi turned to face him, pulling up the blanket to cover her chest. “Hey.”

“How are you feeling?” He leaned on the door jam, looking sexy in just his boxers. “Didn't really get to finish the aftercare last night.”

“Did I fall asleep in the middle of it?”

“You did.” He grinned. “Actually, you might have fainted from the pleasure.”

Despite the anxiety gnawing on her stomach, Nomi laughed. “I mean...it’s possible. Last night was intense.” She mock frowned. “Wait a minute. I told you it was a bad idea for me to sit on your face. Look at your poor nose.”

Tareq blinked and then ducked back into the bathroom. Nomi snickered. There was nothing wrong with his nose. He was gorgeous as always.

He returned a second later, giving her a deadpan look. “Really?”

“There were a couple times I was probably right on the edge of dislocating it, if not breaking it.”

He shrugged. “RACK not SSC. You take your risks.”

She snorted in amusement then stood up. She looked around and realized she had no idea where her dress from yesterday was. Yesterday also felt like three lifetimes ago.

He opened a dresser drawer and passed her the dress.

Tareq leaned against the bathroom doorway once more. Why did guys look so sexy when they did that? Ugh.

Nomi dropped the sheet and marched right up to him. Tareq didn’t move.

“Can I get in there?”

He seemed to consider it before stepping aside. Nomi shut the door firmly in his face. Self-conscious, she turned on the shower using the sound of the water to cover up her trip to the toilet. That done she eyed the hot water and jumped in. She did a quick wash, focusing on all the places where her skin was sticky as a result of last night’s activities.

The anxiety she’d felt upon waking faded as she washed herself. Every inch of skin bore a reminder of something that

had happened, pleasure and pain both. It had been glorious. And now it was over, wasn't it?

When he'd seemingly rushed to finish the checklist game by completing their second activity last night, she'd taken it to mean he wanted to be done with this.

That had made sense, before she knew that their second item was "queening." Now part of her thought it had less to do with rushing to finish than him wanting to end the night with her riding his face and then him fucking her tits.

Still, their game was done. They could go their separate ways. But...but he'd said things that made her think maybe he wanted her to sub for him again. Maybe today. There was still time. If not today, next weekend.

God that was a bad idea. Subbing for a man her heart had dubbed boyfriend-material was stupid. She'd end up with firmly rooted romantic feelings for him that might interfere with her ability to form romantic attachments outside of the club.

Her vanilla relationships were few and far between, because they often weren't sexually satisfying. However, on those occasions when she had been in a relationship, but had still needed to come to Las Palmas for the emotional release, she'd always kept her scenes strictly platonic, if kinky. Rope sessions with her underwear on, a flogging, again underwear on, or even getting all dressed up in fet wear and then playing bartender had worked for her in the past.

Those weren't the kinds of scenes she'd do with Tareq. No, with him sexual contact and pleasure were part of the power exchange. Which meant if she was regularly sceneing with him, there would be no romantic relationships outside the club, just because of the sex, never mind that there was real danger

she wouldn't feel the need to even look for a romantic partner in the vanilla world if she had a boyfriend material man waiting for her each weekend at the club.

She tipped her face up into the spray, not caring that her hair, which she'd pulled up into a bun, was getting wet.

Though talk therapy wasn't really what she did, Nomi decided to try visualizing to check her reasoning. As hot water beat against her skin, Nomi pictured herself six months from now.

She meets a nice guy at a bar. Someone a little bookish, maybe with a fun nerdy hobby or two. After their fourth date she invites him back to her place and...and she closes the door in his face because her ass is still sore from a spanking and Tareq had fucked her less than 48 hours prior. Minus it being unfair to all parties for her to be sleeping with two different people without their knowledge, how would she explain the bruises on her ass and the bite marks on her tits to her date? Never mind that she didn't really want to fuck her faceless, imaginary boyfriend. Why would she when she could have all the good conversation and better sex here at Las Palmas?

Damn it.

She turned the water off. Enough of this, she was going in circles.

Tareq was bad news and the best Dom she'd ever been with. She needed to walk away from him before she got any more emotionally involved and invested.

She didn't want to walk away at all. She wanted to wear his collar.

Nomi pressed the towel to her face and considered screaming into it.

In the end, the only thing she could do was to finish drying off, using sample-size products from the stash in the bathroom drawer to make herself presentable, and get dressed. It took her a few minutes to get the dress zipped on her own, though she managed it. The formal wear felt silly on a weekend afternoon, but she was ready to face whatever came next.

Until she opened the bathroom door and the sheets were in a pile on the floor and he was emptying out the desk drawers into a small bag.

“Oh.”

He looked over when she spoke, following her gaze to the pile of sheets.

“I know they say we don’t have to do anything, but I figure the cleaning staff already has an intense job. The least I can do is pull the sheets off for them.”

Nomi nodded woodenly, her question answered. He had no intention of using this room any longer. Meaning he had no plans to scene today. No plans to play with her again.

“Tell you what, how about I drop this off in the Den?” Tareq held up the bag he just loaded. “Why don’t you go get dressed, you know in street clothes, and then we can meet and have some breakfast. Though at this point it’s definitely lunch.”

Nomi nodded, forced herself to smile. “Sounds good.”

It was happening too fast. She thought she’d anticipated all the possibilities, but everything felt rushed and out of control as he finished checking the room and she put on her shoes.

He held the door open for her, and Nomi forced herself to smile at him as she exited.

She blinked against the brightness of the light, keeping her eyes slitted as they started walking. It was a good excuse to not look at him.

“Fifteen minutes?” he asked when they reached the point where their paths separated.

“Okay,” she lied. Or maybe it wasn’t a lie. “Okay” was an acknowledgment, not a confirmation.

He started to turn away.

“And, Tareq?” She couldn’t help herself from saying something. The words “goodbye” caught on her tongue. That would be ridiculously dramatic. “Thank you.”

He started to reach for her but stopped himself and grinned. “Thank you. I’ll see you in fifteen minutes.”

Nomi turned towards the Subs’ Garden.

She had no intention of meeting Tareq for a “hey that was fun let’s be friends” lunch. She needed to get out of here, and get away from him, now.

TAREQ WAS ONLY STEPS AWAY FROM THE DINING ROOM WHEN Master Mikel hailed him. Tareq paused, his attention sliding to the dining room door. He was curious what Nomi looked like in her regular clothes. He was curious about what she did for a living.

He wanted to know everything about her.

It had taken a Herculean effort to not wake her up with his cock, and pick up right where they left off, but he wasn’t an asshole. She deserved some time and space so she was fully

out of the scene, and didn't feel obliged to say yes to him, when he asked her to play again next weekend.

"You're done," Mikel said with clear approval. "Very good. A short letter, but I saw some of what you did last night. You enjoyed Nomi."

"And I intend to enjoy her again," Tareq said.

Mikel's lips pursed. "You are...supposed to be meeting her?"

"Yes."

"Right now?"

"Yes." Tareq had a sinking feeling.

"Ah. Then I feel that I must tell you that I spoke with her just before she entered the Subs' Garden, several moments ago, and she asked me to tell you that 'something came up'." Mikel's tone put quotes around it.

Tareq froze. "What? What happened? Is she okay?"

"I suspect nothing happened. It was clearly a lie, an excuse, and she looked on the verge of tears. Did you provide aftercare?"

"Of course. I'm not an asshole. I mean she fell asleep so she missed some of it." Tareq started moving, Mikel falling in step beside him.

"You think she enjoyed your company too?"

"Yes." She had. He knew it. It wasn't ego talking, it was fucking fact.

"And did you make plans to play together in future?" Mikel asked.

"Not yet."

“Why not?”

“Because it’s fucking rude to ask a sub to commit to anything while you’re in the middle of a scene.”

“Is it not also rude to give no indication that you enjoyed your sub enough to want to scene with them again by making future plans?”

Tareq stopped mid step and looked at Mikel. “Wait, say that again?”

“You finished your checklist all in one night, far faster than most. You rushed and may be the first ones done.”

“We didn’t rush, last night was fucking marathon.”

“As you say. But why tackle both items in one night?”

“Because I wanted her to sit on my face.”

“Not because you wanted to get it over with.”

“Of course not.”

“But certainly, you see how your sub might think you were rushing.”

Tareq wanted to hit something. Possibly hit his own head against a wall. “But she knows I fucking loved topping her. She’s the best sub in this place.”

“Which is why you made plans, or at least discussed, sceneing together in future.”

“Shit,” Tareq breathed.

“Indeed.”

“I fucked up.”

“Clearly.”

Tareq spared a second to shoot the overseer a “thanks for nothing asshole” look, and took off running.

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CHAPTER 18



Nomi slumped in the driver seat. Shame at her cowardice bit at her, but practicality assured her that this was the most prudent course of action. And it wasn't like she was ghosting Tareq. She'd seen Master Mikel and asked him to pass on a message. It was better this way. They parted amicably, and didn't have to have any awkward conversations.

She'd pulled on her street clothes in a rush, breaking the dress's zipper in her haste to get it off. Then Nomi had shoved things into her tote, and nearly sprinted for the car. But now she was just sitting in the parking lot, torn between her head which said "drive" and her heart which begged her to go back inside.

The phrase made her snort in amusement at the catastrophic thinking.

Driving out of here didn't mean she was abandoning her heart, her chance at love.

It didn't.

Nomi had started the car when she got in, but even with the air conditioning on it felt stuffy. She rolled down the window, letting the warm breeze of the Malibu canyons swirl into the car.

Enough was enough. Time to go.

Nomi put the car in drive—she'd backed into the space—and eased off the brake.

And screamed when a man jumped in front of the car.

Nomi's body jerked as she jammed the brake pedal a second after the car detected the obstacle and braked too, warning lights flashing on the dash.

Tareq slapped his palms on the hood of her car. All the front bumper sensors were beeping at her, but Nomi ignored them and stuck her head out the window.

“What the hell are you doing? I almost hit you!”

“What the hell am I doing?” Tareq stared at her in outrage, then gestured to her car. “What the hell are you doing?”

“Running you over unless you move.”

Tareq circled around to her door. Nomi's heart was in her throat, the adrenaline slowly dissipating.

Tareq braced one forearm on the top of the window opening and leaned down. “Leaving without saying goodbye?”

“Something came up.”

“Bullshit.”

Crap. “You know what, I don't owe you an explanation.”

Tareq's brow arched, and she was taken back to that moment when she'd spotted him in the conclave. That first shared moment of understanding, a connection forged then that had grown stronger than it had any right to over the last forty-eight hours.

He reached in the window and she tensed, but at the last minute his hand veered down, hitting the unlock button on her

arm rest.

“What are you...get out of my car.” She swiveled around as he climbed into the back seat.

“Not until we talk.”

“This is breaking and entering,” she pointed out.

“Actually, it’s more of a kidnapping. As in you’re kidnapping me.”

“I’m not...Tareq, get out of my car.”

He leaned forward between the seats, their noses inches apart. Nomi held her breath, waiting, hoping he’d ignore her words, and irritated at herself for wanting him to stay.

He grinned. “No.”

“Oh, for fuck’s sake,” she groaned, but damn it, she was smiling.

Tareq leaned forward and for a second it looked like he was going to try and climb between the front seats. His shoulders got stuck and he backtracked, eyeing her.

“Do not put this car in gear.”

He climbed out the rear seat on the passenger side. Nomi put the car into neutral just to fuck with him, her foot on the brake.

Tareq jerked open the front passenger door and slid in. He glanced at the dash, then reached over and put the car back into park.

“Has anyone ever told you that you have control issues?” she asked.

“Want to be my shrink?”

“Sorry, I’m not taking on new clients right now.”

“Wait, are you really a shrink?”

“Psychologist.”

“See, I knew you were book smart.”

“Yes, well, we know a lot about one another, and at the same time we don’t know anything important.” The words fell heavy between them, and Nomi stared out the front window.

“No, we don’t know biographical details, but what we know is the important stuff.”

“Tareq—”

“Nomi, hold on, let me talk.” He reached out to touch her, but his hand stopped short, and Nomi’s stomach clenched.

“I can be a little pushy,” he said.

That made her lips twitch.

“I know, shocking, right?” He leaned his shoulder against the back of the seat, the pose the car equivalent of leaning against a door jamb. “But I try to be conscientious. I try to never ask a submissive for something when I think she might feel obligated to say yes.”

That had Nomi stopping, her brain quickly replaying the morning as she processed the implications of his words.

“So, Doc, I have this problem.” Tareq shifted to lie back as he reclined the seat, apparently imitating laying on a psychologist’s couch.

“Oh, I’m definitely not your doctor.”

Tareq ignored her and kept up the bit. “I met this great girl.”

Nomi's stomach was in knots, and she couldn't look at him.

"But she's obliged to hang out with me. Not her choice. We have an amazing time, and about five minutes in I'm already making plans for the next time I see her."

Refusing to look at him did nothing to block out his words.

"I think I'm being thoughtful and doing the right thing by making sure that we finish our obligatory date, get that done and completely out of the way, before I ask her to go out with me again."

Her throat hurt from not crying and her stomach was in knots.

"But someone just pointed out to me that what I thought was being thoughtful and responsible, to her probably seemed like I was rushing our date to get it over with."

Nomi was gripping the wheel so tight she could feel her heartbeat in her fingertips.

"Clearly what I should have done was kept this woman tied to my damn bed, and—"

"Stop." The word was strangled, almost inaudible, but he stopped speaking the moment it passed her lips.

"Nomi, wait, are you crying?"

"Tareq, stop. You have to stop."

He reached for the door, face grim. "I'll leave, just...don't cry, pretty girl."

The endearment was the blow that broke the wall she'd erected around her emotions. Nomi covered her face with her hands and sobbed.

“Fuck.” Tareq’s arms came tentatively around her, pulling her into the center console as he tried to hug her.

Nomi indulged for a moment, then sat up. “I did think you wanted to be done with me. That you were trying to get it over with. But I also...I also thought you gave hints about us sceneing together in future.”

He looked confused, but didn’t speak, only nodded for her to continue.

“But I can’t scene with you. I can’t. It’s dangerous.”

Now his expression went blank and hard. “If I crossed a limit or hurt you—”

“Not that kind of danger. No one here is ever worried about that kind of danger. If I could do a study and write a paper about how backwards that is, I’d be famous.”

“Then what danger?”

“Emotional danger. That’s all anyone in here is really worried about.” She gestured to the club.

“That’s why you left?” he asked softly.

“I left because I’m the worst kind of pathetic cliché.”

“Okay, you’ve lost me.”

Nomi planned to say something calm and measured, to explain the scenario she’d played out in the shower where she didn’t fuck a guy on the fourth date. Instead, some not-so-buried self-hate bubbled up.

“The fat, smart girl who falls for the hot guy after five minutes because he’s nice to her? Cliché. The sub who falls for her Dom because she hasn’t figured out how to separate emotional and physical intimacy? Cliché.” Nomi couldn’t look

at him, so she stared at her hands, her knuckles white on the wheel. “You know what I started thinking of you as? Boyfriend material.”

“Boyfriend material?” His tone was perfectly neutral, and her peripheral vision wasn’t good enough for her to see his expression.

“Yep. Our conversations, the fact that we can joke and laugh and then still have incredibly hot scenes together...my stupid heart classified that as both perfect Dom and boyfriend material. That’s why I have to go. Not because I was hurt you were rushing to end our part of the game, though I did think that.

“I have to leave, because with you, my compartmentalization is breaking down. Normally I leave everything at the gates.” She gestured to the end of the parking lot where the long palm-lined driveway led down to a set of state-of-the-art gates.

“Nomi, look at me.”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Because I can’t see pity on your face,” she whispered.

“Pretty girl, pity is not what I’m feeling right now.”

“You don’t—”

“Right now, what I feel is pissed.”

Oh.

Nomi slanted her gaze to the side. His jaw was clenched, but his eyes were hot with...anger. Wait, was that desire? Need?

“Um, why are you angry?”

“I’m angry, because you should have told me all this.”

“I don’t owe my Dom my private thoughts—”

“I’m not talking about some other Dom. Or what other people should do. *You* should have told *me*.”

“The same way you told me what you were thinking?”

“I was trying to be responsible!”

“And I’m trying not to make a fool of myself and get my heart broken!”

“I’m not going to break your heart.”

“Yes, you are, because if I scene with you again these feelings I’m trying to pretend I don’t have will become permanent. And that’s not fair to the fourth date guy.”

Tareq blinked. “Who?”

“I was visualizing in the shower. What would it look like if I got what I wanted.”

“And what’s that? What do you want?”

Nomi stared resolutely out the window. “It was just an exercise, a fantasy, not—”

“Nomi.”

“A collar,” she all but snarled. “Another pathetic cliché, one night together and the sub is dreaming of being collared.” She swallowed hard, but didn’t stop talking long enough for him to jump in. “I was imagining what would happen if I... *wore your collar* “...if we had something more permanent. I made up this guy I met at a bar. I see you here on the weekends, and it’s just like last night was, sexy and intense but also we talk and laugh.

“On the fourth date I take the guy from the bar back to my place, because hey, social convention says it’s a good time to get physical. I take him home and...nothing. I can’t sleep with him.”

“You’re damn right you can’t.”

He sounded so possessive that Nomi’s heart leapt, shouting “Yes! See?” as her brain told her heart to shut the hell up.

“Not just because that’s a shitty thing to do,” Nomi went on. “Since in this scenario I’m also having regular sex with you, but because I wouldn’t want to. Do you see the problem?”

She turned to face him, though she didn’t let go of the wheel and it took all her courage to do it. “Why did I even go on the date, except maybe to get out of the house and take a break from cooking? Why would I need to bother dating when I’m getting submission, emotional intimacy, and companionship here with you. That’s what would happen if you and I had...anything.”

Nomi’s hands had started to actually hurt, so she forced herself to let go of the wheel. The moment she did she started to emotionally deflate, as if the steering wheel were a life preserver and now that she’d let go, she could just sink quietly under the waves.

“And I want you to know that I’m fully aware how ridiculous that was to even say out loud given that at the time I was imagining this I also thought you were rushing to get our scene over with, and that even now, when you’ve made it clear you’re not opposed to sceneing again, that doesn’t mean you thinking of me as—”

“Girlfriend material?”

She winced. Silence settled in her car, which felt small with him in the passenger seat.

“I could tell you how I decided last night that you would wear my collar,” Tareq said slowly. “I could tell you that right now it’s taking everything not to bend you over the hood of your own car and paddle your ass so hard you never again neglect to tell me what you’re feeling.”

Nomi hated herself for feeling hope as she looked over at him. “You wanted to collar me?”

“Right now, I want to beat your ass black and blue, so don’t look at me with those big pretty eyes thinking that will get you out of it.”

That statement shouldn’t have made her happy, but it did.

“But I’m not going to do that.” Tareq turned to her, touching her chin gently until she lifted her face to his. “Well, at least not yet.”

When she let out a nervous laugh, he smiled.

“You said you’re worried that you can’t separate what happens inside the club and outside, right?”

That wasn’t exactly it, but when she opened her mouth to clarify, he put his thumb on her lower lip.

“Then we fix that.”

“How?”

He dropped his hand. “Drive.”

She blinked. “What?”

“Drive. We leave the club. Together.”

“And...go where?”

“Lunch. I need food.”

Nomi shook her head. “Tareq, what is this supposed to—”

“You’re taking me out for a lunch date.”

“We’re not...dating?” She hadn’t meant that to be a question.

“Why not?”

“We just met!”

“Isn’t that why people date, to get to know one another after they meet?”

“But you only talked to me because of the game.”

“Fun meet-cute story. We’ll have to edit it a little when we tell our kids.”

“That’s not funny.”

“I’m not joking.”

“You can’t just...decide that we’re going to date.”

“Weren’t you listening? Multiple dates, a wedding, and babies.”

“You can’t say stuff like that after twenty-four hours!”

“Why not?”

“Because...because you’re probably emotionally compromised. By the scene.”

“Your pussy is good,” he agreed. “Maybe I am emotionally compromised.” He pressed his hands to his face in mock shock. “Maybe I’m addicted and I’ll have to spend the rest of my life chasing that next fix of sweet Nomi pussy. Well, I wouldn’t chase because you’d be my sub and my wife so I’d pretty much know where you are most of the time. And the

rest of the time you'd be tied to a bed, or a spanking bench, or the wall...point being I'd definitely know where you were then. No chasing necessary."

Nomi opened and closed her mouth a few times. "You're..."

"I'm weak with hunger, woman. Drive."

"Tareq, if you're doing this, saying these things because you feel bad for me, or—"

"Nomi, I'm doing this, and saying this, because I mean it. You were dead right. What we have is special. We can talk and tease one another, and you don't think my humor is fucked up and weird—"

"Oh, I do."

"See? That. That's it. That's perfect."

He smiled at her, and she couldn't help but smile back.

"We just met."

"Love at first sight."

"That's not real, and certainly not with women who look like me." She couldn't help but add that last part, needing to say it even though she knew it wasn't fair to herself, or him.

"Keep it up," he said with a scary smile. "It's your ass that's taking the punishment for insulting my sub and my girlfriend."

"Love takes work. It's not instant."

"Okay, I'll agree to that, but have you ever tried a food, and after the first taste you know, you just know, that it's your new favorite food?"

"Lemme guess, somehow yours is my pussy?"

“Nope. It’s you. All of you.”

Nomi blinked, and a tear slid down her cheek. He brushed them away.

“Tastes change,” she said softly. “People change.”

He shrugged. “You’re right, they do. And as long as we communicate with each other...” The look he gave her was pure stern Dom before lapsing back into easygoing boyfriend territory. “...we’ll be all right.”

“This is...”

“Crazy?”

“We don’t use that word anymore.”

“Okay,” he said, seemingly unbothered by the correction. “It’s madness. Wild, romantic, sexy madness.”

She let that one go, too caught up in her own chaotic mix of emotions. There were a million ways for this to go wrong, and only a thin path to anything resembling a happy ending.

He leaned over the console, cupped her face, and kissed her. He tasted a little like minty toothpaste, and a lot like her future happiness. The kiss was long and slow, their mouths almost still as they simply reveled in the taste of one another.

He pulled back first, gaze meeting hers. “But, Nomi?”

She braced, ready for the other shoe to fall.

“I wasn’t kidding about being hungry. Drive, woman, drive!”

Nomi put the car in gear and drove.

WONDERING WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH ILIAS AND HIS SUB?
You'll find out in [R is for...](#)

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CHECKLIST FAQ

ARE YOU GOING TO DO EVERY LETTER?

Yes, I plan to write one book for every letter, though either X and Y or Y and Z may be combined. I have some very exciting (and sexy) plans for the end of the alphabet.

WILL WE EVER FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS TO THESE COUPLES?

There are tentative plans in place for me to write one final book after Z, possibly featuring one of the overseers, that would take place far enough into the future that we get to see what happened to the characters.

DO YOU HAVE DISCRETE COVERS FOR THESE BOOKS?

Not yet, but soon. The print versions of these books are, for the most part, limited to the three book collections (Checklist: A, B, C; Checklist: D, E, F; etc). While those covers are more discrete than many of the standalone ebook covers, they are not “discrete covers.”

If all goes according to plan, you will soon be able to buy discrete cover hardbacks of the checklist series! The hardbacks

will contain five or six letters, so when I'm done the whole series will be contained in hardbacks.

Have any other questions? [Email me](#), or come hang out with me on [TikTok](#)!

Want more Checklist series goodness including sneak peaks and behind the scenes information? Connect with like-minded readers and join the [Checklist Club Facebook group](#).

AND IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WHAT TO READ NEXT, CHECK OUT THESE SERIES.

- For BDSM club-based books happily ever afters: [Orchid Club trilogies](#).
- For BDSM with a rockabilly vibe: [Undone Lovers](#).
- For menage secret society romantic suspense, try the [Trinity Masters](#) and [Masters's Admiralty](#) series I co-write with Mari Carr.

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EXCERPT FROM VIENNA BETRAYAL

She'd never been flogged like this, with quick fast blows. Instead of the warm thumps, the strikes were sharp, the sensation closer to the sting of a crop, but with a multilayered sound as each tail hit at a slightly different time.

And it hurt. Wonderfully. Terribly. She cried out, rounding her shoulders as her breasts started to burn with heat, the sting not having time to fade before he struck her again.

“Shoulders back,” he commanded.

“I...I...”

“Give me your breasts. They are mine to abuse tonight.”

His perverse command made her shiver in need. She needed this, deserved it. How had she forgotten how good it could be to submit?

Years ago she'd been so heavily into BDSM that she'd actually hosted a monthly munch—a BDSM meet and greet.

Then she'd grown restless and slowly drifted away from the community and the lifestyle, taking with her everything she'd learned about how complex a person's sexuality could be, and how universal the desire for connection was, even if that connection was found on opposite ends of a whip.

The flogger never stopped, and she lost track of time. The sound of each strike was like a metronome, relentless and mesmerizing. Her breasts ached. She felt swollen and tender, each blow a warm sting.

The pattern broke, the flogger not striking her left breast when it should have.

“We’ll pause for a moment.”

Alena forced her eyes open, blinking.

Alexander casually bounced the flogger against his leg, the only sign of impatience during the small intermission.

“Look at me,” he commanded.

Their gazes collided, and for a moment Alena was sure he could see the truth. The truth of why she was here, what she wanted from him.

Anxiety flashed through her, cold and sobering.

Alexander simply nodded, then leaned in, examining her breasts. He used the butt of the crop handle to lift each breast in turn, examining the underside.

“Your skin marks beautifully. No bruises of course, but you will be pink for several hours.”

“Thank you, Sir.”

The words were automatic, almost habitual.

As if Alexander had pulled that buried submissive part of her forward in the space of an hour.

This was a terrible mistake. There was a piece in play she hadn’t seen, and that piece, her long forgotten submissive needs, bolstered by the sexual chemistry between them, had knocked her back several moves.

This plan had seemed perfect, both because it was one of the only ways she could gain access to him, and because she was an experienced submissive. It was an approach no normal person would have dared, unless they were so ignorant of what BDSM was that they walked in blind and ignorant.

Alena's life had never been normal. At best it had been interesting, and at worst traumatic. She was who she was, and did what she did, because of it.

“We'll continue.”

The flogger swished through the air, finding the rhythm once more.

Instead of her breasts he focused on her thighs and hips.

Thwack. Right hip.

Thwack. Left thigh.

Thwack. Right hip.

Thwack. Left thigh.

The blows were stronger now than they had been on her breasts, but not as hard as what he'd used on her ass.

She'd been right.

He knew exactly how to use a flogger. He knew the implement, knew how to use it to cause completely different sensations, how to moderate his swings for different sensations and strengths of impact.

He was precise. Methodical.

The kind of man who wasn't easy to trick.

Alexander paused, stepping back, and she sagged for a moment, letting her head fall back and lifting each leg in turn, circling her ankle and feeling the heat in her thighs.

“Again.” The word was merciless. He was merciless.

She braced her feet, closed her eyes, and forced herself to breathe.

Thwack. Left hip.

Thwack. Right thigh.

Thwack. Left hip.

Thwack. Right thigh.

He’d reversed the pattern, which meant he was striking virgin skin.

“You’re almost at your limit.” It wasn’t a question, it was a statement.

“No, Sir.”

She didn’t want her limit to be what stopped them. She wanted him to keep going, wanted to linger in this place of uncomfortable heat. It was like the first moments of getting into a too-hot spa after a day in the snow.

“No?”

Alena arched her back, thrusting her breasts towards him.

“Ask for what you want,” he commanded. “Or was that a lie?”

Alena’s head snapped up, and she met his gaze, a bit of ire adding bite to her words. “I’m sorry, I thought you’d be able to read my body language, but if you need every single thing explained...”

“Watch your tone.”

“Or what?”

Alexander grinned. It was the first time she'd seen a full smile. My god, what a smile it was.

“Or I'll stop.”

“Oh, that's... That's just mean.”

“You said you'd ask for what you want.” The smile melted away. “That was a lie?”

“No.”

He scooped up the crop and snapped a quick blow to the inside of her upper arm, which was exposed and vulnerable with her arms bound overhead.

Alena yelped and danced in place.

“Mind your manners.” The grin was gone, his tone cool. But the way he looked at her was anything but cool. It also wasn't the dispassionate, focused look she remembered Doms wearing during non-sexual impact play scenes.

Because this wasn't non-sexual.

He wanted her.

She wanted him.

“Did you lie?” He started to walk around behind her. Like prey trying to keep a predator in sight, she turned to follow his progress.

Crack. Again the crop struck the soft, pale skin of her inner arm. Then his hand tangled in her hair, jerking her head back, her scalp prickling with pain.

“Did you lie when you said you'd ask for what you wanted?”

“No... Sir.” She stumbled a little over the second word. Not because she had trouble saying it.

Because right now he didn't just feel like a Dom, or a casual impact play partner—which was what she'd expected before actually meeting him.

As he held her by the hair, her body forced into a slight backbend, her hands bound and raised, her whole body throbbing from his precise use of the flogger...

He felt like her master.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lila Dubois is an award winning, multi-published, bestselling author of erotic, paranormal and fantasy romance. Her book *J is for...*, the tenth book in the bestselling checklist series, won the 2019 National Readers' Choice Award. Additionally, she's been nominated for the RT Book Reviews Erotic Novella of the Year for *Undone Rebel* and the Golden Flogger.

Having spent extensive time in France, Egypt, Turkey, Ireland and England Lila speaks five languages, none of them (including English) fluently. Lila lives in California with her own Irish Farm Boy and loves receiving email from readers.

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