



The Ice Queen

CEO

Emily Hayes

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EMILY HAYES

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-Epilogue-

Thank you for reading!

VIP Readers list

Alev King settled into her ergonomic leather desk chair and adjusted her headset. As she prepared for the conference call, adrenaline coursed through her veins. She had been preparing to franchise her sex toy company, Wicked Orchid, in Japan for close to three years. Finally, the time had come to meet with Mariko Nama, a high-powered business consultant best known for her no-nonsense demeanor.

Some people may have been intimidated by Mariko but not Alev. To her, Alev felt like she was meeting with an equal, a woman who was as sharp and as driven by success. And she knew that Mariko had the power to make Alev's business goals a reality.

Alev powered her screen and entered the video call. Mariko was already present; a faint, nondescript smile formed across her lips while her eyes focused on Alev. Before they spoke, each woman gave a slight bow from their chairs out of respect.

“Good morning, Ms. King. I am glad we finally have the opportunity to meet and discuss your plans.” Mariko's clear, accented voice traveled through the desk speakers.

“*Ohayou gozaimasu,*” Alev responded, choosing a formal, Japanese greeting. While she wasn’t fluent in the language, Alev was familiar with the more professional terms that she knew would make an impact on Mariko.

Mariko’s faint smile spread ever so slightly as her eyes twinkled. Then, with a small nod and chuckle, she replied, “*Daijobudesu,* very good! I appreciate the warm greeting, Ms. King. But just as you are trying to improve your Japanese, I, too, need to utilize my English. But that is indeed impressive.”

Alev knew that she needed to appear modest, but she grinned like a Cheshire cat inside. Alev was calculating and strategic; she knew which buttons to press, especially when it came to business matters and impressing women. Alev’s tactics worked both within the boardroom and the bedroom, and she used her charms and intellect throughout all aspects of life.

“Thank you kindly, Nama-San,” Alev bowed her head again before adding, “Yes, I am honored that you agreed to meet with me, and I feel that you will be pleased with the data I pulled from the other Wicked Orchid franchises. It’s an extremely viable business model that will thrive in Japan.”

Alev and Mariko spend the next thirty minutes discussing profit charts, financial quarters, sales targets, and the top-selling products found at the various Wicked Orchid locations. Alev was particularly proud of how well the newer Wicked Orchid locations were doing during the meeting.

The store in Austin, Texas, just hit its highest profits since it was opened two years ago; the sales were neck to neck with the Los Angeles boutique. Based in San Francisco, the Wicked Orchid flagship store was voted “Best Sex Store Retailer” five years in a row by *Herstories*, a popular queer women’s

magazine based within the Bay area. But Alev's success only fueled her future ambitions; her sights were focused on a Japanese franchise.

Once they had covered the basics, the women turned the discussion towards the annual International Summit Conference, where highly successful female entrepreneurs gathered for a week to network and show off their newest products and services and solidify business deals. Alev was excited to launch her latest product, Lust for Lexi, an intuitive dildo/ VR headset combination product powered by AI technology.

Mariko's eyes lit up at the description. "Ah, yes. I believe Lust for Lexi will definitely capture the consumer market. How long until the model will be ready?"

With confidence, Alev replied, "It will be set to launch well before the summit. My team is working diligently, completing the final steps of development." Alev was especially proud of her technology unit, which consisted of some of the most sought-after engineers. Alev only worked with skilled, driven, and intelligent employees, never compromising quality.

Wrapping up the conference call, Alev and Mariko planned to reconvene for updates on progress and send their goodbyes. Turning off her screen, Alev breathed a sigh of satisfaction. *Mmm, a good business meeting feels almost as good as an orgasm.* Power fueled Alev's libido, unlike any other aphrodisiac.

In between tasks, Alev's mind wandered to her upcoming date with Catherine, the daughter of a prominent art dealer in The Castro. They had met at an opening, with Alev looking to add new art to her robust collection. Catherine caught her eye,

and like a hawk, Alev swooped in and seduced the young socialite as though casting a spell. As she thought about enjoying Catherine, savoring her body like a dessert, Alev's Executive Assistant, Maya Cohen, knocked at her door.

Slightly irritated but always professional, Alev answered, "Yes, come in." Maya cautiously approached Alev's desk. "Ms. King, I have some news. It's regarding a delay on some components towards the Lust for Lexi product."

Blood rose on her face, along with shivers up her back. Alev was not a patient person and abhorred dealing with incompetence, especially after such a promising conference call with Mariko Nama.

Taking a deep breath to maintain control, Alev spoke, "Maya, I need you to get to the bottom of the issue and solve the problem, or I will take the supply contract elsewhere. If it's an issue of money, you know how to access the company funds. I must have these parts in the showroom by Thursday, which is exactly four days from now." Then, keeping her voice even, she added, "Just make it happen—I have faith in you."

Maya appeared slightly intimidated by Alev, but Alev knew that Maya respected her authority. Employees who worked for Alev knew that Alev was cutthroat and demanded the highest of standards.

"Of course, yes. I highly doubt anyone would want you to reject the contract, so I'll get on that right away." Maya nodded as she spoke to help assure Alev of her capabilities.

"Just one more thing; I also wanted to inform you that our San Fran location requires more salespeople, especially with Pride coming up at the end of June."

“Hmm, yes, I had assumed that. Now that we are in May, we should do a hiring spree. Can you contact Judith Goodwin to arrange signage and advertising for new employees? I’ll be coming down to the store this week to assist with interviews.”

“Of course, I’ll do that right away, as soon as I get a hold of Convoy Manufacturing.” Maya turned on her heel and exited the office as Alev thanked her for the updates.

Even in such a high-powered position, Alev was still very hands-on with many aspects of her business. She enjoyed calling the shots and maintaining control of the Wicked Orchid brand, regardless of whether it was within the areas of sales associates or administrative personnel. Alev built her empire from scratch and demanded excellence on every level.

Ruminating on the morning conversations, she turned to her laptop to begin her daily tasks, but not before taking a quick moment to fantasize about the naughty things she wanted to do with Catherine later this evening.

““U gh, oh my god,” McKinley Vodden lifted her head from the couch as a burst of sunshine burned through to her pupils. She smacked her dry lips together and squinted, murmuring to herself, “What time is it? I wonder what time I crashed out?”

As she patted down the comforter that covered her slender frame, a wave of nausea hit McKinley, and all of a sudden, the events from the night before swam into her psyche. Memories of tequila shots, hot kisses, and dancing with abandon flooded McKinley’s thoughts. *Oh no, not again. It was only supposed to be one drink with Casey; why does this keep happening to me?*

McKinley coughed, remembering the cigarette drags she stole from various strangers in her drunken state last night. She had quit smoking for almost two years but was finding herself returning back to the poison, particularly when in a vulnerable and intoxicated state. Deep down, McKinley knew that she was overindulging because she was depressed and feeling helpless in her current mental state. A night of partying wasn’t exactly a healthy cure, but it did provide temporary relief from the pain in her heart.

Rising off the couch, McKinley found her bearings before she straightened out the duvet and arranged the pillows neatly in a row. Considering the sofa doubled as her bed, the least she could do was put it back into civilized order; she knew her roommates wouldn't be too impressed with a messy area, and their tension was already rising.

Just as McKinley was about to hop in the shower, she heard the doorknob turn. Groaning inwardly, McKinley thought to herself, *Shit! I was hoping to be out of here before he came home for lunch!* Then, a tall, muscular figure stepped into the foyer. Before McKinley could dash into the hallway, Nelson caught her eye. "Oh, hi! You must've got in late. I went to bed at 2:00 am, and I still hadn't seen you."

Nelson dropped his keys on the front stand and took off his work boots. McKinley should have figured he would be home by now, as Nelson always had lunch at home. The mechanic shop that he worked for was only two blocks from the apartment they shared, and he always preferred to cook his own meals instead of dining out.

Feeling sheepish, McKinley replied, "Uh, yeah. It was, uh, kind of a late night. I-I was just about to take a shower. Did you want to use the bathroom before I get in?"

Nelson avoided eye contact, something he had been doing more and more of lately. "Yeah, you look pretty rough, to be honest. No, go ahead. I'm here for the next hour. Take your time."

McKinley looked down at the ground as tears began to form in her eyes. She was at a loss for words, but she knew that her couch surfing was starting to take a toll on the roommates. Still, McKinley felt incapacitated, unsure where to go or what to do with her life.

“Look, um, Nelson, I *know* that I’ve been taking up space on the couch, and trust me, I am *trying* to find a job. Shit, I want a job *and* a new place to live. But, I’m just feeling...” McKinley took a deep sigh, “I don’t know...just *lost*, I guess.”

Nelson was about to speak when a bedroom door burst open, followed by a long, red robe swooshing. An exasperated voice, “*God!* I swear men are *so dumb* sometimes!” Lucy stopped when she saw the somber faces of both of her roommates. “Oh, geez, sorry, Nelson, I didn’t mean you. I was talking about the guys on cam.”

Nelson chuckled and bowed his head gracefully. “No offense taken, milady! Maybe I’m just being arrogant, but I feel like trans men are a different species. I don’t hold myself in the same category as cis men.”

Lucy approached Nelson and kissed him on the cheek. “As you shouldn’t, darling. I think it’s hilarious that none of these dudes even know I’m a lesbian. I guess I’m just a superhuman femme who can seduce their wallets by spanking my own ass in front of a screen.” The trio shared a collective laugh. If anyone could break the tension, it would be Lucy with her warmth, humor, and silliness.

“Are you just taking a break?” McKinley asked. “I’ll be out of here soon. Sorry, I just woke up.”

“Yeah, I need about 30 minutes to collect myself and clean up a bit. I had a session with Trevor in one of the private chat rooms—the one I told you about, the big tipper. I’m going back on cam soon, but I needed to step away for a sec.” Lucy tightened the sash on her robe.

Nelson cleared his throat. “Well, since we are all here at the same time, I think it’s important to address the elephant in

the room.” Nelson and Lucy exchanged glances as McKinley’s heart sank.

Before Nelson could speak again, McKinley piped up. “Listen, guys, I know what you are about to say, and I totally get it. I have to find a job, and once I do, I want to get a place. I’m sorry, I know I’ve been fucking up lately. The writing thing doesn’t seem to be working, and I’ve been sadder and sadder lately.” Wringing her hands, she added, “I just don’t know where to look. I-I just feel so…” McKinley couldn’t keep the tears in any longer. Between feeling hungover and sleep-deprived, she felt as though she was falling apart.

Lucy put an arm around McKinley and pulled her close. “It’s okay, boo. I understand. I’ve been there too. That’s why I enjoy camming and stripping sometimes. I get to make my own schedule and control how much of myself I want to share. Plus, the money is good—well, most times at least. Are you sure you don’t want to give it another shot?”

McKinley had joined Lucy on cam once to see what it would be like. But it wasn’t for her. It’s not that she had an issue flaunting her sexuality; in fact, she was quite comfortable with her body and desires (which tended to scale only towards women at this point). She just couldn’t wrap her head around pleasing all of the customers, whose goal seemed to be to objectify her. Still, she had a lot of respect for Lucy, who maintained total control of her cam room and herself.

“No, babe. I just can’t. No offense; it’s just not my jam.”

Nelson gave McKinley a side glance. “Well, as much as we love you, you’re right. You need to make a move and fast. Sorry, Kins, but I don’t want to enable this behavior. You need to take control of your life. I’m here to support that, but you definitely need to get a job.”

McKinley nodded, knowing both Nelson and Lucy were right. Suddenly, Lucy's eyes grew wide with excitement. "Oh my god! I just thought of something!" McKinley turned quickly to face Lucy as she darted towards her bedroom. "Hold on, just grabbing my phone!"

Lucy raced back with the silk robe flowing behind her like the Red Sea. "Here it is!" Lucy motioned McKinley towards her, showing her the screen of her iPhone. "Look! Wicked Orchid is hiring—I love this place. It's where I get all of my toys and outfits for camming."

McKinley looked at the online ad that appeared front and center on the website. She had never been inside the popular sex store, although she was always curious to visit. "Hmmm, that looks interesting for sure."

Lucy grabbed McKinley's wrist with enthusiasm. "And oh my god, if you do apply and get the job, you can have 50% off anything in the store. An old girlfriend of mine used to work there, and she got the best discounts." Lucy grinned, obviously pleased with herself. "You gotta do it, Kins. It would be so cool, and you can get me stuff for camming and dancing. I mean, you kind of owe me, no offense."

McKinley nodded as the opportunity became viable in her mind. "Okay, sure. Yes! I'll definitely apply. But I guess I'm just worried because I don't have any retail experience."

Nelson headed into the kitchen as Lucy chewed her bottom lip. "You know what? Apply anyways because you never know. And not to scare you, but I know for a fact that even the people who did apply with retail experience didn't get the job. I heard the CEO is a hard-to-please stone cold bitch, and she is also very hands-on with the interview process. So I think the selection is more about personality and a willingness to learn,

and you are a ray of sunshine, Kins.” Lucy looked into McKinley’s eyes. “What have you got to lose? Please do this, okay? We love you, but you need to get back on your feet.”

“Okay, I’ll do it. But I need to update my resume first.” McKinley’s thoughts began to churn as she became more excited about the opportunity.

Nelson called out from the kitchen, clearly eavesdropping. “No time like the present, babe!”

McKinley had to laugh. “Alright, alright. I’ll need to head out to a coffee shop with my laptop, but I promise I will apply today.”

“That’s the spirit!” Lucy hugged McKinley before racing off to the bathroom, leaving McKinley to gather her belongings. “I have a good feeling about this,” she called from the doorway, winking as she shut the door. McKinley thought to herself. *You know what? I do too.*

“**M**mmm, I wish I didn't have to leave so soon,” Catherine murmured, her warm breath tickling the tip of Alev's earlobe.

Alev pulled the young socialite closer to her as she ran her hands down the sides of Catherine's hips. The passionate fire between the two women was still smoldering from the night before, and Alev was tempted to lift Catherine's skirt, slip off her panties and get one last taste before releasing her into the day ahead.

“It's always best to leave while still wanting more,” Alev whispered seductively. “That way, you will always be filled with desire.” It was a motto that Alev lived by and advice that she doled out to her multiple lovers. It was also a way to maintain distance between her and the women she had conquered.

While Alev never acted with ill intentions, she never wanted anyone to become too comfortable with her.

Catherine moved her face closer to Alev, leaning in for a soft kiss. Alev held Catherine's lips to hers for a second before taking a step away. “I have a busy morning ahead, and I don't want you to be held up in traffic.”

Catherine pursed her lips and nodded, and Alev detected a look of dismay. “Okay, you’re right. I should get going.” Then, glancing up at the powerful CEO with doe-like eyes, Catherine asked, “When will I see you again?”

Uh-oh, no. Don’t get attached and don’t have any expectations of me, Alev thought to herself, never wanting to hurt anyone’s feelings. Still, Alev wanted to make sure that Catherine knew her limitations.

Alev focused her hazel-green eyes on Catherine, tucking a strand of her neatly bobbed hair around her ear. She softened her gaze as she expressed her thoughts. “I think you’re great. You’re incredibly sexy, and I enjoyed our night very much. But I am a busy woman, and my business is my priority.”

Alev added, her voice hinting at a faint Turkish accent. “Besides, you are young and beautiful; live your life and enjoy all you can offer. So don’t get hung up on me, okay?”

Catherine wrinkled her brow and bit her lip. She had received the message loud and clear. Narrowing her eyes, she replied, “Huh. Okay, I see how it is.” Catherine moved away from Alev to grab her coat, which was slung across a black leather sofa. “Fine, thanks for last night. Later.” Catherine marched out as Alev stood in the hallway with her arms crossed.

After the door slammed shut, Alev shrugged. She knew there was nothing she could have done to appease Catherine or assure her that there was some kind of future between them. Alev loved all sorts of women. She delighted in the pleasures of the flesh, and seducing conquests was how Alev truly got off. But, as much as she reveled in physical pleasure, Alev also relished assuming control. For her, sex was a game of lust and intrigue and a way to stroke her own ego. And ever since

her divorce, Alev vowed never to let her heart get in the way of having a good time or being a successful businesswoman.

Checking the clock, Alev noticed the time. *Well, I guess the timing was right because I really need to get to the store now.* Alev was meeting with Judith at Wicked Orchid to begin the first round of interviews. She planned to have Judith conduct the first part, which covered basic in-store processes, and determine if the applicant was suitable for moving to the second portion. At that point, Alev would step in for a more in-depth analysis of the potential employee.

Alev had high standards for the staff who represented her brand. Of course, having retail experience was an advantage, but more importantly, Alev wanted her employees to be knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the products. And the most crucial element was for the sales team to exude sexual confidence and embrace a pleasure-positive mindset.

Those who were squeamish about anatomy or judgmental about various sexual practices did not make the cut. In Alev's mind, if a sales associate wasn't comfortable with their own body or desires, how could they possibly sell toys and accessories that could inspire fantasies and pleasure in a potential customer. Alev always told her management team that employees can be trained on administrative processes, but self-confidence and positivity are something someone either possesses or doesn't.

Alev scurried around her four-bedroom home, which offered more than enough extravagance and space for her. Alev loved comfort and luxury, and while she sometimes felt that her domicile was a little too big for one person, Alev knew she deserved such an indulgence; she certainly worked hard to achieve it.

It was, of course, immaculate in every way.

Exiting her home, Alev jumped into her white Porsche Boxster convertible and traveled up the rolling hills of San Francisco on her way to The Castro District. Alev arrived in front of Wicked Orchid within twenty minutes, ready to begin the day.

Before getting out of the convertible, Alev smoothed down the silk material of her cream-colored pantsuit, which accentuated her shapely, hourglass figure, offsetting her light olive complexion beautifully. She took one last glance at her reflection, patting her perfectly coiffed, asymmetrical bobbed haircut that gave Alev both a glamorous and slightly androgenous look. Alev was as confident about her appearance as her sexual prowess, and she embodied a strong sense of self-esteem and empowerment.

Alev opened the shop's door, which had already been open to the public for an hour. Alev never tired of looking at the layout of the store, which offered a modern and minimal design that served to highlight the various products. Wicked Orchid was divided into four sections; sex toys, fetish gear, outfits, and novelty party gifts. And while Alev did not believe in branded uniforms, all staff were required to wear black and company name tags, which separated the employees from the customers.

Judith Goodwin caught Alev's eyes from the cash register, giving her a friendly wave. Alev threw her shoulder back and walked into the store with a confident stride. "Good morning, Judith. How has the morning been?"

Judith smiled warmly, shaking Alev's hand. Judith had been the San Francisco store manager for almost eight years, only four years after Alev launched the flagship location.

Twelve years later, the retailer was one of the most popular stores to visit within The Castro and even won accolades from various local publications.

“So far, so good! In fact, I just sold a few Rose Wands within the hour.” Judith was speaking of the newest gadget; a rose-shaped, Bluetooth-enabled clitoral stimulator that was gaining much attention within the sex-positive scene. The toy wasn’t cheap, but it was fast becoming a favorite among many consumers based on rave reviews.

Alev was pleased. “Excellent! Are you ready to start the interviews?” She was eager to get down to business and begin the hiring process.

“Yup, absolutely. Do you want to follow me into the office, and I can show you the list of candidates?” Judith offered. Alev nodded and followed the store manager towards the back, excited to move ahead with their plans.

McKinley awoke with a start. Bolting up from the bed that doubled as a couch, she checked the time on her phone, which read 8:46 am. *Oh, whew, I thought I slept in!* McKinley set her phone alarm for 9:30 am, knowing full well that she had a tendency to press snooze while barely awake. But this morning was going to be different. Today, McKinley was filled with purpose and hope, and nothing—not even her bad sleeping habits—were going to rob her of an exciting opportunity.

She passed by Nelson’s room, heading towards the bathroom, noticing the door was half open; she could see her roommate combing his hair in the mirror, fully dressed. “Hey there,” she said, in a soft voice, not to wake Lucy.

Nelson turned to face McKinley. “Well, hey there, good morning. You’re up early! Excited about today?”

McKinley grinned, nodding enthusiastically. “Oh my god, yes. I even woke up before my alarm.”

Nelson approached the door frame, leaning in to hug McKinley. “I’m excited for you too. Good luck, babe; I’m sure you will get it.”

“I think so. I’m nervous, but I’m hoping it will go well. I’ll let you know as soon as it’s over.” McKinley raced into the shower to prepare herself for the day.

At first, she didn’t even think she would score an interview. It had been four days since she had applied for the Wicked Orchid sales position, and by yesterday morning, she had given up hope. But last night, just after dinner, she received a notification that she had an interview for today at 11:30 am. McKinley was ecstatic. *Maybe things will work out for me after all.*

While McKinley’s passion was in writing and not necessarily sales work, getting a full-time job meant she could contribute more to the home she was currently sharing with Nelson and Lucy. But more so, if she saved enough money, she could eventually move out and find her own place. And besides the financial aspect, McKinley wanted to be a part of a community, to have coworkers and a place to go every day that made her feel productive. As a result, she was filled with positivity and eager to make an excellent first impression.

After carefully selecting an outfit and applying her makeup, McKinley headed out of the apartment and waited for a bus that would take her to The Castro, where Wicked Orchid was located. McKinley was dropped off about a block away and walked towards the main entrance in just under an hour.

Opening the door, she was hit with the scent of vanilla, which was immediately soothing. She paused for a few minutes, taking in the layout. McKinley was struck by how clean, bright, and organized the store was, and the first description that came to mind was high-end.

McKinley was no stranger to sex toys and, in fact, had gathered quite the collection of her own over the years. But

she had never set foot inside such an extravagant shop before; even the lighting was modern and sexy, with its light lavender creating a glow-light effect upon the shiny white shelves. Ambient music filled the space, which created a seductive atmosphere without overpowering the environment. McKinley noticed two sales associates dressed all in black.

She shyly approached the front counter, noticing a tall woman with short blond hair that was shaved into a stylish cut with a name tag that read *Judith*.

Smiling brightly at McKinley, Judith spoke, “Hi! How can I help you?”

“Hi, um, my name is McKinley, and I have an interview today at 11:30 am.” McKinley suddenly became nervous again, clutching a paper copy of her resume in her hand.

Judith’s blue eyes widened. “Oh yes, fantastic! Nice to meet you. My name is Judith Goodwin, and I am the store manager. Thanks for coming in. Did it take you a while to get here?”

“No, no. It was fine; only one bus route. I am already familiar with the area, so it was easy to get here,” McKinley answered while Judith shot her a knowing smile. The Castro area was an epicenter for all things queer, and those who knew shared the knowledge of identity and community. Judith’s smile immediately put McKinley’s mind at ease.

Judith gathered some receipts on the counter, preparing to take McKinley to the office when the McKinley noticed a very tall and dazzlingly attractive woman approaching them.

The woman was dressed in a fitted, pant suit that looked *very* expensive. Her dark brown hair was in the shape of an asymmetrical bob, with the long ends falling just below her

chin and caramel colored highlights running through it. McKinley was most captivated by this woman's eyes, which were a hazel green color, reminding McKinley of the marbles she used to collect as a kid. Her makeup was subtle, as was her jewelry, but whatever she was wearing, McKinley could tell that it wasn't cheap. The woman's poise and confidence were immediately intimidating and McKinley couldn't help herself but stare at her. She was all kinds of feminine but somehow masculine at the same time. Her perfume was intoxicating.

"Hello, ladies. Judith, who's this?" McKinley noticed an accent as the woman spoke, although she couldn't quite place where it was from.

"Alev, this is McKinley Vodden, one of the online applicants. She's here for the 11:30 interview."

Alev stuck out her hand, gripping McKinley's with a sense of self-assurance. "Hi, I'm Alev King, the CEO of Wicked Orchid. Nice to meet you."

"Hi, thanks. Yeah, I'm excited about the interview." McKinley wanted to come across as confident, but something about Alev made her feel awkward and out of sorts.

Alev studied McKinley, nodding silently for almost 30 seconds before responding, "That's good to hear. I love when people are excited to apply and represent the brand."

Judith turned to Alev. "Should I take her back to the office to start the first part of the interview?"

Alev paused, licking her lips. "Actually, I think I'll handle this one myself. I know you have a busy day and don't forget, we have a shipment of vegan-leather floggers coming in today that must be recorded in the POS and then arranged on the shelf."

Judith respectfully nodded. “Of course, sounds good. I’ll deal with that and leave you with McKinley.”

Alev looked at McKinley; her mysterious eyes sparkled from green to a golden yellow and seemed to penetrate McKinley’s soul. “Very good. McKinley, come with me, and let’s get started.”

McKinley followed behind Alev, noticing the height difference but not before her eyes subconsciously rested upon Alev’s supple backside, catching the curves in her hips. *Focus McKinley, focus. Don’t fuck up the interview.*

“Please, take a seat,” Alev offered, pointing to the chair directly across from Alev’s desk. As McKinley got settled, resting her purse beside her, Alev couldn’t help but study McKinley’s tattooed sleeve. While she didn’t have any tattoos, Alev had always been drawn to more alternative styles in women. *She certainly has an interesting look. I wonder what they mean.*

McKinley focused her dark brown eyes on Alev, appearing somewhat self-conscious and earnest. Then, fidgeting a little, McKinley asked shyly, “Um, is everything okay? I’m on time for the interview, yes?”

Alev blinked, not realizing she was staring, although she did enjoy holding McKinley’s attention, seeing her seek approval upon taking a seat. Alev replied, “Of course, you’re on time. If you had been late, I wouldn’t have met with you at all.”

Alev almost heard McKinley swallow as she chuckled awkwardly. “Oh, okay. Well, that’s good. I’m excited to be here.” Alev gave McKinley a slow, sly smile as she leaned back in her chair, crossing her fingers.

“So, my style is a bit different from typical interviews for two reasons. The first is that Wicked Orchid is not a typical

job. Yes, it's a sales position, but we are selling much more than just products; we sell fantasies and desires—tapping into delicious curiosities,” Alev paused, taking in more of McKinley as her eyes rested upon her mouth, which had a petite Medusa piercing in her lip.

“The second reason is that I am less interested in past job experience and more interested in your personality, your essence. The energy you bring to the position will inform our customers about your confidence, which will, in turn, influence their purchasing decisions. Does that make sense?”

McKinley nodded, assuring Alev. “Oh, yeah, for sure. I get it. I actually write some erotica as a hobby, so I am versed in creating fantasies between my characters.”

Alev was intrigued. “Really? Well, that's great to hear. What kind of erotica do you write?”

McKinley replied, “Lesbian, mostly. I mean, I've had experiences with guys when I was younger, but it's all about women for me these days.” McKinley then bit her lip nervously. “Is that, like, too much information?”

Alev smirked. “No, not at all. Wicked Orchid is primarily a sex store for queer women and their partners, so any personal experience or interest in sexuality is a bonus.” While Alev remained in control, she couldn't help but think, *I wonder what she looks like naked and bent over. I wonder what other tattoos and piercings I might find under her clothes.*

Stop it, Alev, this is not a date.

The boss continued, “So, in that case, I'm sure you're familiar with some of the more popular toys, correct? Wicked Orchid carries more high-end brands, although we do offer a

few options of less expensive versions. Have you heard of the Rose Wand?”

McKinley mashed her lips together and shook her head. “No, I’m sorry, I haven’t. But it sounds like a vibrator, right?”

Mmmm, those lips. I can think of some uses for them.

Alev smiled, holding McKinley’s eyes to her own. “Hm mm, that’s right. Here, let me show you.” Alev reached into one of her desk drawers, where she kept a few product demos. She pulled out a rectangular box and opened it, sliding out a thin rod that featured a rose-shaped design at the end.

“This is one of our more popular items, so you must be familiar with it.” Alev traced a single finger, slowing up the shaft, circling the tip of the rose. “It’s a simulator where the rose petals actually massage the tip of the clit, gently sucking it inwards, to simulate a mouth.”

Alev gave a rose tip a few strokes with her fingers. “I’ve personally used it, and it feels so good—almost as good as the real thing.” Alev gave McKinley a playful wink while still remaining professional. She watched as McKinley smiled, clearly interested in the toy. “Wow, that sounds really cool. I’m obviously familiar with vibes, but I’ve never used a sucking one before.”

Alev licked her lips, narrowing her eyes. “Listen, why don’t you take it? It’s never been used, and I think it’s important that you become familiar with such pleasures—especially while you write erotica.”

“Wow, really? Oh my gosh, thank you! I—um...I never had an interview where I’ve been given a sex toy before.” McKinley looked amazed, and Alev smiled, thinking about McKinley using the toy would be a pleasure for her, indeed.

“Another product that I want to show you is the newest item from ShePlay; it’s an anal vibrator made from medical grade silicone that comes with a remote control.” Alev turned towards a rack behind her desk and retrieved a square box. Opening the top, she pulled out a small item featuring a protruding nub.

Leaning closer to McKinley, like a cat peering at its prey, Alev explained, “You can use it to stimulate the opening of the anus, or you can slip it inside. Are you comfortable discussing anal toys? Is this something you have experience in?”

Shouldn’t have asked that, but couldn’t resist, Alev thought to herself.

McKinley blushed, which Alev found endearing; she enjoyed toying a little with McKinley, looking to see how comfortable she was with the offerings at Wild Orchid. “Well, yes, I’ve tried, like fingers and a bit of tongue, but I haven’t used an anal toy before.”

Alev waved her hand, dismissing McKinley’s lack of experience. “It’s not a requirement to work here. I’m just more interested in your comfort level because many women enjoy anal play, and as a sales associate, you need to be comfortable discussing these interests.”

“Oh, of course. I’m not shy about that. I just need more experience with toys, but I’m definitely cool with all sorts of desires.” Then, with a sparkle in her eye, McKinley added, “I’m also curious to try new things, which could probably help when suggesting toys for customers, right?”

Pull yourself together, Alev. She’s a potential employee, not your next fuck.

Alev grinned. “Yes, exactly, you got it. I like how open-minded you are, and that’s an important quality in a sales associate for Wicked Orchid.”

Alev decided to end the interview soon afterwards. Her eyes were too busy straying over McKinley’s hot young body and her questions were beginning to stray into unprofessional territory. Alev’s mind was flooded with many many questions she wanted to ask McKinley, mostly about her sex life, none relevant to the job in question. Also, more candidates were scheduled for that day, and Alev was required to stay on track. Rising from her desk, Alev stuck out her hand and thanked McKinley for coming in.

“Will I hear back either way or do you only call those selected for the position?” McKinley asked.

“To be honest, I only have time to call those I plan to hire. So, if you don’t hear back within three days, assume you weren’t hired. But it was a pleasure regardless. If anything, a woman named Maya Cohen, who is my Executive Assistant, will be in contact on my behalf.”

Alev walked McKinley to the door and returned to her desk. She had some thinking to do, but one thing was for sure; McKinley Vodden certainly intrigued her, and there was something about her innocence that made Alev’s mouth water. *If she weren’t applying for the job, she would make quite the tasty snack!*

CHAPTER 6

“Eat whatever you like, girl. It’s on me today!” Lucy enthusiastically handed McKinley a menu, squirming like a little girl in her seat. The roommates grinned at each other, and McKinley felt grateful for her companion. Lucy had scored some serious money during a private webcam chat with one of her best clients and decided to treat McKinley for lunch.

“Let’s go to The Wharf,” Lucy had suggested, referring to one of the most elegant restaurants in the Bay area, with an expansive patio overlooking The Golden Gate Bridge. McKinley could never have afforded such a decadent meal and was already feeling like a burden in the home. If anything, McKinley was trying to remain more scarce until she sorted out her job situation, so the last thing she wanted was a free lunch.

But when she had tried to resist, Lucy wouldn’t take no for an answer. “Look, I rarely make *that* much money in *such* a short period of time, and I want to celebrate with my roomie. Besides, I am taking the rest of the day off anyway, so why not enjoy a few glasses of wine and some fresh seafood together?” McKinley bit her lip with uncertainty, and Lucy whined, “Come *on*, Kins! I know you feel bad about things right now,

but I honestly adore you, and we never get to spend any one-on-one time together. It won't be fun without you."

Finally, McKinley decided to join Lucy, and within a few hours, the women found themselves outside overlooking the ocean when a server dropped by and handed them two menus. McKinley surveyed the options, trying to choose the least expensive item, when Lucy exclaimed, "I know what I want! I'm getting the Lobster Thermidor. See anything you like?"

"Um, I'm not sure. I thought about the clam chowder in a bread bowl," McKinley squinted as she perused the menu items. "Or maybe the fresh crab salad."

McKinley put down her menu and gave her a look. "You mean as an appetizer, right? There are *so* many good things on the menu. You wanna get a *salad*?"

"I'm just not that hungry, Luce." So as not to offend her friend, McKinley decided to compromise. "How about this? I'll get the soup as an appetizer and the salad as my main. Would that make you happy?"

Playfully, Lucy rolled her eyes. "*Fine*. You know I appreciate a basic bitch like you. But," Lucy pointed a long, dark finger at McKinley, "You are *also* having some wine because I'm grabbing a bottle, and I refuse to drink the whole thing alone."

McKinley grinned at Lucy, remembering why she loved her roomie so much. Lucy could be quite dramatic, but she had a warm heart and always came from a good place. "Deal." The women high-fived each other just before the server came by to take their order.

Once settled, Lucy leaned in closer. "So? How did it go? I never had a chance to ask. I was dancing at Landslide last

night, and by the time I got home, it was close to 4:00 am.” McKinley was eager to share the details of her interview at Wicked Orchid.

Smiling as she spoke, McKinley replied, “Well, it sure was interesting! I learned about a few new toys at the store, and I even got a Rose Wand to take home.”

Lucy interrupted her, “Wait, sorry. You got a Rose Wand during your interview? Damn, I’ve wanted one of those for a while! What else happened?”

McKinley continued, “Yup! The woman who interviewed me, fuck, she was like super hot—Her name was like Alex, but not Alex?—said it would be good for me to be familiar with the items in the shop and offered me an extra toy that she had in storage.”

Lucy put both hands on the table, exclaiming, “No, honey. You’re talking about Alev—the-Alev King! She’s the CEO of the entire Wicked Orchid brand. She’s a *fucking lesbian legend!*”

McKinley’s eyes widened. “Oh! I-I didn’t know that. Wow, that’s pretty cool.” McKinley gave Lucy a sly smile. “She’s super hot too. She has the most incredible eyes, and her style was like kind of masculine but still feminine, and she wore like a really expensive suit and expensive boots.”

“Girl, you don’t even know. Supposedly, Alev is a total player and dynamite in bed. Like, she’s obviously a total boss and rich as hell.” Lucy motioned for McKinley to come closer as she whispered, “So there’s a girl I dance with, and she also does some escorting on the side. Apparently, one night she was hired by Alev for a date. Well, let me tell you. My girl got *paid*, and not only that, she said that Alev fucked her better

than anyone she's had in her life! But don't spread that around cause I know Betty would be pissed if it got out."

McKinley shook her head vehemently. "No, no, never. But wow, that's pretty crazy." McKinley stopped to think about Alev and how the woman seemed to devour McKinley with her eyes while still remaining so cool and professional. *I wonder if she was hitting on me?*

McKinley continued, "I mean, I *feel* like the interview went well. I'd love to work for someone like Alev, and the store is absolutely gorgeous. She seemed to like me." Then, while folding a napkin in her lap, McKinley added, with a shrug, "I hope I get the job. But, apparently, they'll only call me if I do, so I'm just waiting it out." McKinley was excited about the opportunity, but she didn't want to get her hopes up.

Lucy softened her gaze. "I'm sure it will work out, babe. I mean, Alev gave you a sex toy so that you could better understand the products. If she didn't want you selling items at Wicked Orchid, why would she bother?" Then, grabbing McKinley's hand, she squeezed with reassurance. "It's gonna be okay. I promise.

"Yea, I'm just—" Suddenly, McKinley's phone rang. Digging into her purse to retrieve it, she noticed a no caller-ID for the number. Furrowing her brow, McKinley paused. She never answered numbers she wasn't familiar with. Still, a nagging feeling in the pit of her stomach told her to pick up.

"Hello?" McKinley answered. Lucy studied her roommate while the server came by with a bottle of wine and two glasses. "Oh? Oh really?" Lucy's eyes widened, and McKinley grabbed her hand from across the table. "Oh my god, that's great! When do I start?" Lucy shrieked from her seat and held McKinley's hand even tighter. McKinley finished the

conversation, “Okay...okay, yes, that sounds wonderful. I’m very excited, and thank you so much for calling.” Upon ending the call, McKinley bolted from her seat and exclaimed, “Oh my god! I got the job!”

Lucy stood up and hugged her roommate tightly. “Oh, Kins! I’m so happy for you! Nelson will be pleased too. That’s so awesome. When do you start?”

“I start my training tomorrow at noon. I’m supposed to wear all black too.” McKinley was reeling from the good news, almost in disbelief. “Oh my god, I’m so excited! This couldn’t have come at a more perfect time.”

Lucy sat down and motioned for her friend to do the same. “It’s definitely time to celebrate. Let’s toast to a new job and an exciting future at Wicked Orchid.” Lucy poured a generous glass of Chardonnay for McKinley, and the women clinked glasses. Given that another woman who claimed to be Ms. King’s assistant had called her instead of Alev, McKinley was also eager to see her new boss again. There was something about how she had *felt* in that interview with Alev’s intense eyes all over her that she couldn’t get out of her head.

The women continued their lunch as a gentle breeze blew from the coast, invigorating McKinley with newfound energy she had been craving for months.

“**H**m mm, yes, that’s right,” Alev cradled her Samsung to her ear while checking her watch. She was eager to get to the store, but not before providing Maya with explicit instructions. “No, my focus is going to be on the flagship store for the next month, so I’ll need you to keep an eye on the other locations.”

Maya replied, inquiring about minor details, and Alev rolled her eyes. *God, I adore Maya, but I swear, she needs more directions than a map. I don’t have time for this today.* But as irritated as she could get with her longtime assistant, she knew that excellent employees were hard to find. She valued her working relationship too much to show too much of her obvious annoyance.

After confirming upcoming tasks and projects, Alev hung up and headed to Wicked Orchid. She wanted to turn her attention toward the Lust for Lexi product, and after struggling to get that new girl, McKinley out of her head, Alev thought she had just the opportunity for her.

It wasn’t often that Alev sought the help of sales associates at the store, but whenever someone showed promise, Alev wanted to utilize their skills. According to McKinley’s CV, the young woman was an experienced writer with a penchant for

lesbian erotica. *She seems like a good fit for this component; I definitely need to talk to her.*

Upon entering the shop, Alev spoke briefly to Judith. It was McKinley's first day, and she was about to start her training. Addressing the store manager's authority, Alev claimed, "I'll need to talk to McKinley when she comes in, just before the onboarding. When is she expected to arrive?"

Nervously, Judith bit her lip. "Um, well, about a half-hour ago." Judith knew Alev had no tolerance for lateness, and the manager was concerned about receiving the CEO's wrath. Alev raised her eyebrows, putting her hands on her hip. "Oh, is that so? It's her first day. That's not a good look."

Just as Judith and Alev exchanged glances, McKinley burst through the front door. "Oh my goodness, I am *so sorry* I'm late! The bus I normally take decided to switch routes because of construction, so I hailed a cab to get here." As McKinley took off her jacket, Alev couldn't help but notice the new trainee was dressed in a plain black catsuit that showed off her slender physique. Lovely long legs and those firm breasts and her wild multicolored mermaid hair tied up and loose curls escaping the band it was meant to be in. *Mmmm. Well, at least she knew to dress in all black. God, I want to fuck her.*

But Alev couldn't let superficial attraction detract from the issue. Sternly, Alev spoke, "McKinley, I don't tolerate lateness, especially from a new employee in training. Why didn't you call the store to let Judith know?"

McKinley blushed, tucking a strand of turquoise hair behind her ear, looking nervous. "I-I'm sorry. I don't know. I guess I was just trying to figure out how to get here as fast as possible. It slipped my mind." Alev studied McKinley's

expression, noticing her glossy brown eyes forming tears. She decided to back down to give McKinley a break.

Waving her hand, Alev continued, “I’m a hard woman to please, McKinley, and this morning, so far, you haven’t pleased me at all. Do you think you can try and remedy that?”

McKinley nodded eagerly like a puppy eager to learn how to please her new master.

A good spanking would sort her out.

Stop it, Alev.

Turning to Judith, Alev spoke as though McKinley wasn’t in front of them. “Once she puts away her things, tell her to come into my office.” Turning on her heel, Alev marched towards the back of the store as McKinley hurried to get settled.

Within ten minutes, she heard a soft knock at her door. “Yes, come in.” McKinley slowly entered Alev’s office, wearing a sheepish expression. “Hi, um, again, I am so sorry. I promise it won’t happen again.”

Curtly, Alev answered, “Take a seat. I’m sure you can make it up to me.”

“I reviewed your resume last night and noticed you are a writer. Can you tell me more about that?” Alev leaned back in her chair, taking in McKinley’s presence. She was yet again intrigued by her. Was it more than the merely physical? McKinley seemed like a creative and vibrant individual, and she was keen to tap into her talents.

“Sure! I graduated from college, and my dream was to become an author of children’s books. I tried that for a while, but it didn’t really pan out,” McKinley dropped her eyes and blushed again, appearing slightly disappointed. “Um, anyway,

after needing a change of pace, I decided to turn my interest to erotica. I wrote a short story that a small, independent publishing company published in Austin, where I'm from."

With a small sigh, McKinley continued, "I'd like to write more, but since moving to San Francisco, it's been hard getting settled. More than anything, I needed a job, so hopefully, once things are more stable, I can start writing again."

Alev nodded. "Hmm, okay. Well, it's good to hear that you are still interested in writing because I have an opportunity for you." Taking a breath, Alev leaned in closer. "I've been developing a new product called Lust for Lexi, an intuitive dildo and VR headset combination product that is powered by AI technology. I need someone to write sexy content that the product would eventually express."

McKinley's eyes widened. "Whoa! Like, a robot sex toy? Wow, that's really cool!" Alev couldn't help but chuckle at McKinley's enthusiasm. "Yes, exactly like a robot. Sex and tech is a new frontier for the industry; it's a trend that will continue to grow, and I want Wicked Orchid to be one of the first brands that can offer this product to women."

Alev pulled out a contact sheet that laid out the specifics of the product. "My issue is that I am incredibly swamped, and I'd like to involve someone who can write content. Considering your background, I thought you might be up for the opportunity. What do you say?"

McKinley beamed. "Oh my god, I'd *love* to! Would this be during my shifts or extra hours? I mean, I want to do it. I'm just curious about how that would work?"

"Some of the work would have to be aside from your sales shifts. But you would be paid a premium for your time. We'd

meet in my office after hours and discuss each component, and from there, you would craft some text for me to review. I imagine it would be about two extra hours, a few times a week. Think of it as supplementary income,” Alev explained.

“Oh my god, yes. Not only do I need the money, but I would love the chance to work on this project with you. Thanks so much for thinking of me.” McKinley was glowing with appreciation, and Alev enjoyed her enthusiasm.

“Excellent. We can start in the next few days after you’ve had some training in the store with Judith. But one last thing,” McKinley reached out, placing a few fingers on top of McKinley’s warm hand, “Don’t be late again, or you won’t have a job at all.”

McKinley bobbed her head with understanding. “Of course not—I promise. I’m too excited about this opportunity to mess it up.” McKinley and Alev locked eyes before Alev dismissed her from her office. “Alright, Judith needs to talk to you now, so I’ll leave you to it.”

After McKinley left, Alev could still feel the electric heat that emanated from McKinley’s hand. Something about that soft touch seemed to connect her to the employee. But even though Alev felt a spark, she vowed never to get involved with a Wicked Orchid staff member. Alev had a voracious appetite for sex, but above that, she was a consummate professional unwilling to risk her success for a crush.

Yet, here was this McKinley and her lovely lean body in tight black pants and shirt with her wild mermaid hair. She moved with the ease and grace of a dancer and had that lovely delicate earnest face.

For god’s sake, try not to fuck her, Alev.

“Here you go, honey. You good for cream?” Nelson asked McKinley, handing over a steaming mug of coffee. McKinley took it from Nelson, breathing in the fresh-brewed aroma, feeling more awake. The roommates were sitting in the kitchen, preparing for their morning.

McKinley was sharing her first week of training at Wicked Orchid, informing Nelson of her additional project with Alev. Filled with newfound confidence, McKinley was pleased to see Nelson so proud of her recent position. *See? I'm not a total fuck-up. Not only did I get a full-time job, but I could also exercise my talents as a writer.*

The tension between her and Nelson that had built over the past few months seemed to dissipate, and she found Nelson returning to the warm, supportive person she knew when she had first moved to San Francisco.

“Thanks so much, but I gotta run. Alev asked me to bring in some writing samples to use towards content for her new product, so I don't want to be late.” She rested the half-drunk mug on the kitchen table and kissed Nelson. He patted her face playfully, like a loving relative, before returning her goodbye.

Over the past week, McKinley grew to enjoy the store more and more and also many of her coworkers. Most of them seemed to be in the same boat as McKinley; artists, musicians, or students who were still honing their craft without pay for their talents. And all of the women who worked there were very sex-positive and aside from Angela—who was completely heterosexual—the coworkers were all varying degrees of queer, making McKinley feel right at home.

She became inspired by her surroundings and the colorful personalities that made up the Wicked Orchid team. While it had been a few years since McKinley published a book of lesbian erotica, she began to play with plot outlines in her mind, crafting characters loosely based on her coworkers. She greatly appreciated the creative motivation. McKinley felt she was a part of something larger than just selling sex toys to women. For the first time, she felt like she was a part of a community, making San Francisco feel like home.

McKinley arrived at Wicked Orchid twenty minutes early for her shift. After the stern talking from Alev on her first day, she vowed never to make that mistake again. McKinley was filled with an unfamiliar feeling whenever she was around Alev that combined intimidation, fascination, respect, and lust. There was something electric about Alev's energy that captivated McKinley and expanded her own sense of self. Whenever she found herself in the presence of the sexy and powerful force that made up the CEO, McKinley tapped into her own strength, empowering herself in ways she hadn't since moving from Austin.

“Oh great! You're here early—thank god.” Judith waved McKinley over to the front cash register. “I hate to ask, but I was wondering if you wanted to start a few minutes early. If so, I'll let you go a half-hour before your shift ends tonight?”

McKinley shrugged happily. “Sure! It’s no problem for me. I’d rather start early than arrive late.” She was eager to make a good impression, inspired by Alev’s vision and the opportunity for full-time employment.

Judith breathed a sigh of relief. “Oh, thank god—you’re a lifesaver.” Judith lowered her voice and leaned into McKinley, “Alev’s in the office, and she is not in a good mood. Apparently, Tawny ordered the wrong brand of lingerie for the outfits section, and Alev is having a fit. She needs someone to help her go through it to see if it’s something we can even sell here. Wanna help her out?”

McKinley’s pulse quickened at the sound of Alev’s name, and her body became instantly alert. Then, trying to sound calm, she casually replied, “Yeah, no problem. Where is she? In the back?”

Judith nodded. “Yup. When you’re done, I’ll have you price some of the tentacle dildos that just arrived. Man, I can’t believe how popular they are! I’ve been waiting for this delivery for a few days now; we already have some on reserve for customers who’ve been waiting.”

McKinley smiled reassuringly. “All good—happy to help. I’ll be back asap.” McKinley headed towards Alev’s office, hearing the sounds of ripping plastic and the thumping of cardboard boxes.

Knocking on the door, McKinley called out, “Ms. King? Hey, it’s McKinley. I’m here to help you out.”

Before she heard a reply, Alev swung open the door, her face slightly flushed. McKinley couldn’t help but smile at the sight of Alev’s rosy cheeks and glossy lips and the fire burning in her eyes. She couldn’t help noticing her emerald linen pant suit that perfectly complemented Alev’s green-hazel eyes.

God, she looks like a model for a corporate magazine. She is just always immaculate.

Appearing slightly frazzled, Alev ran a hand through her dark smooth bobbed hair, pulling herself together at the sight of McKinley. Then, rolling her shoulders back and straightening her shoulders, Alev put her hands on her hips and glanced down at McKinley. “Did Judith send you?” McKinley guessed that Alev must have been around 5’11”, towering above McKinley’s petite frame.

McKinley gulped nervously. “Um, yep. I’m here to help you with the lingerie?” Being alone in Alev’s office thrilled McKinley but also made her nervous.

“Hm, okay, good. I can definitely use your help. Come in,” Alev ushered McKinley inside, and McKinley noticed boxes towering on top of one another. Alev motioned towards the unboxed items. “This is a line called Xtassy, which we’ve never carried before. All of our lingerie comes from Queen Slink, which I prefer because that company is completely female-owned and operated. I’ve never been a fan of the branding of Xtassy, but since we have all of these pieces, I’m trying to figure out a way to market the line inside Wicked.”

Alev moved slowly like a panther, touching a delicate, manicured finger to her lips. Her nails were short and square. “Hmm, maybe we could do some in-house photos and create our own posters and signage. I don’t want to use their marketing material at all.”

McKinley asked, “Why not?” Feeling slightly self-conscious, she twirled a hot-pink strand of hair that fell forward over her shoulder, “I’m just not, like, familiar with this line.”

Alev turned to look at McKinley, focusing her eyes like lasers. “I think it’s cheesy and trashy. I hold all products to a very high standard, and I’m very disappointed in Tawny’s choice. The two of us will need to have a talk. I mean, the outfits themselves aren’t *bad*, so I’m torn between tossing it all and losing a few thousand dollars. Or selling it in-house and seeing if we can make the best of it.” Alev redirected the conversation casually. “Do you wear lingerie?”

McKinley opened her mouth, but no sound escaped. She wasn’t much of a fan, preferring to keep her clothing cheap and cheerful, with basic undergarments. The only decorative aspects of McKinley were her multicoloured hair, piercings, and tattoos. Aside from that, her fashion sense was basic. But she also wanted to impress Alev, so she racked her brain for the best answer.

“Um, *sometimes*, you know, if I have a *date* or something,” McKinley caught Alev’s coy smile as the CEO gave McKinley a quick once-over with her eyes. McKinley felt like she was being devoured by Alev’s eyes, as though they were burning through her clothes. “Could I see a few pieces? I’m curious what they sent.”

Alev’s small grin widened and curled into a broad smile, and instantly, McKinley was mesmerized. “I have a better idea. Do you want to try a few pieces on?” Alev’s glance danced across McKinley’s breasts, moving downwards over her hips, “You’ve got a great body, and I’m sure whatever you tried on would look fantastic.” Alev’s expression then tightened again. “If you like the items, we could do a photo shoot for the store.”

“Seriously? For sure!” Excited, McKinley exclaimed, “I’d *love* to. What’s first?” Alev dug around in a box closest to her

feet and pulled out a black lace bodysuit wrapped in cellophane. “Let’s try this one,” Alev suggested, removing the plastic.

Immediately, McKinley pulled her black shirt over her head, exposing her small, perky breasts. McKinley was not a fan of bras, and aside from being nervous around Alev, she had always been very free with her body and with nudity in general. A big reason she chose to move to the Bay area was to live in a more liberated part of the United States, and she was eager to express herself beyond just her writing.

“Um, you can use the staff restroom if you prefer,” Alev offered. But McKinley shrugged. “Nah, it’s fine. I don’t care. I figured this would be faster anyway.” But within a split second, McKinley backtracked, “I mean, *if* you don’t care. Is this okay?”

Alev remained cool and unaffected. “It’s fine with me; it’s your body. And besides, I do appreciate someone so comfortable because it makes the customers feel at ease when selecting intimate items. I just don’t want you to feel pressure. We are as professional as we are fun, so whatever you are comfortable with is cool.”

“Awesome,” McKinley cheerfully replied. Then, grabbing the bodysuit from Alev, she bent over to remove her black leggings, slipping the body suit over her legs and sliding the material over her torso. “Do you have a mirror?”

“Of course, right over here.” Alev opened a closet door to reveal a mirror hanging on the back. McKinley stepped towards the closet and studied her reflection. She was slightly shocked at how sexy she looked, never having worn something so flattering yet so revealing. Smoothing down the

fabric, she turned slightly to admire her profile. “Wow, I *love* it! And the material is really soft. It’s a great cut too.”

Alev stood closely behind McKinley, also gazing at the employee’s reflection. Nodding slowly, McKinley noticed Alev’s expression of approval. “You know what? You are absolutely right. It looks great on you, and I can see the quality in the detailing.” Alev caught McKinley’s eyes in the mirror. “Do you think you’d like to model it for the store?”

McKinley turned to face Alev. “Oh my god, I would absolutely love to. I feel so sexy in it!”

“Good, good. Actually, turn around for a second,” Alev directed McKinley and McKinley felt a hand adjust the spaghetti straps at the center of her back. Alev’s adjustments sent delicious shivers up McKinley’s arms, and without even thinking, she found herself backing up against Alev, leaning into her touch.

Within a second, Alev backed away, noting, “I just needed to adjust the straps to fit better across your breasts. But otherwise, it looks great.” McKinley instantly felt as though her desire had been exposed. Awkwardly, McKinley replied, “Oh, um, yes, thanks.” She stepped away from her boss, unable to make eye contact.

But Alev was keen to continue and offered McKinley another item: a two-piece bra and panty set. Wanting more time with Alev in the office, McKinley gladly accepted the lingerie, but she turned her back to remove the bodysuit. She felt shy suddenly.

“McKinley? It’s *Alev*.” McKinley turned her shoulder, slightly confused. “Sorry, what?”

“You called me Ms. King when you first came in. Just call me Alev, okay?” Alev commanded, and as McKinley nodded, turning back to face the wall, she felt a deep flush running over her face. This was so erotic. Alev was so attractive.

““O h, thank you, Emile. You can just sit the snacks down here.” Alev lowered her sunglasses, directing her housekeeper. Emile carefully extracted a platter of appetizers from her silver tray, gently setting it on the table beside Alev’s pool deck lounge. She then lowered a Dirty Martini towards Alev, who took it in her hands.

“It looks like a beautiful afternoon, Ms. King; a perfect day to be poolside,” Emile noted in a thick Brazilian accent, looking up towards the sun. Emile had been Alev’s housekeeper for close to 16 years. And while Emile was the closest person to Alev, she insisted on calling her boss by her last name, even though Alev tried to discourage it.

“Mm hmm. You’re right. The sun feels wonderful on my face.” Alev stretched out on her lounge, adjusting her high-cut, designer one-piece bathing suit. Before retreating into the house, Emile asked, “What time are you expecting your guest?”

Alev checked her delicate wristwatch. “She should be here in about three minutes.” After a chat, Catherine now understood that while Alev was emotionally unavailable, the powerful businesswoman was still interested in indulging in

physical pleasures. So, Alev agreed to spend the day with her, understanding that conventional dating was off the table.

Alev felt overworked and needed a release that she could only find within the deep recesses of an intense orgasm. She also took great pleasure in ensuring that Catherine enjoyed herself as well. Besides business matters, Alev's other superpower was sex. She was dominant, voracious, and a true seductress. She gave what she couldn't share of her heart with her body.

"Excellent, Ms. King. I will escort her to the patio as soon as she arrives." Emile politely nodded and turned to leave Alev by the pool deck.

Once alone, Alev's thoughts turned to McKinley. She'd been replaying memories of McKinley trying on the Xtassy lingerie for days, unable to get the images of McKinley's taunt body and beautiful breasts out of her mind. Even with Alev's strict rule of never hooking up with her Wicked Orchid staff, Alev found herself fantasizing about the new hire and sensed that McKinley felt the same about her.

But there was something else besides raw attraction that drew Alev to McKinley. The young woman seemed bright and imaginative, and Alev was eager to learn more about her talents and utilize McKinley's skills beyond selling sex toys. There was more to McKinley than met the eye, and Alev was captivated by her style and youthful sensuality.

As the heat warmed Alev's core, she became conscious of a tingling sensation traveling across her belly. Knowing she was hidden amongst the landscaping surrounding the high fence along the pool deck, Alev's hand began to wander up towards her inner thigh, resting against the soft skin inches

away from her vulva. The more she tapped into the sensations of her own caresses, the more aroused she became.

Alev leaned her head back, stretching her right leg while keeping her left leg bent. She slowly moved her right hand over her pubic bone, resting it on the fabric of her bathing suit. Alev's fingers began to inch towards her vulva, her fingers curling to tickle the tip of her clit.

Expelling a sigh, Alev rocked her hips back and continued touching herself over the bathing costume.

With eyes closed, she imagined McKinley's rose-colored nipples poking out from the black mesh bodysuit, and Alev's mouth began to water. She wanted to suck on those nipples, tease them with her tongue. Her fingers then crawled underneath the bathing suit material until Alev found the lips of her pussy, warm and dewy with desire. With one hand, she wet her fingers in her desire and then moved them up to her clitoris.

Alev circled a finger lazily around her clit while thinking back to McKinley's image in the mirror. With her back to Alev, Alev had had a view of McKinley's small round ass with its little plump cheeks. As Alev rubbed herself harder, waves of pleasure echoed throughout her entire body. She fantasized about running her tongue down McKinley's behind, lower and lower, until she reached the crack of her ass. An insatiable hunger overcame Alev as her senses heightened with every stroke of her throbbing clit.

Alev pictured herself bending McKinley over while stroking her strap-on, preparing to plunge deep inside McKinley. Her hips gyrated in her chair as she massaged her clit faster and faster, softly moaning and aching for a release.

It was merely seconds before an explosion of ecstasy burst inside of her. Alev's eyes rolled back into her head as her toes pointed and flexed. All of her muscles suddenly tensed and then softened as a delicious orgasm carried her from the heavens, placing her gently back on earth.

Only a minute had passed before Alev heard Emile's voice through the sliding screen door. *Shit, Catherine's here!* Alev quickly adjusted her bathing suit, well aware of her swollen lips and quivering legs.

Putting her on Gucci sunglasses, Alev cleared her throat and sat up in her chair. Then, waving to Catherine, Alev exclaimed, "Right over here, doll. Come take a seat." Catherine beamed widely, strolling over to sit beside Alev. Alev barely could catch her breath.

Stop thinking about your fucking your employee, for god's sake.

McKinley scrolled through her phone while leaning back in a hard plastic chair, an uneaten, plastic-wrapped sandwich remained in front of her, but McKinley was too excited to eat. Even though she only had a 30-minute lunch break, McKinley was more focused on selecting the best passages of erotica to present to Alev.

McKinley heard the doorknob turn on the staff room door. Twisting her neck, Judith popped her head in, waving at McKinley. “Hey there. Sorry to disrupt your lunch. When you’re back on the floor, Alev wants to see you.”

“Oh, okay. I thought we were meeting at 5:00 pm, after my shift?” McKinley asked. But Judith shook her head. “Not anymore. She has to leave the store early today, so you’ll meet with her, and I’ll get you to dust the shelves. We might as well clean a bit while the store is quiet.”

It was a Monday afternoon, the slowest day of the week at Wicked Orchid. Originally, Alev wanted to meet with McKinley at the end of the day, and she was looking forward to spending more one-on-one time with Alev without rushing away. McKinley was disappointed to learn that their time would be limited, but she didn’t dare show it on her face.

“Okay, cool, sounds good. I’ll be out in a few minutes,” McKinley looked at her sandwich, suddenly feeling hungry. Then, looking up at Judith, she added, “I’m just gonna scarf this down.”

“No worries, I’ll see you out there.” Judith closed the door, leaving McKinley to her thoughts. Putting her phone away, McKinley unwrapped the sandwich, devouring it hungrily before gathering her belongings.

As she approached Alev’s office, her heart was pounding, and she felt her palms begin to sweat. It had been years since McKinley shared her writing with someone. Her only claim to fame was having a short story published in an anthology of queer female writers over two years ago.

At the time, she thought it was a great start to her literary career and was excited about future opportunities with the publishing house. But the company had since rejected every submission, and McKinley soon found herself spiraling into a depression, losing her creative spark. So, when Alev became interested in McKinley’s work, providing her a chance to collaborate, McKinley felt both excited and anxious, for she had yet to rebuild her confidence as a writer.

McKinley knocked on Alev’s door and immediately heard Alev exclaim, “Come in.” McKinley entered the office slowly, constantly aware of Alev’s tough demeanor. Even if it seemed as though Alev liked her, McKinley was careful never to get on Alev’s bad side. She had heard Alev’s wrath first-hand and wasn’t about to put herself in such a position, especially in being so attracted to her boss.

“Hey, how are you?” McKinley asked, exuding a sunny disposition while desire glowed like amber within her core. “I brought some writing samples to review.”

Avoiding eye contact, Alev cleared some files off her desk and cleared her throat. She *seems distracted. Maybe she's too busy to meet?* “Is this a good time? We can do this another day if you’re busy?” McKinley suggested. But Alev waved her hand dismissively, finally connecting her eyes to McKinley. “No, no. This is a perfect time. Actually, It’s the *only* time I have this week. Sit down; let’s see what you’ve got.”

Alev always had a somewhat icy aura of detachment that McKinley chalked up to Alev’s no-nonsense professionalism. But McKinley noticed that Alev seemed unusually tense, and the energy in the room made the young writer feel nervous. McKinley froze in her seat, unsure of what to do next.

“I’m preparing for the International Summit; it’s a conference in Japan,” Alev softened, explaining the mess of files on her desk. “That, on top of launching the new product. But don’t mind me; I thrive in chaos. I’m very interested in what you have to present.” This time, Alev’s tone was gentler, putting McKinley at ease.

“Okay,” McKinley smiled, scrolling through her phone to find the bookmarked passage. “Alright, here’s one. You mentioned you needed dialogue, yes?” Alev nodded. “That’s right. The Lust for Lexi product will respond to voice activation. So, I need examples of hot and sexy sentences that we can integrate into the toy. I may not use the dialogue completely verbatim, but it helps to have a template.”

Well, I don’t understand that aspect of technology, but I sure hope she likes what I’ve chosen. Clearing her throat, McKinley selected one of her favorite paragraphs and adjusted herself in her seat before she began reading aloud.

“‘Spread your legs for me,’ Taylor demanded, and Kasey obliged. Taylor then ran her fingers up the soft flesh of Kasey’s

inner thigh, inching towards the soft folds of her vulva. Taylor continued to tease Kasey with her feather-like touch, and Kasey began to moisten. Finally, Taylor leaned into Kasey's ear to whisper, 'Do you want to come again?' Kasey nodded. 'Oh god, yes, please. I need it so bad!'"

McKinley paused for a moment as Alev exclaimed, "Okay, perfect. That's good. I like the commands and questions. That's exactly the sort of thing that we need for the toy. Imagine having a conversation with a lover and talking dirty. Lust for Lexi will be designed to do just that."

McKinley grinned, her nerves morphing into excitement. "Want me to continue?" Alev waved her hand impatiently. "Yes, yes, of course! Keep going."

McKinley drew in a breath and scanned the file on her phone that contained the prose. "Okay, here's one I think you will like."

"'Kasey...I want you. I want to touch you.' Kasey was breathless with desire, fiddling with Taylor's button and zipper fly. 'Take what you want from me.' Taylor bucked her pelvis against Lauren's hand, badly wanting to be fucked. Taylor grunted and moaned. 'Kasey, don't stop. I want you. Put your fingers inside of me.' Kasey curled her fingers deep inside Taylor's hot, wetness. 'Come for me, Tay. I want to hear you come with my fingers deep inside you.' Taylor released a loud moan as Kasey's hand became flooded with Taylor's wetness."

Alev let out an amused chuckle, and suddenly McKinley's face turned red. *Is she laughing at me? Oh god, that's not a good sign.*

Sensing that McKinley may have been embarrassed, Alev shook her head, saying, "No, no, it's *fine*. In fact, it's better than fine. I'm just laughing over the fact that now Kasey is

dominating Taylor. I like the switch-up; it keeps it fresh.” Alev then curled the corners of her mouth into an alluring smile. “I mean, *I’m* not a switch. But cheers to those who can turn like that.”

While McKinley felt relieved, she was confused by what Alev was referring to. “What do you mean? Sorry, what’s a *switch*?”

Alev looked at McKinley in disbelief. “What do you mean, you don’t know? You just wrote about it! It’s when a seemingly more dominant person takes a submissive role to appease their partner. Or because they enjoy being both dominant and submissive.”

“Well, when you put it like that, then, of course, I know what it means. But isn’t sex just like that? Giving and receiving?” McKinley asked, intrigued by Alev’s perspective.

“It’s true that some people can embrace both roles but not everyone. Personally, I am dominant, and I prefer to remain that way. I don’t submit during sex. In fact, I don’t submit, period.” Alev rolled her shoulders back stubbornly.

“Oh, so you are, like, a *Top*,” McKinley surmised. “Okay, yeah, I get it. I’ve known a few women like you, but not many. But my roommate Nelson would describe himself as a Top I think.”

“So, tell me,” Alev licked her lips and leaned closer towards McKinley, “Are you a *switch*? Or are you a *sub*?” McKinley blushed again, this time from being put on the spot. Something about the way that Alev looked at her made McKinley’s stomach quiver with delight.

“Um, well, what makes you think I’m not a Dom?” McKinley, trying to keep up with Alev’s teasing. McKinley

knew she was not particularly dominant, but she wanted to keep Alev guessing and flirt a bit.

Upon hearing McKinley's response, Alev burst out laughing. "Now *that's* funny. Sorry, McKinley, but I'd never fall for that. You're far too," Alev paused, her eyes scanning McKinley's face and breasts, "*sweet* to be dominant. But you're also a lovely person and smart, so don't sweat it. The world needs people like you."

McKinley couldn't tell if Alev was making fun of her or just being playful, but regardless, McKinley found herself tingling with arousal. Their banter was becoming flirtatious, and McKinley wanted more.

"You're right; I'm not dominant. But I am interested in switching it up—maybe trying to assume more control in the bedroom." McKinley mused, adding to the rapport. "Maybe that's why I create the types of characters that I do. I'm always interested in experimenting with new things and sexual energy."

Alev remained still and silent. Her expression remained unreadable, but her eyes were focused on McKinley's. The tension between them was thick, and it almost seemed as though they were at a standstill. McKinley wasn't sure if she took the conversation too far, but she couldn't help it. Alev's presence *did things* to her, and McKinley found herself walking the line between friendly and flirtatious. *Girl, what are you doing? She's your boss—the boss! Come back down to Earth and stay focused.*

Suddenly, there was a knock at Alev's office, and both women heard Judith's voice come through as she poked her head inside. "Sorry to disturb you. I was just wondering if

McKinley is free to come help with a shipment that just came in?”

McKinley looked at Alev, who remained cool. “Of course, she’s all yours.” To McKinley’s disappointment, Alev dismissed her instantly, and McKinley stood to leave. “Was any of that helpful for you? Did you want to hear more erotica at some point?”

Alev barely nodded, still as a statue. “So far, it was great. I’m sure we will reconvene in the future. But Judith needs you right now, so go and help her.”

McKinley looked at Judith, giving her a wane smile. “Yup, for sure. Just tell me what you need.” McKinley left the office, feeling worked up, wondering if she could change her panties in the restroom before starting the next task in her day.

““**T**hanks, Judith. And one more thing,” Alev cradled her phone into her shoulder while her hands were full of newly packaged merchandise. “Could you please schedule McKinley and Autumn for the Xstassy photoshoot?... Hm mm. Yes, that’s right. We are doing it in-house tomorrow.”

Ever since the day McKinley tried on the new lingerie at the store, Alev was inspired to get McKinley in front of the camera. She was in awe of how well the pieces fit her petite and sexy physique, and she knew McKinley would make an incredible model for Wicked Orchid. Her tattoos and hair gave her such an individual look that just brought out the best in the lingerie. Alev also thought that pairing her with Autumn, who was a tall, svelte goth Brunette, the photos would emphasize both their dynamic looks and the styles of Xstassy.

“Excellent—yes, 8:00 pm until approximately 11:00 pm. Regardless of the job, they need to be paid for at least three hours of work... Great, thank you.” Alev hung up after leaving instructions for Judith. She was excited to see McKinley again but also conflicted. Her growing attraction was making it difficult for Alev to focus. Even though she enjoyed flirtatious banter and sexual dominance with various women whenever

she desired, Alev had yet to break her rule about having sex with her staff.

And what made it more challenging was the fact that McKinley seemed to flirt right back. Alev sensed an electric connection between them, making it harder for Alev to maintain her signature cool.

Alev finished some tasks in her office before leaving for the night. She was excited to produce the shoot, hiring her favorite photographer, Ruby. Ruby had done product photos for Wicked Orchid in the past, and Alev knew she would be perfect for capturing the seductive designs of the lingerie.

The next day, Alev arrived at Wicked Orchid, approximately an hour ahead. Ruby was already there, and as soon as Alev entered the store, she came to give Alev a hug.

“Oh my god, it’s so good to see you! It’s been, what, at least two years, right?” Alev wrapped her arms around Ruby, feeling the soft leather material of Ruby’s jacket. Squeezing back, Alev replied, “I’m sure it has. I’m so happy to work with you again. The shots you took of the Queen Slink pieces were so divine. I just knew you’d be perfect for this shoot.”

Ruby stepped back, running her hand over her shaved head, which sported a dragon tattoo on the left side. She pointed to the camera that swung around her neck. “Check it out. It’s my newest weapon—a Nikon D850 DSLR. I’ve wanted to get my hands on this for a few years.” Ruby touched the device with her tattooed fingers, “You are going to love the results. This baby gives the finest details, and the color palette is extraordinary.”

“That’s wonderful. I have no doubt in your skills, no matter the equipment you use.” Alev looked around the store, hoping to catch a glimpse of McKinley. She then heard the

door chimes, and instantly her heart jumped. Turning around quickly, she noticed Autumn entering the store, wearing all black. Autumn saw Alev and Ruby and came over to say hi.

Alev was slightly disappointed that McKinley wasn't here yet, although she also wasn't late. She was hoping to chat with her before the shoot. Instead, Alev approached Judith, who was counting her till, as the store had closed for the night.

"Hi there. How was the day?" Alex asked as Judith concentrated on the coins in her hand. Nodding slightly, Judith replied, "It was good. A little slow in the morning, but the afternoon picked up until after dinner."

Trying her best to sound casual, Alev asked, "Do you know if McKinley is on the way in?"

Judith answered, keeping her eyes on sections of the till. "Um, I'm sure she is. She knows the shoot is at 8:00 pm. What time is it now?"

Alev knew precisely what time it was; she had been checking her watch since arriving. But she wasn't about to let Judith know. "Let's see; it's 7:21 pm."

Judith remarked, "Well, there's lots of time still." Finally taking her eyes off the money, Judith looked up to face Alev. "Trust me; I'm sure McKinley will be on time. She was super excited to model the clothes. She is definitely looking forward to doing this."

Did she say anything about me? Alev wanted to ask but didn't dare. However, it made her feel exhilarated to hear that McKinley was so enthusiastic. And whatever desire Alev felt towards her employee, most of all, she wanted good shots of the lingerie for the store. It was good to know that McKinley

was eager because her positivity would shine through, elevating the outfits, which would help with sales.

Just as Alev turned her back to address Ruby and Autumn, the door chimes clinked again. Instantly, Alev turned her eyes to the entrance as McKinley entered Wicked Orchid. Alev noticed that McKinley's hair was done in long curls that showed off the beautiful colors and she was wearing a bit of makeup; her cheekbones were highlighted, and the shape of her eyes was contoured with black liner. *Ah, very good! Not too much, but it's the perfect amount that would emphasize the overall look.*

As enthusiastic as Alev was to welcome McKinley to the shoot, she also felt the need to remain collected. Alev was never one to fawn over her objects of desire, even if she wanted to.

Judith piped up first, "Hi McKinley, you're right on time. And your makeup looks great!"

McKinley grinned at the group; her brown eyes glistened with excitement. "Thanks so much," replying to Judith. "It's funny because I spent some time wondering what to wear, almost forgetting that I am wearing the Xstassy brand. I think I was just nervous," McKinley gushed, punctuating her sentence with an awkward laugh.

"Hey, Kins," Autumn walked over to McKinley. "This should be a lot of fun, right?" The co-workers embraced as Judith guided McKinley into Alev's office. "You can put your stuff in here. Alev and the photographer are just discussing the shoot. Want me to introduce you?"

Alev overheard McKinley's faint reply from behind the office doors. "Oh yes, that'd be great, thanks." Alev calmed herself, maintaining her signature stoic demeanor. Rolling her

shoulders back, she focused on Ruby. “So, I’d like to use the shelving unit as the backdrop, maybe having the models lean against it. We could throw some accessories behind it as well. You know, casual but sexy. What do you think?”

Ruby squinted, envisioning Alev’s idea. “Hm mm. Sure, we can try that. How long until the models are ready?”

Alev assumed her director role, commanding, “Autumn, McKinley! We’d like to get started. How ready are you?”

Autumn approached the group from the other side of the store. “I’m good to go anytime. Just let me know what I’m supposed to wear.” Upon hearing Alev’s orders, McKinley rushed out of the office, wearing only a bra and panty set. “I’m here, ready when you are!”

Alev gathered the models towards her and the photographer. “Good, we can get started. Girls, this is Ruby Jones. I’ve worked with her for almost a decade, and she is a well-known fashion photographer in the Bay area.”

Ruby shook hands with Autumn and McKinley. “Nice to meet you both. This is going to be fun. We are going to keep the poses light and airy—nothing too serious. First, I’ll start with a few photos of you together and then some individual shots to highlight the lingerie.” Ruby grabbed her camera and adjusted a few of the settings. “Alev, what do you have for outfits?”

At this point, Alev had not yet addressed McKinley, but now that the young sales associate was standing right in front of her, Alev had no choice but to welcome McKinley personally. “Good to see you. Your makeup looks great—good job. I’m going to give you a few white pieces. Some are two-piece, but I also have a white lace bodysuit that I think would

look fantastic on you.” Again, Alev conveyed a welcoming air while remaining a no-nonsense boss.

Alev noticed McKinley blush at her compliment. “Thank you! Yeah, I figured I’d go with something more subtle.” Brushing a piece of colored hair from her face, McKinley asked, “Is it similar to the black lace bodysuit I got to try on a few weeks ago?”

Upon hearing McKinley’s question, Autumn chimed in, “What bodysuit? I want to try that on. You know black is my color,” the statuesque goth pointed out. Not wanting to explain how she had McKinley in her office, trying on lingerie, Alev brushed over the question. Coolly, Alev replied, “Oh, don’t worry; I picked out that piece just for you. It will contrast nicely with McKinley’s white outfit.”

Not wanting to waste any more time, Alev motioned for Judith to bring over the boxes of Xstassy lingerie. Alev began to open the cartons, pulling out lacey, plastic-wrapped items. As she delegated specific parcels to each model, she noticed McKinley beginning to undress in front of her, removing her bra to reveal her perky breasts.

Unlike Autumn, who retreated to the office to undress, Alev was drawn to McKinley’s confidence and free spirit, wishing that she could be the one to remove McKinley’s clothing slowly. Instead, Alev imagined herself taking the time to caress McKinley’s skin with her fingertips and lips, building up desire and wanting with every stroke.

A now-topless McKinley stood in front of Alev and Ruby, her rose-colored nipples erect like two small berries. “Alright, what do I get to wear first?” McKinley looked directly at Alev, giving her a slight wink. “You already know how much I love

this line.” Without hesitation, Alev gave McKinley a coy smile. “I do. That’s why I wanted you here.”

With Autumn rushing back to the group, Alev and Ruby began the shoot, with Alev’s heart beating excitedly in her chest.

“Like this?” McKinley asked, turning her back as she leaned into Autumn. It was the first time McKinley had done a fashion photo shoot, and she was grateful for Ruby’s directions. But, most of all, McKinley wanted to impress Alev, so she was careful to follow Ruby’s every word. She felt good, feeling Alev’s eyes on her body. She felt sexier than she ever had before.

“Perfect, yup, just hold that pose.” Ruby snapped away as McKinley caught Alev’s figure in her peripheral vision. When she had first arrived at the shoot, McKinley was thrown off by Alev’s chilly attitude, and she wondered if she was upset with her. Like, she didn’t even say hi. Maybe she was stressed about the shoot? Or perhaps something happened earlier at the store?

But McKinley didn’t want her anxious thoughts to overshadow her concentration. And after everyone got started, McKinley noticed that Alev seemed to soften a bit. Still, McKinley couldn’t help but want more attention from her boss—compliments, direction, suggestions—anything that would make her feel seen by Alev.

Ruby stopped shooting and paused. “Okay, this has been a great set. I love how you two look together. It’s an excellent

contrast; the black and white lingerie sets offset each other beautifully.” Ruby turned to Alev, “It’s up to you, but I feel we got some great solo pictures of Autumn and these duo images of the two of them are pure fire. Should we move on to single shots of McKinley?”

Alev had spent most of the shoot standing off to the side. Every once in a while, McKinley caught Alev looking at her, but McKinley chalked it up to Alev’s pursuit of perfection, scrutinizing every facet of the models and their outfits. Finally, narrowing her eyes, Alev spoke, “Yes, I think we are done with Autumn now.” Alev then turned to McKinley, focusing her hazel eyes in a way that gave McKinley butterflies. “Are you ready for some single shots? I’d like to put you in a bra and panty set.”

Not wanting the shoot to end, McKinley replied enthusiastically, “Absolutely! I’m game for anything.” Alev gave McKinley a subtle nod and a slight smile. “Excellent. That will be the last look for tonight.” Then, turning to the tall brunette, Alev remarked, “Autumn, you can stay if you like, but we are done with you.”

Autumn leaned down to grab her duffle bag. “Actually, I had plans to meet up with some friends after the shoot, so I’m gonna leave if that’s cool.” Autumn approached McKinley, hugging her tightly. “It was a blast to work with you, doll. I’m back at the store on Friday. See you then?”

McKinley beamed, “You bet!” Like all of her co-workers, McKinley adored Autumn. It was a solid team, and everyone got along well. “See you Friday!”

Autumn left the store, leaving McKinley with Ruby and Alev. For some reason, McKinley started to feel excited but nervous, as though something interesting was about to happen.

Regardless, she was glad to spend a few more minutes in front of Alev.

Ruby handed McKinley her last outfit and explained, “I want to incorporate these wall racks because they have this cool cage-like look. So once you’re ready, I want you to stand like this, putting your fingers through the holes, like you are climbing the structure.” Ruby checked in with Alev, who gave a silent nod of approval.

Ruby went to demonstrate, raising one leg while her two hands grabbed the white-colored metal rack. Suddenly, the base started to shake, and the entire caged structure collapsed within seconds.

“Oh my god! Are you okay?!” Alev and McKinley exclaimed in unison, rushing to grab Ruby, who tripped while falling on her knees.

“Oh wow, shit, I didn’t expect that to happen!” Ruby said with a laugh. “I’m okay, don’t worry. At least I wasn’t scaling a wall or anything!” With the help of Alev and McKinley on either side, Ruby rose to her feet. “So, I guess that’s not going to work. Sorry, McKinley! But better me to fall than you.”

To McKinley’s surprise, Alev suggested, “Why don’t we just call it a night? We can’t use the metal structure anymore, and I think that, based on the shots we got, there’s more than enough material to advertise in-store.”

Ruby shrugged. “Sure, no problem with me. I’ll send you the edited versions in a day—two day’s tops.” Then, turning towards McKinley, Ruby shook her hand once more. “It was a pleasure to work with you. You’re stunning, and you have a great look.” Ruby gave McKinley a sly, flirtatious smile, holding her gaze for a few seconds before waving goodbye to Alev.

McKinley grinned, flattered that such a well-known photographer would pay her such a lovely compliment. As McKinley began to gather her belongings, removing her Xstassy outfits, Alev went to lock the front door of the store. McKinley enjoyed the shoot but was disappointed that she couldn't spend more time with Alev. *Well, at least I got to participate as a model. She obviously likes me as an employee; otherwise, she wouldn't have asked in the first place.*

"She was clearly flirting with you," Alev remarked as she headed towards the mess of boxes and the broken metal structure. McKinley, who was tying her shoe, lifted her head. "Sorry, what was that?"

Alev chuckled. "Ruby, the photographer. I can tell she has her eye on you." Alev began to collect some debris, gathering it off to the side. "You're free to go, McKinley. I'm just putting all this stuff into a pile for Judith to deal with when she's back in the morning."

McKinley found it interesting that Alev noticed Ruby flirting with her. *I swear, nothing gets past that woman!* She wanted to believe it was because Alev was also interested, but McKinley knew it was only wishful thinking.

"Here, let me help you," McKinley kneeled beside Alev, grabbing at bits of plastic and moving cardboard into a corner. "I don't mind; I've got nothing else to do."

Alev shrugged nonchalantly. "Suit yourself; this will only take a few minutes." McKinley felt Alev's energy freeze, and she couldn't read whether her boss wanted her to leave or stay. Still, as an employee, she thought it was her duty to help tidy.

McKinley sauntered over to a box that had been left to the side, away from the other mess. Grabbing it, she brought it over for Alev to assess. "Hey, what should I do with this?"

Alev walked over to McKinley to examine the box that McKinley was holding. It wasn't heavy but a bulky shape, and just as McKinley thought Alev had a hold of it, the box fell between the women. "Oops, sorry," McKinley giggled, keeping her eyes on Alev. "Sometimes I have butterfingers."

Alev looked at McKinley, a warm look in her eyes that McKinley had never seen before. "That's okay," she replied softly, maintaining her gaze. At that point, both women froze, their eyes locked. For McKinley, time stood still, and an intense tension filled the void between them. It was the first time they truly looked at one another, without pretense or distraction. The energy was electric, and there was no going back.

"Alev, I-I really wish," McKinley murmured, biting her lip, wanting so bad for Alev to kiss her at this moment. But the words couldn't escape her mouth.

As if reading her mind, Alev stepped closer to McKinley and bent down close to her face. "Is this what you want?" Then, Alev whispered, "Tell me that it's okay." Alev was close enough that McKinley could smell her expensive, designer perfume. "Tell me what you want."

"I want you to kiss me." Instantly, Alev brought her mouth to McKinley's, planting a warm, soft kiss. McKinley felt herself become dizzy with desire. She couldn't believe Alev King had kissed her! The flood gates had opened, and McKinley wanted more.

After Alev moved her mouth, her eyes searching for a reaction, McKinley whispered, "I want more of you." Alev kissed her again, harder and with more passion, and McKinley felt like she might explode there and then.

Alev's hands were on her body. Her tongue was in McKinley's mouth.

What happens now?

Alev guided McKinley into her office, away from the storefront window, with a hand wrapped around her waist. As the women kissed passionately, locked in an embrace, Alev's heart raced with anticipation and anxiety.

Alev King had never fucked one of her employees, and she knew she was about to break that rule tonight as McKinley urgently pressed her body against Alev, seeking her tongue, with hands racing all over Alev's body. There was something about McKinley that Alev just couldn't resist. Just moments before, the kiss was too hot to leave things alone, and there was no turning back at this point.

Don't do it. Maintain some distance. This could be a big mistake.

Alev's body was doing one thing and her mind was racing between thinking it was a really bad idea and thinking she might implode if she didn't get to take McKinley in every possible way.

As usual, Alev's ego prevailed over her common, rational sense when she wanted something badly. And there was no denying how soaked with desire she was over the thought of having McKinley bent over her desk.

“I’ve wanted you so much, so many times in this room,” McKinley gasped, reaching under Alev’s designer blouse, yanking the material up towards her chest. While her body screamed with excitement, Alev’s voice was seductive yet calm and measured.

“As soon as you walked into my store, I knew there was something special about you, something sexy and spirited. There are so many things I want to show you.” Alev opened the office, noticing a boxed sex toy on her desk. “In fact, maybe we could even play with this!” Alev picked up the new, unopened G-spot vibrating toy called The Unicorn Horn. “This baby can give you a clitoral and g-spot orgasm at the same time apparently. Let’s see if it works.”

McKinley’s eyes were wide with wonder and she nodded, as Alev passed her the product. Alev gave McKinley a slight nod, encouraging her to open it. McKinley pulled out the hot pink silicone vibrator that featured a split end. One tip was more extended and broader than the other. The shorter nub forked off from the larger portion, offering a pointer end.

McKinley’s eyes grew wide as she turned the toy over in her hand. As she examined it, Alev observed McKinley, titillated by her curiosity. “Press the button on the side to turn on the vibrations.”

McKinley found the switch, and the toy began to buzz in her hand immediately. McKinley squealed with delight. “Oh wow, that feels so powerful! So, this big bit goes inside me and this other bit on my clitoris?”

Alev chuckled as she found McKinley’s innocence endearing. Of course, when it came to lovers, Alev was more discerning over appearance and presence than sex toy knowledge. But Alev appreciated McKinley’s genuine nature,

which made her more appealing. It was as if McKinley was void of ego, the opposite of opportunistic, and for someone as successful as Alev, it was a refreshing quality.

Alev cleared off her large, oak desk, creating a spot where McKinley would fit perfectly. Then, gently taking the toy from McKinley's hand, Alev directed her. "Sit up there, gorgeous. I'm going to show you exactly what this toy can do." Alev bit her lip as her own pussy tingled with desire. She wanted to fuck McKinley so bad that she could feel herself salivate.

Alev asked, "Do you want to try it?" McKinley bobbed her head up and down, and Alev grinned, aroused by McKinley's enthusiastic consent. "Then be a good girl and open your legs wide for me." Alev placed the toy on the desk to the right of McKinley.

McKinley leaned back, steadying herself with her hands. She parted her legs, allowing Alev to caress her legs. Alev ran her fingertips over the soft, fleshy parts of McKinley's thighs, noticing as goosebumps sprang to the surface. McKinley softly sighed as Alev played with McKinley's vulva, through the black lace panties. Alev teased her, pressing two fingers against McKinley's clitoris, stroking her through the material.

Alev could tell by how McKinley squirmed that she was eager for more pleasure, but Alev loved the waiting game—watching someone desire her touch filled Alev with an intoxicating sense of power mixed with insatiable lust. Roguishly, Alev baited McKinley as she rubbed harder against the warm, luscious panties. "Do you want some more, baby? Do you want me to fuck you with this toy?"

McKinley responded with a moan and nodded.

"Say it out loud."

“Please fuck me... please...” McKinley whispered.

Alev laughed softly as she moved one hand away from McKinley to grab the toy while the other hand traveled over McKinley’s half-dressed body. “Well, since you said *please*, I *suppose* you deserve it.” Alev then flicked on the Unicorn Horn and McKinley laughed.

“Oh my god, that is awesome. I didn’t realize it would light up like that!” McKinley laughed again as she arched her back, spreading her legs even wider. She looked so beautiful in front of Alev and so comfortable, Alev felt blown away. Any doubts she might have had minutes earlier melted away. Alev knew there was only one way this was going. She had wanted this so badly for weeks now and she was going to take exactly what she desired.

Alev pushed McKinley’s soaked panties to the side, revealing her swollen wet vulva. She had wanted to wait until removing all of McKinley’s clothes, savoring each erotic moment. Alev thought to herself, *This could be the first and last time we play, so I want to enjoy every second of it.* But her need was too great for slowing down.

Alev took the smaller tip of the toy and massaged McKinley’s clit, which was still covered with lacy, black material. Alev carefully observed as McKinley began to gyrate her hips, longing for more stimulation. Alev continued to vibrate the toy over her clitoris until McKinley’s pussy became more swollen with arousal, glistening with wetness.

“Mmm, yes, good girl. Now you are ready for the other end.” As she adjusted the settings, Alev shifted the toy, positioning the longer portion ready to enter McKinley. “This will also vibrate inside of you while it pulsates against your G-spot. Ready? If it is too much at any time- just say.”

McKinley nodded, she was flushed and almost unable to speak. “Mmm, yeah, please..” she moaned. Upon McKinley’s command, Alev placed the larger, vibrating end in her mouth, moistening it with her saliva before gently inserting it inside McKinley. As McKinley closed her eyes and arched her back, moaning in pleasure, Alev continued to push the toy further inside, angling it so that the bulbous tip could stimulate her G-spot while the smaller nub continued to vibrate against her clit.

“Oh my god, oh my god! Holy shit, I’ve never felt anything like that before,” McKinley cried out, thrusting her hips against Alev’s hand. Alev continued to observe McKinley; she immensely enjoyed orchestrating pleasure while maintaining full control. It made her feel connected to her lovers while still maintaining emotional distance. Alev didn’t consider herself a selfish lover, but she had strict boundaries around her heart. But as long as the women she played with enjoyed their time in her presence, Alev didn’t see this as a big deal, for she was always honest about her intentions from the start.

Alev continued to thrust the Unicorn Horn into McKinley until she noticed McKinley tense up as her body prepared to orgasm. Alev artfully angled the dildo, penetrating at a faster rate until McKinley’s head tipped back and she exclaimed, “Fuck, oh my god...”

Knowing what would happen next, Alev dodged her body slightly protecting her beautiful designer suit just as McKinley ejaculated. Hot liquid gushed out of McKinley as she collapsed, splaying out spread-eagle on the desk.

As McKinley caught her breath, shaking her head in disbelief, Alev couldn’t help but chuckle. She had managed to save her pantsuit and she was happy about that. “So yeah,

another thing about this toy is that it is perfect for squirters. Apparently, it worked quite well on you!”

McKinley sat up, with her face flushed and her hair a mess. “That was ugh... so incredible,” McKinley remarked as she readjusted her clothing. “And oh my god, you didn’t even take off my underwear. What are you? Some kind of sex magician?”

Alev laughed. She had received many compliments about her sexual techniques, but no one had referred to her in that way before. Alev enjoyed the way McKinley expressed herself.

Fuck, she looks so hot, a just fucked mess on my desk.

“What can I say? I’ve been a lesbian my entire life, and I’ve been working in this industry for 14 years.” Alev playfully shrugged. “I’d like to think I picked up a trick or two. You’ve not even had the chance to meet my fingers and my tongue yet.” she winked at McKinley whose eyes widened and she blushed.

McKinley hopped off the desk and moved towards Alev. “I’d love to please you, to taste you.” But as McKinley began to fiddle with Alev’s blouse, attempting to remove her top, Alev stopped her. “No, I want you to let *me* remove your clothes.” Alev gazed down at McKinley, who smiled, nodding with consent. “Okay, I’d like that,” she replied.

“Good, good. I like when women do as I say.” Alev brought McKinley’s body closer, feeling McKinley’s pubic bone against hers as her hands reached to grab McKinley’s ass.

“Close your eyes, baby girl.” McKinley obliged as Alev leaned in to kiss McKinley. Alev brushed her soft lips across McKinley’s warm mouth, her tongue caressing the corners of

McKinley's lips before slipping inside. Alev held McKinley's face with both hands, keeping her still and achieving dominance. Even though Alev liked to start slow and seductive, she wanted it to be clear who was in charge.

A soft moan escaped from McKinley as their tongues began to collide, weaving together like silky ribbons. Alev slid her hands down McKinley's face, one holding the back of her neck while the other drifted towards the small of McKinley's back. Alev cupped McKinley's petite body, holding her mouth hostage as her fingers slipped underneath McKinley's lingerie, feeling her soft skin. When Alev felt McKinley arch her back with wanting, Alev knew she wanted more.

"Stand still; I want to undress you right here," Alev ordered in a silky whisper. "Here? Really?" McKinley asked, a twinge of nervousness in her voice. "What if someone comes in, like a cleaning person or something?" Alev smiled and pointed to the security system on the touch pad before she replied, "Don't worry, no one is going to disturb us." Alev then paused for a moment before adding, "You know, I never play with my employees; that's always been a boundary for me. But there's something about you, about our energy. I'm making an exception, but only if you want it as much as I do."

McKinley leaned in to Alev and stood on her tiptoes to kiss her. "Oh god, I do. I want you so badly. I understand what you're saying. But tonight, I just want to be me—not your employee. So can we leave that for now and just focus on this moment?"

Alev replied coolly, "Of course, that's why we are here. Now, as I said, stand still. Can you do that for me?"

Playfully, McKinley bit her lip, unable to stop grinning. Then, wordlessly, she nodded, looking up at Alev with

obedience. “Lift up your arms,” Alev ordered, and McKinley obliged. Next, Alev lifted McKinley’s bralette over her head, exposing McKinley’s breasts. “Mmm, so lovely. Your nipples are beautiful.” Alev ran her fingers lightly over McKinley’s small breasts, noticing goosebumps forming over her chest.

Alev took a step back to admire the McKinley’s lovely body before lowering herself on the carpet so that she could remove McKinley’s panties. The only time Alev was ever on her knees was to worship pussy, and her mouth salivated at the sight of McKinley’s neatly trimmed pubic hair and full wet vulva.

Looking up at McKinley, who stood as still as a statue, Alev remarked, “God, what a beautiful pussy you have. I need to taste you right now.”

McKinley continued to stand, naked and exposed, while Alev began to trace her tongue along the folds of McKinley’s labia, lightly teasing the crevices of her lips.

Alev gripped McKinley’s hips as her tongue quickened its pace, flickering against McKinley’s hardening clit. Alev could tell how excited McKinley was getting as she gripped Alev’s shoulders tighter and tighter. With every pronounced grab, Alev licked and sucked, feeling McKinley’s juices decorate her face.

As McKinley’s clit became more engorged, Alev took two fingers and slipped them inside her wetness, delighting in how tight her muscles became as they squeezed against Alev’s hand. More moans escaped McKinley, prompting Alev to ask, “Do you want more? Want me to fuck you harder?”

“O-oh god, yes, please. More fingers, please!” McKinley begged, which was precisely what Alev wanted to hear. She

loved when her lovers wanted more of what she could give them, Alev's greatest pleasure in life was giving.

"Mmm, good girl. I like it when you beg for me." Alev slid in a third finger and began to curl her hand in the come-hither motion, pressing against the spongy tissue of McKinley's g-spot. McKinley's knees buckled almost instantly, and she folded against Alev's body. "Oh fuck! Fuck, oh god, yes, oh my god!"

Alev's mouth continued to suck as her fingers were still buried deep inside and she relished in the tsunami of McKinley's orgasm that ran right down her arm. Alev loved how shaky McKinley's limbs felt, how she surrendered to Alev's mouth. Alev wanted to give her a second to collect herself, but she was excited to move on to the next way she wanted to pleasure McKinley.

Alev stuck out her hand for McKinley to grasp, letting McKinley help her to her feet. Once standing, Alev held McKinley in her arms, sensing the waves of pleasure dissipate as McKinley caught her breath. "How are you feeling, babygirl?"

McKinley closed her eyes and beamed with joy. "Oh god, so good. You are *so good!*" Taking a few more breaths, McKinley then opened her eyes. "Mmm, I want a turn to please you. May I?"

But Alev shook her head. She got off being the seductress, and as much as Alev found McKinley desirable, she needed to maintain some detachment and control. So instead, Alev replied, "No, not yet. Not tonight. I'm not done with you unless you want me to stop?"

McKinley opened her mouth as if to object, but Alev could tell that McKinley's body craved more physical pleasure.

However, she waited for McKinley to vocalize her wishes before moving forward.

“No, no, I don’t. I just want you to feel as amazing as you’re making me feel. I want you—I want more of you,” McKinley answered, throaty with desire.

“Don’t worry,” Alev reassured her. “I’m having the best time, watching you, making you come for me. This is what *I want*.” Alev looked deeply into McKinley’s eyes, penetrating her soul. “Do you understand?”

McKinley nodded as if in a trance. “I do.” Alev smiled, loving that she could blow McKinley’s mind. “I’m glad; it was my pleasure, babe. How are you feeling?”

“Honestly, like I could take a nap,” McKinley chuckled. “I’m so relaxed but also tired now.” McKinley looked around, searching for a clock in the office. “What time is it, anyway?”

Alev—who had remained fully clothed the entire time and bar the sleeve of her blouse, still looked immaculate—checked her watch. “It’s almost 2:00 am.” Alev thought for a moment before adding, “Do you want to crash at my place tonight?”

McKinley bobbed her head. “Oh, that would be great if I could. You sure you don’t mind?”

“It’s fine, no problem. I’ll set you up in the guest room; you’ll have plenty of space.”

“Okay, well, thank you.” McKinley looked a little uncertain, as though she didn’t know what to do next. But Alev—no stranger to these encounters—knew exactly how to comfort McKinley. “Come with me. Do you need anything before we leave?”

“No, just you.” Alev noticed the look in McKinley’s eyes that suggested adoration, even a little attachment. This caused

a slight sensation of worry within Alev. She very much enjoyed her time with McKinley and was deeply attracted to her.

But physical attraction and sexual chemistry were the only love languages Alev knew—especially after her divorce. She didn't want to disappoint her but she hoped McKinley understood that tonight's tryst was as close as the women would ever get. And Alev needed to make sure of that.

McKinley woke up with a start to the sound of birds chirping outside the window, and for a moment, she had forgotten where she was. Then, blinking open her eyes, McKinley sat up, realizing she was not at home. She surveyed her surroundings, now remembering that she had gone to sleep in one of Alev's spare bedrooms. The bed was huge and luxurious. *Oh wow, I can't believe that actually happened. I wonder what time it is.*

As McKinley pieced together the details of her evening, she was still awestruck about her and Alev hooking up. Looking around the spacious bedroom, her eyes pinpointed the ensuite washroom. Slowly, she rose out of bed and grabbed her iPhone. *Okay, only 8:00 am. I can still make it to work by noon.* For a moment, she was worried she had slept in, which would have made her late to Wicked Orchid. McKinley made her way towards the tiled room to wash up and prepare for her morning.

Alev hadn't given McKinley any instructions as to what she could use in the bathroom, but McKinley assumed it was acceptable to help herself to body wash and other toiletries. Stepping into the shower, McKinley soaped up her naked

body, still feeling the buzz of the hot sex she encountered the night before.

McKinley had been with plenty of partners in the past, including both men and women. And while she had dabbled in various sexual activities, McKinley now preferred intimacy strictly with women. But even her most skilled female lovers didn't exude the magic that Alev seemed to possess so effortlessly. Even at 32 years old, no one had made McKinley feel so amazing, until last night while under the seductive spell of Alev King.

McKinley hummed to herself, still high from her multiple orgasms. As she rinsed off, she couldn't help but tilt the showerhead ever so slightly so that the droplets pelted against her somewhat swollen and sensitive vulva. McKinley tipped her pelvis forward to achieve the perfect angle to stimulate her clitoris. The water pressure was intense, and within a minute, McKinley was massaging herself with Alev's hand-held shower. Closing her eyes, she leaned against the tile and circled the hose slowly and methodically, noticing a pleasurable build-up bubbling beneath her pubic bone.

McKinley breathed deeply into the sensation, hoping to achieve another climax, when she heard a sharp knock at the bedroom door. Startled, McKinley dropped the showerhead into the tub, which caused the hose to spray in all directions. "Oh no! Shit, stop, stop!" McKinley cursed to herself, grabbing the metal pipe. Then, leaning over towards the tap, she quickly shut off the water, which calmed the hose to a complete stop.

"Alev? Is that you? Sorry, I'm just in the bathroom—be right out." McKinley threw back the shower curtain and grabbed a large, fluffy towel scented with fabric softener.

Dripping wet, McKinley raced to open the bedroom door, excited at the thought of seeing Alev this morning. *Maybe we could have a quickie before I leave or even have a coffee together. I'd love to spend a bit more time before I need to take off.*

With one hand, McKinley attempted to towel off her hair while swinging open the bedroom door with the other. “Hey, I was just thinking of yo—” McKinley faltered when she realized it was a stranger at the door.

“Good morning, Miss. Did you sleep well?” The tall woman spoke in a heavy Brazilian accent. Stunned and confused, McKinley stuttered, “O-oh gosh, I’m so sorry!” Then, realizing she was naked except for the towel on her head, McKinley grabbed the terry cloth fabric and attempted to cover herself up.

But the Brazilian woman seemed unaffected, almost amused. “It’s no problem. Ms. King wanted me to wake you to see if you wanted coffee or breakfast.” McKinley wrapped the towel securely around her torso, “Are you, um, sorry, what is your name?”

“Ah, yes, I’m so sorry, forgive me. My name is Emile; I’m Alev’s housekeeper.” Emile gave McKinley a polite yet reserved smile. “Alev also mentioned that there is some money on the kitchen counter for you to take a Lyft to work if you like.”

McKinley nodded slowly. “Okay, wow, that’s really nice of her. Is she here?”

Emile slowly shook her head. “I’m afraid not. Ms. King had some early business to tend to. But she wanted me to pass on the messages to ensure you had a nice morning.”

Emile continued to stand in the doorway, ready to assume orders, but McKinley wasn't sure what to say. She was disappointed that Alev wasn't around or that she couldn't wish McKinley good morning in person. But McKinley didn't dare say anything out loud to Emile.

Taking a deep breath, a self-conscious McKinley shrugged. "Um, okay. I'm not hungry, but coffee would be lovely, if you don't mind? I'll be downstairs in a few minutes; I just need to finish getting dressed."

"As you wish. I'll have your coffee waiting. How do you take it?" Emile graciously asked.

"Just black is fine. Thank you very much. Oh, and nice to meet you," McKinley replied gratefully. Emile maintained her calm, professional demeanor. "You as well, Miss. See you downstairs."

McKinley closed the door and hurried to gather her clothes. The logical part of her brain knew better than to place any expectations on last night's situation, but McKinley couldn't escape the feeling that she was being treated like a stranger.

Even still, McKinley's body continued to hum with excitement. She decided not to let her thoughts get in the way of how amazing Alev made her feel last night. And even though Alev had made it clear that having sex with an employee was not something she normally did, McKinley was already waiting for the next time they could physically be together.

To McKinley, Alev was an enigma, a powerful force of a woman who—at the same time—held herself with an air of mystery. Alev's reserved nature only made her more appealing to McKinley, but the young woman knew that she needed to

temper her emotions. *She's still your boss, and you don't want to cause any issues at the end of the day. Maybe if I just talk to her to let her know that I'm not high-maintenance, we could spend more time together...*

As she packed up to leave the spare bedroom, McKinley continued to muse as she cascaded down the winding staircase that led to the foyer. At the bottom of the stairs, McKinley's senses were awakened by the smell of freshly brewed coffee. *If only Alev could have joined me for a cup. Oh well! I guess I'll see her at Wicked Orchid soon enough.*

McKinley turned right towards the kitchen. Sunlight poured through the curtains as Emile stood at the sink, washing dishes.

“Ah, hello, Miss. I left your mug of coffee in the dining room. And I know you said you didn't want to eat anything, but I also left a tray of fresh muffins, just in case you change your mind.” Emile gave McKinley a jaunty wink, which immediately made McKinley feel at ease. Of course, she didn't want to overstay her welcome, and it felt strange being in Alev's mansion without her, but McKinley was grateful for the warm send-off and the offer of fresh coffee.

“Thanks so much, Emile, that's very sweet. Please thank Alev for me as well.” McKinley sauntered to the room adjacent to the kitchen and seated herself at the dining table.

Removing her oversized purse from her shoulder, McKinley checked her phone while she drank her coffee, also remembering to text her roommates to let them know she was safe. Since moving to San Francisco, McKinley wasn't known to sleep out much, preferring to return to the familiar apartment she shared with Nelson and Lucy. And even though

everyone respected each other's personal lives and space, McKinley didn't want her roommates to worry.

McKinley had turned her phone off during the photo shoot to avoid getting distracted. She powered up the device, first texting Lucy and Nelson to let them know she was safe and would be home after her Wild Orchid shift. It was still early, and McKinley didn't expect a response right away.

Taking a few sips of the fragrant java, McKinley scrolled through her social media accounts, allowing her mind to unwind before deciding to check her emails. In her pursuit of finding employment, McKinley had let her Gmail account lapse for a few weeks, so while she had the time, she thought now would be as good a time as any to get caught up on any messages.

Opening her Gmail app, McKinley wasn't surprised to find almost 50 new emails, many of which were promotions or spam. Like most women of her generation, McKinley's main form of communication was messaging apps as opposed to emails; she wasn't too concerned about missing anything crucial. But as McKinley scrolled through her new mail, she noticed a message that immediately caught her eye.

"Oh my gosh! What's *this*?" McKinley couldn't help but exclaim out loud. The sender was from Austin, Texas, where McKinley was originally from, and the email had come from the administrator of Austin Community College, the Language and Communications Department.

Stunned, McKinley opened the email. With the recent move to San Fran, and in addition to feeling depressed and unmotivated, McKinley had forgotten about her application to the college program. Gripping the phone, McKinley's eyes scanned the message.

To: McKinley Vodden

Upon reviewing your application for our Linguistics and Educational Leadership Certificate Course, we are pleased to inform you that your request to enroll in the two-year program has been accepted.

In order to secure your spot, please respond within 30 days to confirm the Austin Community College of your participation. The course will begin on Tuesday, August 25, at the Berenato Campus.

Congratulations, and thank you for choosing Austin Community College as a path towards a brighter future and an enriching career.

Sincerely,

Roslyn Murphy

Austin Community College Administrator

At once, McKinley was shocked and delighted. “Holy shit!” Upon hearing noise from the dining room, Emile entered the room to investigate.

“What is happening? Is everything okay, Miss?” Emile asked, wiping her hands on an apron.

McKinley looked up from her phone. “Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to shout.” Still in shock, McKinley pointed to her device. “I just got accepted into my dream program at the Austin Community College! I applied in hopes of getting accepted for this semester, and when I didn’t hear back, I assumed the worst and decided to stay in San Francisco. I didn’t even *consider* that they would have gotten back to me.” McKinley shook her head with disbelief. “The message says I can start the program at the end of the summer!”

Emile smiled warmly. “Well, that’s wonderful news. I’m sure your family will be very proud of you. Congratulations.”

McKinley gulped, pausing for a moment. She had been estranged from her mom for seven years, and McKinley’s father had left when she was only two years old. As a result, family had a different meaning to McKinley, one that was chosen and not blood. But McKinley knew that Emile wasn’t far off. Her current family consisted of Nelson and Lucy, and McKinley knew *they* would be proud of her; and she also had some distant cousins in Austin who would be happy to welcome her back.

“Thank you,” McKinley replied warmly. “I’m just—wow! I need a bit of time to process this. But it’s definitely exciting! I dreamed of becoming an English teacher, specifically in creative writing. This program would give me the credentials I need to take the next step in my career, so it’s a big deal.”

Suddenly feeling a burst of energy, McKinley couldn’t sit any longer. She needed to move, think, and figure out the next two months of her life. “Emile, thanks so much for the coffee and muffins, but I should go.”

“Have a good day, Miss. And congratulations again,” Emile replied, polite as ever. Then, in a rush, McKinley grabbed her purse and guzzled the remainder of her coffee before Emile handed her some bills for a Lyft. “Oh, don’t forget this. Do you want me to call you a ride?”

McKinley suddenly remembered that she wasn’t aware of her exact location and, thus, wouldn’t be able to navigate her way back. “Oh, um, yes, please. That would be great. Sorry, I completely forgot.”

“It’s fine. Just let me know when you are ready, and I will call the company.” Emile held a phone poised in her hand, but

McKinley wanted to leave immediately. Instead of going to Wicked Orchid, McKinley decided to stop at home first. She still had a few hours before her shift and couldn't wait to go back to the apartment to notify her roommates of the exciting news. "I'm fine to leave now, Emile. Thanks very much."

Emile called Lyft to arrange a driver while McKinley waited outside in front of the mansion. The sun shone high, welcoming the morning with its bright rays against a cloudless blue sky. Nearby, birds chirped and nestled within the landscaped bushes surrounding the enormous house.

McKinley felt as though she was in a dream. Last night, she had the hottest sex of her life with a rich and powerful woman who was twenty years older, and this morning, she found out that she had been accepted into a program that, to her dismay and lack of self-confidence, she had forgotten about.

Today felt like the beginning of a whole new life for McKinley, and her world, which seemed to exist only in black and white over the past year, suddenly became alive, bursting with the colorful possibilities.

However, even in her glory, McKinley battled a few anxious thoughts. First, she would need to tell her roommates that she needed to move out. *What happens if they want me to leave sooner than later, especially if they find a roommate who can replace me before I need to go?* She valued her friendship with Lucy and Nelson and didn't want to disappoint them. *Surely, they would understand, right?*

Another thought nagged at McKinley's conscious. She had committed to helping Alev with the Lust for Lexi project and a few other side tasks at Wild Orchid. However, McKinley still

had a few months before her course started, and she didn't want to be jobless again.

Hmmm, well, I do have a month to respond to the school. Maybe I can bide some time before I send off my confirmation. This is big news, but I want to make sure I make smart moves.

McKinley's thoughts continued to churn until the white Honda Civic with a visible Lyft sign pulled up in front of the mansion.

Alev's eyes sparkled with wonder. She pushed the button again, allowing technical permissions to signal the robotic voice. *Spread your legs for me. Very good! I want you; I want you to come for me.* Alev shook her head with disbelief, muttering to herself, "Wow, this is actually happening! I never thought I'd see the day when our sex toys could talk to us."

Alev held the Lust for Lexi prototype in her hand, examining its sleek design. The AI-powered dildo offered the perfect amount of curvature, along with a pulsating head for G-spot stimulation. In addition, the medical-grade silicone material felt soft and smooth to the touch, and the dual-density component added an element of realism that far exceeded Alev's expectations. But the voice-activated AI feature was what would catapult sales for the Lust for Lexi product, and Alev couldn't be more pleased with the integration of McKinley's prose.

Alev continued to analyze its features until she heard a knock at her office door. Today, Alev needed to be at her head office, straddling responsibilities for both the Wicked Orchid stores as well as continuing to prepare for the International Summit conference. However, Alev had become so distracted

by the prototype that she almost forgot about her meeting with Maya.

“Yes, come in,” Alev responded in a hurried voice. There were a lot of points that Alev and her assistant needed to discuss; Alev wanted to ensure that Maya was on top of her tasks.

“Hi, Alev. I’m ready for our 2:00 meeting if you are.” Maya poked her head into Alev’s office as Alev waved at the chair in front of her desk.

“Grab a seat, Maya.” Alev cleared the surface of her desk while leaving the Lust for Lexi prototype out in the open. “I have to show you this. It’s incredible!”

Sitting down, Maya fixated her eyes on the product. “Wow, cool! Is that the mock-up?”

“Mm hm. I was just testing out the voice activation feature.” Alev turned on the toy. “Check it out.” Then, leaning into the dildo, Alev spoke aloud, in an animated voice, “Oh god, I’m so horny. I want you to make me feel so good.”

Alev locked eyes with Maya as they both suppressed a laugh. Regardless of how serious Alev was about her franchise, she couldn’t deny that the sex toy industry was undoubtedly amusing.

Wrapped up in the success of its sales, Wicked Orchid also strived to make sexuality and the exploration of fantasies something to have fun with and to laugh occasionally. Especially when it came to pleasure, one could never take themselves too seriously, and in appreciating odd and ridiculous elements, even Alev enjoyed the bizarre giggle on the job.

The toy lit up in under a second, and a robotic-sounding voice responded, “*You have the sweetest, most delicious pussy. I can’t wait to be inside you, to fuck you from the inside out.*” Alev and her assistant looked at one another as Maya exclaimed, “No way! I can’t believe it. The first talking sex toy!”

“Right?! It’s incredible. And do you know who helped write the text?” Alev rhetorically asked, without waiting for Maya to answer. “It was McKinley—the new sales associate at the Castro store.”

Maya’s jaw dropped. “Really? She wrote content for the robot?” Alev nodded her head slightly. “Well, not actively. Apparently, McKinley’s an erotic writer. I asked her if she’d be interested in sharing some samples, you know, like sound bites, of her work that we could integrate into the toy.”

Confused, Maya furrowed her brow. “Sorry, I’m not following. Are you saying that McKinley actually wrote the words from Lust for Lexi as part of an erotic story?”

Alev grinned. “Exactly. We’re paying her an additional wage, of course. And she did need to sign a contract to ensure that there was no copyright infringement. But yes, Lexi is regurgitating samples of McKinley’s writing.”

“Oh, my god, that’s *genius!*” Maya held out her hand. “Can I see the toy?” Alev handed Maya the prototype as her mind started to wander. Even though Alev wanted to keep some distance between her and McKinley, Alev couldn’t stop thinking about the other night when she fucked McKinley at the store.

Typically, Alev wasn’t one to dwell on her conquests, but there was something so vulnerable, sweet, and primal about her encounter. Alev couldn’t help but fixate on her desire

while, at the same time, needing to remain aloof. And being the successful businesswoman she was, Alev's solution was to integrate McKinley further into the business as a way to utilize her talents while still getting to spend time with the talented young artist.

As Maya studied the product sample, Alev narrowed her eyes in thought. "Maya, I was thinking that I'd like to involve McKinley more into our projects; things beyond what's happening inside the Wicked Orchid store." Folding her fingers together and resting her hands on top of her desk, Alev asked, "How do you feel about McKinley assisting with some of the aspects of the conference? Do you think that would be helpful for you?"

Maya paused, biting her lip, and immediately, Alev could tell that she triggered some anxiety within Maya. Alev backtracked. "I'm not suggesting that she take over your responsibilities—you're doing a fantastic job. I'm only asking if you feel there are areas where you could use the help."

Maya smiled with relief. "Of course. I can *always* use the support. But I don't think I've met McKinley before." Maya put the toy back on Alev's desk and leaned back in her chair.

Alev nodded, her mind churning with thoughts. "Okay, good. That's good to hear. This is what I want you to do. I'd like you to draft a job proposal that outlines potential responsibilities and from there, we can present it to McKinley, to see if she is interested in taking on more than just sales for Wicked Orchid." As she spoke, Alev became more excited at the thought of working more closely with McKinley. "I see a lot of potential there and I think it would be great to see what else she can bring towards the business."

Maya bobbed her head, processing Alev's instructions. "Once I'm done with the proposal, did you want McKinley to come here to meet in person?"

"Yes. If she is interested in more work with the company, I'd like the two of you to meet." Alev then paused. "But first, create the draft, and I will present it to her myself. Then, I'll let you know what happens from there. Sound good?"

"Okay, boss. I'll get on that right now. Anything else for today?" Maya asked as she uncrossed her legs, preparing to be dismissed.

"That's all, Maya. I will be on a video call with Mariko Nama in about fifteen minutes, so please hold any calls until I'm done." Alev turned to face her laptop, signaling that the meeting was over. Maya took the cue and quietly left Alev's office.

Once the door shut, Alev continued to face her screen, but she was having trouble focusing. Alev had planned to record a few notes in preparation for her video call to discuss the conference and the development of the Lust for Lexi toy. But all Alev could think about was McKinley and her delicious body that made Alev's spirit ache with desire. *God, what's wrong with me? I never get like this. It's like I want her out of my system, yet I haven't even begun to have enough.*

Alev felt torn between her attraction to McKinley and her need to assume control and detachment. Ever since her divorce from Dallas, Alev swore she would never put emotional energy into a casual lover, let alone become involved with one of her employees. But there was something magnetic about McKinley that Alev couldn't pinpoint, nor could she escape.

However, Alev thought the wisest course of action would be to have McKinley more involved with Wicked Orchid

projects so that she could work more closely with her but also have her more entrenched within the company to help elevate its success. Even beyond her previous marriage to Dallas, Alev's first love was business, and she found it nearly impossible to separate the two. At least this way, Alev could be around a woman she was attracted to without letting her yearning distract her from her goals. *That is, if McKinley agrees, of course.*

While waiting for her video call to begin, Alev continued to daydream. She imagined McKinley knocking on her office door to discuss the job proposal. And Alev would be waiting behind her desk to welcome McKinley inside.

"Yes, come in." Alev would say in a calm, controlled manner.

"Hi, it's McKinley. I wanted to talk to you about the job offer." Without waiting for Alev's response, McKinley would let herself in, taking a seat in front of Alev.

Alev would notice McKinley's outfit, which consisted of a short black skirt and colorful blouse. And while the top was loose-fitting, Alev could still see the outline of McKinley's tiny, button nipples, indicating that she wasn't wearing a bra.

McKinley would then lean towards Alev, resting her delicate hands on the desk, replying, "I thought about the proposal, and I'm so flattered. I got so excited about the thought of us working together. Thank you for thinking of me... boss." McKinley would give Alev a seductive wink, suggestively biting the corner of her lip.

Then to Alev's surprise, McKinley would then ask, "Can I show you how excited I am? Would that be okay?" McKinley would be toying with the buttons on her blouse while waiting for Alev's consent.

But Alev would remain cool as always, holding McKinley's gaze. Finally, nodding ever so slightly, Alev would respond by saying, "Yes, I'd like to see that. Show me anything you want."

Then, McKinley would stand up so that Alev could see McKinley's entire figure. Slowly, McKinley would begin to undo each button on her blouse, slowly and deliberately. She would part the silky material of the shirt, exposing her breasts to Alev. Taking her left hand, McKinley would begin to caress her own skin, moving towards the right nipple, squeezing it gently.

"I'll bet you want this in your mouth right now," McKinley would tease, with Alev smiling ever so slightly. But Alev already knew what she wanted in her mouth.

"Lift up your skirt," Alev would instruct, and McKinley would oblige, sliding it up her thighs, revealing that she wasn't wearing underwear. Alev's mouth would water with anticipation as she began to touch herself underneath her desk. She wanted to taste McKinley so bad that she could barely talk.

"I want to feel your mouth on me," McKinley would continue to seduce Alev as Alev rubbed her own clit, harder out of McKinley's sight. Then, as McKinley stripped off the skirt, Alev breathed harder, spreading her legs further apart....

Suddenly, Alev was snapped out of her reverie by a voice that escaped from her laptop speakers. The screen was still on standby, but clearly, Mariko's audio was ready to start for their video call.

"Hello, hello? Can you hear me?" Mariko called out from behind the screen as the video-conferencing software powered up.

Alev shook herself free from her erotic fantasy, coming into the present moment. Snapping her legs together and clearing her throat, Alev replied, “Hello Mariko, yes, I can hear you just fine.”

Rolling her shoulders back and assuming an upright posture, Alev focused her attention on being the professional businesswoman she was, berating herself in the process. *Come on, Alev, get it together. You have an empire to run, and the last thing you need is to be distracted by a silly crush.* But regardless of what Alev’s mind told her, her body was on fire with passionate feelings towards McKinley.

O *h my gosh, why am I so nervous?* McKinley raced out of the bathroom and hurried into the living room to find her shoes. As McKinley threw on her jacket, Lucy came out of her bedroom in a robe, a silk cap covering her long black locks. Yawning, she exclaimed, “Where are you off to? It’s only 9:00 am!”

“I have a meeting with Alev King at her head office. It sounded important, and I don’t want to be late.” McKinley wasn’t a morning person by nature, but she was intrigued by the message she received from Alev’s assistant, Maya Cohen.

Maya had requested McKinley’s presence to meet with her and Alev this morning regarding a job opportunity. Aside from the date and time of the meeting, the email didn’t go into a lot of detail, leaving McKinley anxious to learn more. On top of that, McKinley was also excited to see Alev again. The memories from their passionate night still played like a slideshow in McKinley’s mind.

“Alright, girl, good luck. I’ll probably be gone by the time you’re back. I’m dancing at The Bistro this afternoon, doing the day shift.” Lucy gave McKinley a little wave before retreating back into her room.

While waiting for the bus, McKinley thought about the letter from the school, trying to figure out how to break the news to both her roommates and Alev. And since receiving the email from Maya, McKinley felt even more conflicted. Not knowing what to do next, McKinley decided that she would receive more clarity after the meeting, so she resolved to wait it out. *Besides, I still have a whole month before making my decision. Yeah, I'll wait and see what happens—it's just not the right time yet.*

McKinley coasted through the streets, rolling up and down hills until she arrived at Alev's Head Office, located in the heart of the downtown business area. Yanking the cord, she signaled for the bus to stop, exiting from the side door. She approached a tall, glass building and walked into the foyer, searching for the elevators.

As she rode to the 18th floor, McKinley thought about the erotic short story she had written about two strangers meeting in an elevator, who ended up fucking, never to see one another again. She had often dreamed of enacting that fantasy in real life and couldn't help but imagine herself and Alev sharing close, confined quarters that fueled the sexual tension between them. McKinley pictured herself greeting Alev as she entered the sliding doors, captivated by Alev's powerful, towering presence.

Together, they would ride the elevator up a few floors before it got stuck. After a few minutes, the compartment would become so warm that both women decided to remove their shirts. As they waited for help, Alev and McKinley would become dewy with sweat, and Alev would take the material from her expensive blouse, dabbing the moisture off McKinley. Their attraction would continue to grow until neither woman could hold back. Alev would then press herself against

McKinley, cornering her in the elevator, with a hand sliding up McKinley's skirt. McKinley would be soaked with arousal, her body aching for Alev's touch. The women would then passionately kiss as their bodies began to rub against each other. "Please, I want you to fuck me. I want you inside of me so bad," McKinley would whisper. She would then part her legs, welcoming Alev's fingers....

Ding! Suddenly the elevator stopped, and the door opened, shaking McKinley out of her fantasy. Bringing herself back to reality, McKinley walked down the hallway until she reached a door that read *Wicked Orchid Head Office, President and CEO: Alev King*. As McKinley slowly opened the door, she was immediately greeted by a woman sporting a short, stylish haircut and designer glasses.

"Hello! You must be McKinley, yes?" The woman stuck out her hand. "I'm Maya Cohen, Ms. King's Executive Assistant. It's a pleasure to meet you."

McKinley grinned, yielding to Maya's firm grip. "Hey, nice to meet you as well." Looking around the spacious, elegantly decorated room, McKinley couldn't help but remark, "Wow, this is a great office!" McKinley felt herself relax, soothed by Maya's friendly demeanor.

Maya turned her head slightly, glancing around her surroundings. "All of the interior designs were Ms. King's vision. She certainly has an eye for taste." Grabbing a folder from her desk, Maya motioned for McKinley to follow her down the hall. "Please, come this way." McKinley followed Maya down a short corridor, noticing a few achievement awards with Alev's name on them on the walls. *Wow, these are crazy. How the heck did someone like me end up in a building like this?*

Maya swung open Alev's door, ushering McKinley inside. Upon seeing the women, Alev stood up from her desk. McKinley's heart skipped a beat, enthralled by Alev's powerful energy. Her glossy brown and caramel bob shone in the light. McKinley was both intimidated and aroused by her strength and mature, timeless beauty.

"Good morning, McKinley; thank you for joining us today." Alev greeted McKinley with a crisp smile, followed by a brief handshake. It was the first time the two women had seen each other since their sexual encounter, and Alev was quick to set a professional tone.

"Thank you; I appreciate you wanting to meet with me." Alev motioned for McKinley to grab a seat while Maya sat in a chair closer to Alev's desk so that the two businesswomen were facing McKinley.

Getting right to the point, Alev began, "We've asked you to come in today because we are interested in working with you beyond your sales role at the Wicked Orchid flagship store. While you seem to be satisfactory in your current position, you possess other talents that I feel could benefit the development of additional projects I have set for the company."

Alev then pointed in Maya's direction. "I've asked my assistant to prepare a job proposal for you, and if you are interested in the opportunity, we'd love to bring you on board. But first, let me ask how you have been enjoying your time at Wicked Orchid? Do you feel that it's been a good fit so far?"

McKinley bobbed her head. "Oh yes, definitely. I love the people I work with; the products are so sexy and fun. And I loved being a part of the photo shoot as well." McKinley tucked a strand of hair behind her ear, adding, "By the way,

how did you like the erotica I've sent? I received your payment for that, so thanks."

Both women looked pleased as Alev replied, "It was excellent; the text pairs perfectly with the voice-activated commands for the Lust for Lexi prototype. In fact, I was telling Maya about it the other day." Maya chimed in, "It's really good, McKinley. We were both very impressed."

Alev continued, "And that's why Maya has prepared this proposal; we see a lot of potential in you." Then, turning to her assistant, Alev curled her fingers, signaling to receive the folder from Maya's hands.

Maya handed the documents to Alev, noting, "We would like for you to look it over and at the back is a contract to sign if you agree to the terms. But just to give you an overview, the idea is that you would be working with me, assisting with projects assigned by Alev. The details are described in the proposal, but it would be things that complement your existing skills: content writing and some marketing tasks. And if you accept the position, we would like you to accompany us to the International Summit Conference in Japan, which gathers successful businesswomen worldwide for a week of presentations, product launches, and keynote speeches."

Alev interjected, "It's an incredible opportunity for Wicked Orchid, and we are launching the Lust for Lexi product at the conference. However, there is a lot to be done before attending and, of course, at the event." McKinley felt Alev's eyes bore into hers, seemingly assessing McKinley's interest. "I'll also add that, with this position, your wage would go from hourly to salary."

McKinley's jaw dropped slightly as excitement rose within her body. She had only ever worked hourly paying jobs within

customer service, and while McKinley had done well in school, paid writing opportunities were scarce. The idea of working closely with an influential force like Alev while receiving a higher than minimum wage was mind-blowing to McKinley, not to mention that she loved being in a sex- and pleasure-positive environment with other queer women.

The opportunity felt like a dream come true to McKinley, and suddenly, the chance to enter a school program felt more remote. McKinley felt like she was at a crossroads with big decisions. And to make matters more complicated, her attraction to Alev felt like a magnet, drawing her in. *Gosh—I don't know what to do! This seems like an incredible offer, and I don't want to pass it up. But the writing program means so much to me.*

McKinley kept her voice steady as thoughts churned in her mind. “Wow, all of this sounds so incredible. I’m definitely interested, and I’ll read over the proposal today. I’m just curious; how long do I have to decide?”

Alev and Maya exchanged glances, with Alev replying, “Well, we’d like to have an answer as soon as possible. But considering that we need to prepare for the conference, the latest would be in three weeks, considering that we would have to replace you as a sales associate at the store.”

McKinley nodded, taking in the deadline while calculating the weeks ahead. She knew that she needed to respond to the school at roughly the same time. Taking a deep breath, McKinley responded, “Okay, no problem. I can do that. Thanks again, this is really exciting.”

Exhilaration, peppered with a twinge of anxiety, coursed through McKinley’s body. She knew she was straddling two worlds: the liberal arts education versus a corporate role.

Having never faced such opposing realms, McKinley was overwhelmed. She also craved more of Alev's touch.

“Excellent. Maya, could you leave McKinley and me for a moment?” Alev asked. Turning to McKinley, Alev's eyes pierced through her own. “The photos from the shoot came back, and I'm hoping you could help me with some marketing copy for the advertisements? I'll pay you for your time, of course. It should only take about an hour, if you are free?”

McKinley's eyes widened. “Yeah, sure. I'm excited to see how they turned out.” McKinley was also thrilled to spend some alone time with Alev, even within a professional setting. “I'm free all afternoon, so whatever works for you.”

Maya stood to exit the office. “I look forward to being in touch, McKinley. Just keep us posted on any questions you have.” The executive assistant swiftly left the room, closing the door behind her.

Now that she was alone with Alev, McKinley was at a loss. She wanted so badly to express her desire, but at the same time, she didn't dare make a move. McKinley wasn't shy when it came to flirting with women, but contained within these office walls, she felt out of her element. Luckily, Alev was never one to let an uncomfortable silence linger.

Clearing her throat, Alev began, “McKinley, I asked you to stay because I wanted to speak to you privately. I know we haven't been in touch since the night you slept over and I think it's important to talk about what happened.”

In a rare moment, McKinley sensed a bit of uncertainty from Alev, almost as if she wasn't sure what to say.

Regardless, the CEO continued, “I never get involved with my staff; I mentioned that, the other night. We definitely have

chemistry, and I enjoyed my time with you. But this,” Alev pointed to herself and McKinley, “this can’t happen again. I need my company to remain professional.”

Alev’s expression remained stoic, but McKinley wasn’t convinced. She observed Alev squirming in her chair, exuding both resolute and indecisive energy. It was a refreshing side of Alev that McKinley had never seen before.

Taking her chances, McKinley responded, “I understand, and I respect your decision as my boss. I love the projects I’m doing with Wicked Orchid, and I want to continue to work with you.” McKinley paused, looking down at her fidgety fingers. *I don’t care, I have to say it. I have to say what’s on my mind.* “But...isn’t there a way where we could, I don’t know, maybe see each other a bit, on the side? Like separate from work? There is something between us that I’d love to explore with you.” McKinley gathered up her courage while feeling like she was going to fall off a cliff. “Maybe we could just have a bit of fun, for a while?” *Oh my god, I’ve practically just asked to get fired. McKinley, what are you doing right now?*

But even though McKinley knew she might be crossing a line, she didn’t care. She always believed in following her intuition, letting her passions guide her. And there was something inside McKinley that told her to go for it, to seek out a possibility of more intimate time with Alev.

Alev remained unwavering, save for a sparkle in her eye. For a few seconds, the CEO didn’t speak, and McKinley’s heart sank. *Fuck! What’s going to happen now? Come on, say something!*

McKinley watched as Alev narrowed her eyes, appearing to consider McKinley’s statement. Alev unfolded her fingers,

placing her hands on either side of the table and looked down at her desk. McKinley held her breath, unable to move as she waited for a response.

Finally, Alev spoke. “You’re right. There is something between us and it’s called sexual tension. I’m not going to deny my attraction towards you. The other night was,” Alev halted, searching for the words, “it was exciting and hot and yes, I’d love to enjoy more of you. But McKinley, I’m going to be brutally honest. When it comes to hooking up, I am emotionally unavailable. Not everyone can handle that, and I would never want to hurt you, especially as a valuable employee.”

Alev’s gaze intensified. “You need to understand that if we were to start an affair, the only thing I can offer is physical pleasure, paired with respect and consent.” Alev sighed, almost regretfully before adding, “You could never ask me for more. Do you get it?”

McKinley nodded as a thrill of hope shot through her veins. “I get it, I understand. I can accept that, and we can keep this a secret.” McKinley couldn’t help but lean forward towards Alev. “I want you. Can we try this?” McKinley was on the edge of her seat already wet with arousal.

“Okay, yes, we can.” Alev lowered her voice to a seductive tone, as her eyes scanned the office, ensuring that the door was shut tight. “Tell me what you want right now, McKinley. How can I make your fantasies come true?”

McKinley parted her legs slightly, running her hands up her thighs. “I want you to fuck me, I want to feel you deep inside me.” Her heart was beating furiously inside her chest as her pussy tingled with delight. “*Please.*”

“That’s the magic word I love to hear.” Alec gave McKinley a coy smile. “Slip your panties off and open your legs wider for me,” Alev ordered, and McKinley enthusiastically obliged. Maintaining eye contact, McKinley backed up her chair slightly so that she could rest her legs on the surface while Alev came from behind the desk, positioning herself between McKinley’s legs.

Alev leaned down to kiss McKinley, first gliding her lips across McKinley’s neck, teasing her earlobe, which sent shivers down McKinley’s spine. McKinley could smell Alev’s designer perfume as she leapt with desire as she felt Alev’s fingers exploring the delicate folds of her vulva.

“I love how wet you are for me,” Alev whispered into McKinley’s ear as she pushed two fingers firmly into McKinley’s vagina. Upon being penetrated, McKinley moaned, and Alev quickly drew her fingers out, placing them on McKinley’s mouth. “Shhhh, you have to be quiet,” Alev warned.

McKinley could taste her own juices, catching a whiff of her musky scent. “Okay, okay. I will, I promise,” McKinley whispered, and Alev moved her fingers back inside McKinley, massaging her G-spot, while McKinley squirmed with pleasure in her seat. She bucked against Alev’s hand, wanting to take her in deeper to which Alev added a third finger, then a fourth, stretching McKinley’s open, adding more delicious pleasure as she began to fuck her with her fingers.

“Oh my god, please. Yes, just like that, please don’t stop,” McKinley murmured as quietly as she could, sensing a climax beginning to build.

Alev read McKinley’s body, knowing that she was about to reach an orgasm. Alev fucked McKinley harder, increasing the

power of her thrust. McKinley gyrated her hips, riding a wave of ecstasy when an explosion of pleasure erupted from her body, causing her muscles to tense. She felt dizzy with the orgasm. Alev's fingers inside of her felt like the most incredible thing in the world.

Alev stood over McKinley, observing her as McKinley's breathing slowly returned to normal. McKinley felt the cool touch of Alev's fingers on her hot face as Alev stroked a strand of McKinley's hair. "How was that, angel? Do you like the way I make you feel?" Alev muttered quietly, appearing amused and pleased with McKinley's enjoyment.

McKinley hummed, closing her eyes as she savored waves of sexual satisfaction. "Oh my god, you are so good, I love the way you make me feel." Alev smiled to herself as McKinley came back down to earth. Even though she was overcome with ecstasy, McKinley had a burning question in the back of her mind. "Alev, can I ask, can I get the chance to please *you*? I want to make you feel amazing too."

Alev chuckled softly to herself as she rested against the edge of the desk. "Oh, honey, I'm a Top. I get off on getting women off. It's rare that you will see me in a position where I'm receiving. And it's gotta be someone who is very close to me, where I can be that vulnerable." Alev took a breath and assumed her usual controlled demeanor. "Don't worry about me—just let me take care of you, okay? That's more comfortable for me, anyways."

McKinley bobbed her head and bit her lip, feeling a bit disappointed. She wanted an equal exchange with Alev. For now, McKinley didn't want to push her luck, but if there was one thing that turned her on, it was a challenge; it was something that would remain on McKinley's mind. *How can I*

*get this woman to open up for me? Is that even possible? I
guess we'll see....*

Alev folded her hands in front of her, motioning for Maya to take notes as she was talking. Alev had gathered management from both the San Francisco branch of Wicked Orchid and the Los Angeles location to discuss the quarterly results from stores on the West Coast. Judith from the flagship store and Dusty Myers, the manager of L.A.'s Wicked Orchid franchise, were both present and Alev's Executive Assistant.

Alev had transferred the financial results to a projector screen, making the detailed information more visible to the group. "See this line? This represents the cost of sales, which we always want to keep below 10%. I'm pleased that for both the San Fran and L.A. stores, this has been maintained at 7.5% over three months."

Judith and Dusty smiled and gave each other a subtle high-five, obviously pleased that Alev was satisfied with their results. "Awesome to hear. I feel like the new customer service framework has aligned well with KPI objectives," Dusty commented.

Alev turned to Dusty, "And at this point, what do you feel are the highest performing products?" Without hesitation,

Dusty answered, “Oh, definitely the G-spot dildos, but in particular, the silicone Pulsating Player has been a huge hit.”

Alev was pleased to hear that as she was thinking about the launch of the Lust for Lexi toy. While Alev already had the data to support its projected success, it was also important to understand what was selling well at the various Wicked Orchid locations. While Alev’s business model focused more on classic quality than trends, she was also aware that integrated technology was here to stay, and sex toys were no exception.

“Very good. It sounds like the L. A market is ready for the Lust for Lexi AI model,” Alev remarked as Dusty added, “Absolutely. When do you think that will be ready for retail?”

Alev replied, “I am working on the prototype, so it’s ready for the launch at the International Summit in Japan. So, it should be ready for the Wicked Orchid stores in less than three months.” Alev turned to Maya. “Does that sound right?”

Maya nodded, confirming Alev’s prediction. “Yes, that’s a solid estimate. And hopefully, we can bring McKinley on board sooner to help expedite the process.”

As soon as Maya brought up McKinley’s name, Alev’s heart skipped a beat. She thought back to the intimate encounter in the office a week ago, feeling both nervous and aroused. Alev had told herself not to dwell on the incident, but she couldn’t help thinking about McKinley; the taste of her lingered in Alev’s mouth. Finally, she decided to leave McKinley alone for a while, to give her time to consider the business proposal but also to give herself space to detach.

Alev kept tabs on her employees; if she ever needed to know about McKinley’s performance, she could always ask

Judith. But for now, it was best if Alev maintained some distance from her object of desire.

“Great, alright, let’s move on to something more fun. We have the summer staff party coming up, and I’d like to schedule it for the same date for both the San Fran and L.A. store. Judith, Dusty, can either of you think of a Friday night that would work well with the team?”

Alev saw cohesion between her West Coast stores, and as such, she preferred them to act in tandem; that also extended to the dates of staff parties. Judith raised her hand. “What about two Fridays from now? June 20? That will be after we count inventory but before Pride weekend. It would be nice to give the staff a break in between.”

Dusty turned to Judith. “Yeah, I like that. L.A.’s Pride festivities are only a few days after yours, so I think that works for our location.”

Alev studied both managers. “Good. If that works best, then let’s schedule the summer staff party for Friday, June 20.” Alev pointed to Maya, “Please add that to my Google calendar and send out a memorandum with the details. We’ll have it catered as usual and see if you can arrange the same D.J. as before. We got some great feedback from her performance.”

Maya bobbed her head, following Alev’s instructions. “Yup, will do. And the staff are allowed to bring guests, like before?”

“Of course, yes, everyone is permitted a plus-one,” Alev answered. Even though she attended the earlier portion of the staff events, Alev had never brought a date. Considering that she wasn’t seeing anyone seriously and had no plans to, there was no reason for her to take anyone to the staff party.

“Anything else on the agenda?” Alev asked Maya, who shook her head. “No, I think we covered everything. Does anyone have anything they would like to add?” Both Judith and Dusty looked at one another and shrugged. “Nope, I’m good,” Dusty replied as Judith echoed, “Same here.”

“Excellent, the meeting is adjourned. Judith, I’ll email you next week about the Xtassy advertisements. I have McKinley working on the copy.” Judith grinned. “Cool, sounds good. I’m excited to see the photos from the shoot.”

Maya, Judith, and Dusty exited the room, leaving Alev alone in her office. She took a quick stretch, pausing to clear her mind before moving on to the rest of her workday. Alev decided to check her phone, which had been silent during the meeting, when she noticed a text message from Catherine.

Hello beautiful. How’s your day going? Call me when you have a sec. I’ve got some exciting news for you.

Alev wrinkled her nose, frowning slightly. Like McKinley, Alev also wanted to keep Catherine at arm’s length to avoid leading her on. While she had enjoyed her time with Catherine, Alev could tell that Catherine was starting to catch feelings, and Alev did not want to encourage any romantic drama. Still, the mention of *interesting news* piqued Alev’s attention, and she couldn’t help but be intrigued.

Alev called Catherine’s number, and Catherine picked up on the first ring. “Hello?” she answered in a breathy voice.

“Hi, it’s me. I got your text. What’s the news?” Alev asked in a friendly yet efficient tone.

“Well, hello there. I’m actually shocked that you called me so soon,” Catherine replied flirtatiously. “I’m glad your curiosity got the best of you.”

Alev rolled her eyes slightly, amused that Catherine thought she had the upper hand. “What can I say? You caught me on a good day,” she playfully retorted. “So, what’s going on?”

“So, you’ll never believe this, but The Advocate magazine is going to do an interview with me about curating famous queer artists for the Bay City Gallery,” Catherine said excitedly.

“Awesome; that’s great news. Congratulations.” Alev was happy for Catherine, although not entirely surprised. As a socialite in San Francisco’s art scene, Catherine was no stranger to publicity. But being featured in The Advocate was a high honor, a feat that Alev had not yet achieved. Wicked Orchid had been placing ads in The Advocate for years, but Alev herself had yet to be interviewed.

Catherine continued, “But that’s not all. They actually wanted to do a day-in-the-life piece with me, and I was wondering if you might want to have dinner with me that night. So I could introduce you to the journalist.” Catherine’s voice lingered as she tried to coax Alev into agreeing. “Who knows? Maybe they will want to interview *you* in the near future?”

Narrowing her eyes, Alev thought quickly. She could sense that Catherine’s proposal doubled as a ploy to secure a date night, but at the same time, Alev knew that this could be a huge opportunity to help promote the launch of her newest sex toy.

Alev also enjoyed spending occasional and casual time with Catherine. Still, as a businesswoman, she was also attuned to any chance available to help boost her company and highlight upcoming projects.

Tapping a pen as her mind churned, Alev replied graciously, “Thank you for thinking of me. It’s possible that I could be free. When is this scheduled for?”

“Hold on, let me check my notes,” Catherine paused for a second before answering, “Oh, I see. It’s Friday, June 20. Apparently, it’s an all-day thing, but you can just join me for dinner if you’re free.”

Shit! Alev thought to herself. *That’s the same night as the staff party! I can’t miss that.* Alev struggled to respond until an idea popped into her head. *Mmm, maybe there is a way around this.*

Clearing her throat, Alev finally spoke, “So, that is the night of our annual summer staff party for Wicked Orchid.”

“Oh, really? That sounds nice. Well, I thought I would ask anyway. I’m sure you’ll have a great time.” Alev could sense a twinge of disappointment behind Catherine’s chipper tone. But being the opportunist she was, this was the perfect moment for Alev to voice her request.

“I have an idea—hear me out. What if you came to the staff party as my date and asked the journalist to cover your appearance at the event?”

“Really? You want to take me to the staff party? Oh wow, that sounds fun. I’d love to go!” Catherine replied excitedly, “Let me talk to the journalist—her name is Kai, by the way. But I can’t see it being a problem. I mean, what’s the difference, right? It still serves the same purpose whether we are having dinner or together at an event.”

“That is exactly what I was thinking.” Alev heightened her charm. “Let me know what she says, and from there, we can make a plan.”

Catherine squealed with excitement. “Oh wow, this is going to be a blast! Did you maybe want to meet up for dinner first before going to the party?”

Alev paused, sensing Catherine’s motive. “I’m sorry, but I probably can’t. I want to be onsite early at the event. You know, just to make sure everything runs smoothly.” Then, feeling guilty, Alev added, “What are you doing tonight?”

Catherine replied, “I’m meeting my girlfriends for a quick drink and maybe a bite, but that will be earlier in the evening. No plans after that.”

Perfect, Alev thought. Playfully, she offered, “Well, if you want me to bite back, you should swing by later. We can, um, hang out by the pool again.” Alev punctuated her sentence with an air of suggestion, enticing Catherine back to her home.

And as Alev suspected, Catherine took the bait. “Yeah, I could do that. I’ll call you once we decide to leave the lounge.” Alev could hear the wanting in Catherine’s tone. “I look forward to it!”

The women ended the call, and Alev took a few minutes to sit with her thoughts. She couldn’t help but feel a little bad about taking advantage of potential media coverage. Besides, Alev was never one to bring a date to a social event. But Alev tried to justify her actions. *It’s not like Catherine and I are partners. We’re both well-known, successful women; we use each other for gain. It’s not like I’m hurting anyone...*

But there was another nagging feeling festering in the pit of Alev’s stomach. She didn’t want to admit it, but if there were anyone she would have liked to take to the party, it was McKinley. But in Alev’s reality, that wasn’t possible. Still, the idea lingered in Alev’s mind. *Why does this woman have such a hold on me?*

““**H**uh, that’s weird. Who’s that?” McKinley looked at the strange number calling her phone. “That’s an Austin area code.”

Puzzled, McKinley answered, “Hello?” A male voice responded, in a slight twang, “Hello! Is this McKinley Vodden?”

At first, McKinley couldn’t recognize the voice, although something familiar was in its tone. “Um, yes? Who’s this?”

McKinley heard a chuckle emanate from the caller. “Gosh, I can’t believe you don’t remember my voice. Girl, it’s Darius!”

All of a sudden, it became apparent, and McKinley squealed, “Oh my god! I’m sorry; it’s been forever since we’ve spoken. How did you get my number?”

“Well, it’s only been the same one from when we used to date. So how the heck are ya?” McKinley grinned, flooded with memories. Darius Jones was McKinley’s boyfriend from high school, back in Austin, Texas. Before McKinley had come out as a lesbian, she dabbled with bisexuality and spent her senior year dating the popular football player.

While McKinley adored spending time with Darius, the physical attraction wasn't there and knowing how enamored Darius was with her, McKinley felt it was unfair to continue the relationship.

They broke up the summer before Darius went to college but remained friends. For the first year after high school, McKinley and Darius spoke regularly, finally losing touch for no reason other than the natural evolution of growing apart. But Darius always held a special place in McKinley's heart, and she was glad to hear from her old friend.

"I'm good, yeah, things are, you know, things are *fine!*" Feeling slightly overwhelmed, McKinley tried to sum up her journey. "Um, I'm living in San Fran, and oh, I just got a new job about a month ago. So, I'm just... I don't know, trying to find myself, I guess. But things are shaping up. How about you?"

"I couldn't be better! Marylou—my wife—is expecting her third child, and I'm hoping for a boy. I mean, I love my precious daughters; they are my angels. But this is our last chance to see if we can add a son to the family unit." One of the things McKinley loved was Darius's vibrant energy, and she was pleased to see that he was still a ball of fire.

"Well, that's great! Congratulations on your family. Are you still in Austin?" McKinley asked

"Yes, ma'am! I never left, especially with Marylou's family here. Please tell me that you'll come and visit us one day. I know she would love to meet you," Darius offered.

McKinley forgot to share her school program in all of the excitement. "Actually, I have some interesting news now that you mention it. I got accepted into the Linguistics and Educational Leadership program at ACC!"

Darius's voice boomed through the phone. "No way! Congratulations, girl. But honestly, I'm not surprised. You were always such a talented writer, even back in high school." McKinley could practically see Darius's wide, toothy grin through their call. "When do you start?"

McKinley paused and bit her lip. "Well, I'm *supposed* to start in mid-September. I just need to give them confirmation of enrollment within the month."

"Huh, what do you mean by confirmation? Aren't you already accepted, hun?" Darius asked. "Wouldn't you just automatically start the program in the fall?"

"Well, um, yeah, I'm just struggling a little with that." McKinley stammered. "I-I, uh, I got this cool job in San Fran, and I'm on the fence about what to do, exactly."

Darius replied, "What kind of job? Is it in your field?"

McKinley chuckled in response. "You'll never believe it. I'm working at a Wicked Orchid store; they sell sex toys, fetish gear, lingerie, and other things. But the coolest part is that the management team wants to give me more responsibilities, some of which would involve some content writing and marketing."

McKinley wished she could also share that she had a major crush on her boss and that they were fucking, but she wasn't sure how Darius would take it. McKinley knew that he had long since moved on from their high-school relationship, so it wasn't a matter of jealousy. But knowing how important it was to Alev to keep their affair a secret, McKinley was anxious not to tell anyone, let alone someone she hadn't spoken to in ten years.

“Oh, I’m familiar with Wicked Orchid,” Darius laughed through the phone. Then, in a hushed whisper, he added, “Marylou sometimes surprises me with these cute little outfits, you know, like for special occasions? But tell me, are you happy there? I mean, I know how much you wanted to pursue your writing career, and the Linguistics Leadership Program would give you an edge.”

McKinley sighed, knowing that Darius was right. “I know, and I’m excited about the opportunity. But then I got this *other* chance, which sounds like it will be more challenging than a retail position, so I am feeling stuck on what to do.” *Plus, I want to keep working with Alev and spending time with her. I don’t want to give that up yet.*

“Hun, you know that I’ve always been one of your biggest supporters, even after you dumped my ass,” Darius joked, knowing that neither of them harbored any resentment from the past. “But school is important, and not everyone gets accepted into ACC. So I just want you to make the best decision for your future.”

McKinley melted with appreciation. “Thank you, that means a lot. I still have a few weeks before I need to contact the school. Trust me; I’ll do what’s best for myself. I just need more time to figure it out.”

“I respect whatever you decide. But listen, I should get back to work. It was so nice catching up with you. Keep me posted on what happens,” Darius said before ending their call.

“I will, babe. Take care, and thanks for calling.” McKinley hung up and thought to herself, *What a nice surprise! I forgot how much I loved talking to him.* McKinley checked the time. *Shit, I need to leave now!* Quickly, McKinley grabbed her

backpack and headed out the door to make her shift at Wicked Orchid.

A short while later, McKinley scampered off the bus and strolled to the store's front entrance. Immediately, she was faced with two eight-foot banners showing images of her and Autumn in the Xtassy lingerie. Between the banners was a retractable table that displayed the Xtassy line; some items were out of the box for customers to examine while the sale products remained wrapped.

Already, there was a small crowd of customers admiring the display. Judith rushed over to McKinley. "Don't you just love it? I can't believe how well these banners turned out." Judith gushed, "You and Autumn look amazing! I know Alev is very pleased as well."

"Oh my god, it's so awesome! I've never seen myself as a model before. And it looks like the customers like the display. It was such a fun experience!" Assuming that Alev had been present for the banner unveiling, McKinley couldn't help but ask, "Is Alev still here?"

Judith replied, "Oh yes, she's in the office. Actually, she requested to see you whenever you are ready. So, once you are done, I will have you at the register for today."

McKinley tried her best to sound casual but knowing that Alev was at the store and wanted to talk to her made McKinley's heart skip a beat. "Okay, yeah, sure. I'll be ready in a few, just going to put my stuff away."

McKinley sauntered through the *Employees Only* door and dropped off her bag in her locker before knocking on Alev's door.

Knocking softly, McKinley voiced through the closed door. “Hi, Alev? It’s McKinley. You wanted to see me?”

McKinley heard Alev clear her throat before she replied, “Yes, come in.” McKinley entered the office, seeing Alev seated at her desk. McKinley noticed an ornate pendant that hung in between Alev’s breasts, like a focal point. Grabbing a seat in front of Alev, McKinley remarked, “What a lovely necklace!”

Alev’s hand touched the pendant as though she had forgotten she was wearing it. Then, blushing slightly, Alev responded, “Oh, yes, thank you. Um, it was a gift from my ex-wife. I’ve had it forever.” Then, pausing for a moment, Alev added, “Today is—or, I guess, what would have been our thirteenth wedding anniversary. I know it’s silly, but I still wear it for the memories.”

McKinley was surprised to see Alev so vulnerable. She never opened up about her past or the marriage that ended in divorce. Nevertheless, McKinley was flattered that Alev had shared a piece of personal information with her.

“Are you guys, like, still in touch? Like, are you friends?” McKinley asked, hoping she didn’t come off as prying.

Alev looked down at her desk before laughing bitterly. “No, no. Nothing like that.” Chuckling quietly and shaking her head, Alev looked up at McKinley. “She was an alcoholic who cheated on me. Yeah, I walked in on her and her lover, and get this! She was actually so drunk that she didn’t even know what she was doing or where she was.” Alev sighed deeply, touching the pendant.

McKinley was at a loss for words. She wanted to comfort Alev, to embrace her, but she wasn’t sure what would be considered appropriate. Up until this moment, there was a

marked power exchange between the women; Alev's sense of control encapsulated even their intimate moments. McKinley didn't want to do anything that felt out of line, but she understood what it felt like to be disappointed by a loved one.

McKinley and Alev shared a few seconds of silence before McKinley spoke, "I'm sorry, that sounds awful. My dad was an alcoholic, and he cheated on my mom. She kicked him out, and that was the last I saw of him. I was three when he left." McKinley looked down at her lap and shrugged. "It took me a long time to forgive him, but eventually, I had to move on for the sake of my mental health, you know? Once you're ready, forgiveness can offer a lot of freedom."

Once McKinley looked up at her boss, she was caught in Alev's intense gaze. "Do you know where he is? Is he still alive?" Alev asked.

McKinley sighed, looking up at the ceiling. "Yeah, as far as I know. He sent me a postcard from Albuquerque about two and a half years ago. But, to be honest, I'm not sure why he bothers. I mean, we don't have a relationship. Part of me thinks he feels guilty for his past, but I can't help him with that."

Alev paused before commenting, "Maybe you're right. And maybe he loves you regardless but can't express himself in the way you want. I know that Dallas—my ex-wife—carries a lot of regrets. I've since forgiven her, and we've been in touch since the divorce in a casual, amicable way, but her apology never took away my feelings of hurt and betrayal. The whole thing changed me as a person."

A sense of empathy suddenly overcame McKinley, and she couldn't help but reach across the desk to grab Alev's hands, holding them tight in hers. As she looked deep into Alev's

eyes, McKinley felt Alev's guard coming down. "I'm sorry, really. I'm sure today is a tough one for you." Alev squeezed her hand and closed her eyes. "Thank you," she whispered. "I'm sorry too."

With their eyes locked on each other, the women held onto each other until Alev broke the moment, snapping out of her fragility; a cold glaze formed over Alev's marbled, emerald eyes. She moved her hands away from McKinley's and cleared her throat. "Anyways, let's move on, shall we? I brought you in here to talk about business."

McKinley slinked back into her seat and nodded. "Sure, no problem. What's going on?"

Alev formed a tight smile on her face, raising her guard. "I have another project for you. How would you like to take over writing our e-newsletter? Judith is trying to remove some responsibilities off her plate, and since you're familiar with the store and many of the products, I thought you'd be a good fit."

McKinley was flattered, albeit anxious about deciding between Wicked Orchid and the ACC program. McKinley was excited to receive these new opportunities with the company. Still, she was also worried about letting Alev down if she decided to move away to attend school in the fall.

But then again, writing the newsletter would utilize my skills, giving me more hours, which I need. And given that she had just shared a tender moment with Alev, McKinley felt compelled to help her.

"Wow, thanks for asking me! You know, it means a lot that you see so much potential in me. How would that work? I'm assuming I'd be trained in some way?" McKinley asked, curious to learn more.

Alev leaned back in her chair and nodded. “Yes, of course. We have a software program that you would use; it’s very straightforward.” A twinkle then formed in Alev’s eyes as she added, “I would provide you with the content that we want to feature, and from there, you would write the text and input any images. And I could train you, *personally*.” Alev winked, giving McKinley a coy smile.

There was no doubt that Alev was flirting, and McKinley couldn’t help but take the bait. “Is that right? Would we need to train *after hours*?” McKinley grinned as a thrill of arousal formed in her belly.

Alev chuckled, apparently amused. Then, leaning across her desk, Alev held McKinley’s gaze and licked her lips. “Actually, we might need to. There’s *lots* for you to learn.”

McKinley squirmed in her seat as wetness formed between her legs. She wished Alev would come around her desk to kiss her. But, instead, McKinley replied in a soft, seductive voice, “Mmm, well, I can be a good student. I’m a good listener and can do what I’m told.”

Nodding, Alev continued to stare into McKinley’s soul. “I have no doubt. So far, you’ve been *very attentive* to the lessons I’ve given.” Then, taking a deep breath, Alev laughed, “God, I’m sorry. I got a bit distracted. You do something to me, and sometimes I lose my focus.”

McKinley waved her hands. “No, no, it’s okay! I know, I got a little off topic, too.” McKinley blushed slightly and smiled before adding, “You do something to me too. I find it hard to resist you, especially when you flirt with me like that.”

Alev studied McKinley before remarking, “Well, maybe we should spend a little time together tonight if you’re free?”

McKinley's body came alive with desire, for she wanted nothing more than to feel Alev's touch and lips on her body. "Mmm, yeah, I'd like that. I'm all yours!"

Alev bobbed her head. "Okay, good. It's a date. Meet me in the office at 9:30 pm; everyone will have left by then. But in all seriousness, I need someone to write the newsletter, and you will be trained and paid extra, of course." Alev straightened her shoulders, assuming a more serious nature. "What do you think?"

McKinley knew that she was digging a hole for herself. It was possible that she might have to leave in three months, and she didn't want to commit to an ongoing responsibility that would leave Alev looking for a replacement.

But she also loved the description of the task, and the idea of working more with Alev left McKinley mesmerized by her attraction. Besides, she still had a little over two weeks to give her decision to the school. *What would be the harm of helping out, even just for a few more months? People leave jobs all of the time. And I still don't know what I want to do, so why not just seize the moment?*

Feeling closer to Alev than she ever had before, McKinley nodded. "Yup, I'll do it. Just let me know when we need to get started."

Alev gave McKinley a warm smile. "I will. Oh, and before you go back on the floor, I just want to thank you. Thanks for listening." Alev held out her hand, and McKinley squeezed it before standing to leave the office.

"You're welcome. I'll see you tonight." McKinley turned to leave, her heart soaring with a feeling she hadn't experienced in a while, something that felt more powerful than lust, more transcendent than physical desire.

““O h my god, yes...oh fuck!” Alev exclaimed, her thighs parted while her back was arched. McKinley was lying between Alev’s legs, her right hand thrusting between them.

McKinley decorated Alev’s body with tiny butterfly kisses in between thrusts as goosebumps formed over Alev’s arms. Alev glanced down at her, her beautiful employee, who she had finally let return the favour and fuck her.

She had been craving it for so long now and it was just as perfect as she imagined. McKinley’s earnest face looking up at her.

Alev took McKinley’s brightly colored hair in her right hand and pushed her head down.

“Your mouth, baby, take me in your mouth,” she growled her directions and McKinley obediently took Alev’s clitoris in her mouth while her fingers continued to work hard.

Alev felt herself tightening and knew she was very close to climaxing. “Please don’t stop, oh god, don’t stop, yes, yes, *yes!*” Alev cried out. For a split second, time had frozen as a powerful explosion of ecstasy burst from within her. Flushed

and dewy, Alev laid still for a moment, her breathing slowly returning to normal.

Putting a hand on her chest, Alev felt her heartbeat as she fluttered her eyes open. “Wow, just *wow!* I needed that so badly.”

It was unusual to say the least for Alev to allow herself such vulnerability with a lover and she felt momentarily glad she had done. She had been getting far too uptight in herself. She had really needed McKinley to please her in that way for some time.

McKinley giggled softly as she moved her body to lay on top of Alev. McKinley nuzzled her lips against Alev’s neck, kissing her softly. “I’m so honored that I could be the one to make you feel that way.” The bedroom had become warm from the friction of body heat, and their naked bodies seemed to melt together.

Alev lay still, allowing McKinley to drape herself over her limbs. Alev kept her breathing steady while her eyes remained closed. Then, stroking McKinley’s hair, Alev remarked, “I never usually let my guard down enough to let that happen, but, I don’t know, I guess I trust you. It felt good to allow myself to feel.”

McKinley squeezed Alev, “I feel special,” she said. Then, propping herself up on her arm, McKinley looked into Alev’s eyes. “I mean it. Thank you for saying that.”

Alev wasn’t sure what had come over her, but the entire day had left her feeling sad and drained, thinking about what would have been her wedding anniversary if not for the divorce. And there was something about her conversation with McKinley in the office that made her feel like she could bring some emotional walls down. After Alev and McKinley left the

office to return to Alev's home, she felt safe enough to open herself to being fully present with McKinley.

But now, as the two women snuggled in bed, Alev felt out of her comfort zone. *What do I do now? Should I ask McKinley to sleep over? No, no...I can't do that. What if she doesn't want to? No, I need to sleep alone in my own room. But, ugh, it feels so nice to lay with her. Fuck. This is so weird. What is happening to me?*

Feeling self-conscious, Alev's body tightened in an attempt to assume control. Then, half-joking, she replied, "Yeah, well, don't tell anyone. It's a pretty rare occurrence, and I can't promise it will happen again."

McKinley chortled and then quipped sarcastically, "I wouldn't dream of it! Imagine what would happen if the world discovered that Alev King wasn't a total ice queen after all!"

"Hey, hey, that would never happen!" Alev laughed and overturned her body so she could playfully pin down McKinley. The two women wrestled lightheartedly until Alev lay completely on top of McKinley. "Now, who's in charge?!"

"You are, *boss*." McKinley looked up at Alev and batted her lashes. "Don't worry; your secret's safe with me." *Fuck, she is so beautiful. Those eyes are killing me*, Alev thought. As much as she was enjoying her romp with McKinley, she needed to ensure that McKinley still had respect for her position.

Looking down at McKinley, Alex nodded. "That's right. I'm still the boss. And this is still...you know, private, between you and me. Right?"

McKinley's expression turned from impish to serious. Then, softly, she replied, "Of course, I know. We have a deal; I

get it. I just..." McKinley sighed and paused before adding, "It's just nice to feel the *human* side of you. I don't have any less respect or expect anything to be different. But I just love being able to share this time with you as two adults who are attracted to each other. Don't you?"

Alev softened; it was as if McKinley could read her mind. Alev's finger stroked McKinley's cheek. "Of course I do. You're an amazing woman, and I love the time we spend together." Alev took a deep breath. "I haven't felt this *close* to someone in a while. Thank you for allowing me to bring my walls down. And I'm so happy to have you on board at Wicked Orchid—you are a great addition to the team."

Suddenly, Alev noticed a change in McKinley's expression. It appeared as though McKinley was struggling with something as her brows furrowed. "Hey, is everything okay?"

McKinley looked at Alev and then quickly looked away. Shaking her head slightly, McKinley replied, "Um, no, no, everything's fine. I was just thinking about...um, I was thinking about Wicked Orchid and all the cool opportunities I've been given." McKinley made eye contact with Alev once again. "I just want you to know I'm grateful and would never want to mess that up intentionally."

Alev couldn't help but laugh out loud. "Oh god, I know that! You looked so serious for a second; I thought you would tell me that you were quitting your job or something!" Alev looked tenderly at McKinley. "And I never want *this* to make you feel uncomfortable. I adore you as my lover, but I'd understand if it ever became too much for you. And your job wouldn't change, okay?"

McKinley simply nodded and stared at Alev; her expression was unreadable. To Alev, McKinley seemed as though she was frozen, as though she didn't know how to respond. Alev took a deep breath, not knowing what else to say. "Okay, well, good. I'm glad we are on the same page." Alev laid on her back as McKinley snuggled into her. Finally, McKinley said softly, "Okay, thank you, I understand, and I appreciate that."

As they cuddled together, sharing a comfortable silence, Alev decided to make a move. "I'm not sure what you have going on tomorrow, but you're more than welcome to sleep over." Alev's heart was beating quickly; she couldn't remember the last time she had asked a lover to stay the night. But at the moment, Alev felt so comfortable that she couldn't imagine McKinley leaving her bed.

Alev noticed McKinley's eyes widen; she seemed surprised, and if Alev was honest with herself, she couldn't blame McKinley. Alev acknowledged that she wasn't exactly the warmest person, and the last time McKinley had visited, Alev had set her up in one of the guest bedrooms. A few seconds seemed like minutes as Alev waited for McKinley to respond.

"Oh man, I would honestly *love* to spend the night with you. But, I, um...I have a busy morning. Actually, what time is it now?" McKinley asked as she sat up in bed. Alev turned over to see her bedside clock. "It's 1:35 am."

McKinley exclaimed, "Wow, already? Shit, I should probably get going. I'm sorry, I didn't realize how late it had gotten."

Alev tried to hide her disappointment. "Are you sure? I could have Emile call you a Lyft in the morning to take you

anywhere you want to go.”

McKinley looked tenderly at Alev and smiled. “I really appreciate that, and if I didn’t have so much to do the next day, I would take you up on that.” McKinley stroked Alev’s bare arm as she gazed into her marble-colored eyes. “I want you to know that I really enjoyed our time. Thank you for opening yourself up to me. I know that’s not easy for you, and it means a lot that you trust me. Maybe we can get together at the end of the week or something?”

Alev nodded slowly so as not to appear too eager. But inside, she was already craving McKinley’s body again. Casually yet affectionately, Alev replied, “Sure, I’d love that. You are welcome here, anytime.” Alev reached out to stroke McKinley’s hair, pulling her in closer. The women wrapped their legs around each other for a final round of passionate, good-bye kisses before McKinley climbed out of Alev’s king-sized bed.

Alev lay on her stomach, watching McKinley get dressed. Her eyes scanned McKinley’s delicate frame, which was decorated with a series of tattoos. Alev didn’t realize that she was smiling to herself until McKinley remarked playfully, “Hello? Did you hear what I said?”

Alev shook her head, clearing her mind. “I’m sorry, what? I didn’t catch that.” McKinley laughed as she threw a t-shirt over her bare breasts. “Yeah, I didn’t think so. You looked like you were lost in your world. I asked if you ever attend the staff parties? We got a memo at the store that it’s in two weeks.”

Alev gulped as a feeling of nervousness crept into her belly. Alev wasn’t sure why, but it suddenly made her feel anxious for McKinley to see her with Catherine. Regardless, Alev answered, “Yes, I always attend, at least for the first bit.

As the face of the company, it's important for me to show my face, you know?" Alev narrowed her eyes and inquired, "Why?"

McKinley shrugged as she looked around Alev's room, apparently searching for something. "Um, no reason, I was just curious. Hey, did you see my purple bag?"

Alev sat up as her eyes scoured the room. "Oh, yeah. I see it. It's hanging on the door to the bathroom." McKinley grabbed the bag, which hung from the doorknob. "Thanks! Do you know if we are allowed a date? Like, can we bring a plus one?"

Alev wasn't sure where McKinley was going with the conversation. Part of her wished she could bring McKinley as her date, but Alev knew that was impossible. Aside from her own personal philosophy about dating co-workers, Alev had already committed herself to Catherine. She started to worry that maybe she was digging a hole for herself and that the party could get messy.

"Um, yup," Alev ran a hand through her hair. "Yes, you can. Are you bringing anyone, like, *special*?" Again, Alev tried her best to sound nonchalant, but her curiosity was piqued as to whether McKinley was dating anyone else because, truth be told, she never asked.

McKinley seemed distracted, avoiding eye contact with Alev. "No, I don't think so. Well, maybe I'll bring my roommate Lucy if she's free but only if the other staff are also bringing guests. Otherwise, I'll just come solo." McKinley slung her oversized, purple purse over her shoulder and leaned down to kiss Alev, who was still in bed. "I have to go. Thank you for an amazing time."

Alev paused, wishing there was more she could say to encourage McKinley to stay, but she knew the young woman needed to leave. “Alright, have a good night, babe. I’ll see you at the store this week. I’ll be training you on how to write the newsletter.” McKinley grinned and winked at Alev. “Sure thing, I’m looking forward to it!”

McKinley turned her back and exited the room, closing the door behind her. Alev flopped on her back and sprawled out. Her hand touched the spot where McKinley had been lying beside her, and she felt the warmth of McKinley’s body heat, still present on the mattress.

For the first time in years, Alev noticed the enormity of her bed and the space she had in the absence of another body. Just like that, she already missed McKinley’s presence beside her.

McKinley's stomach fluttered with nerves as she rode in a Lyft away from Alev's mansion. Filled with so many emotions, McKinley took a few deep breaths to help slow her thoughts. Most of all, McKinley was shocked and delighted that Alev let down her guard enough to reveal a more vulnerable side, let alone have McKinley pleasure her. *This is real. There is something there with us; I can feel it!*

And as ecstatic as McKinley was over having such a genuine connection with Alev, she was also anxious and a bit sad. She still hadn't decided how to respond to the Austin Community College about her school program. Between her deep feelings for Alev, opportunities at Wicked Orchid, and the offer to enter a Leadership Program, McKinley felt her head spinning. It seemed that every day, the decision was becoming more difficult, and tonight's events only made McKinley's body yearn more intensely for Alev.

As the vehicle approached the shared apartment, McKinley made up her mind to speak to Lucy about her affair with Alev. She needed someone to talk to to help make sense of the chaos in her head.

McKinley crept through the front door, trying not to wake Nelson. On the other hand, Lucy was most likely awake and camming, if not relaxing, between private shows. McKinley had already shared with Nelson and Lucy that there was a chance that she needed to move out in the fall, and both of her roommates took it well.

McKinley agreed to give two months' notice so that Nelson and Lucy could make arrangements if needed. But she had yet to come clean about the most significant reason that she was struggling with a decision.

As McKinley jiggled her keys out of the doorknob, she heard Lucy call out from her bedroom. "Kins? Are you home?" McKinley shut the door behind her and replied, "Yeah, I just got in."

Lucy entered the foyer, her signature red robe flowing behind her. "I have some exciting news; I couldn't wait for you to get home!" McKinley grinned and replied, "Oh yeah? I've got some news for you first." *Oh man, Lucy will lose her mind once she finds out I've been hooking up with Alev King!*

"Me first?" Playfully, Lucy feigned a pout. "Sorry, I've been *dying* to tell you. So, I was chosen to MC the annual fundraiser for the San Fran Sex Worker Collective. I've wanted to do this for years, so it's such an honor to be a part of the event." Lucy proudly beamed. "And in addition to asking if Wicked Orchid could sponsor some prizes, I also wanted to ask if you wanted to do a live reading from your book of lesbian erotica! The producers will pay you to perform for a 15-minute slot."

McKinley's jaw dropped. "No way, that's fantastic news! Congratulations!" Lucy had been a proud volunteer for the SFSWC for two years, and McKinley was glad to see that

Lucy was being recognized as a leader in her community. “And, of course, I’m sure that Wicked Orchid would gladly sponsor some prizes. What’s the date?”

Lucy answered, “It’s the 27th. Are you going to read? Please say yes. Your stories are so good, Kins, and I know the crowd would love it.”

McKinley thought aloud, “That’s seven days after the Wicked Orchid staff party. Um, yeah, I could do that. But I don’t have any new material, only old work. And I’d have to see if I can gather enough material for a 15-minute slot. I haven’t done a book reading since I lived in Austin.”

Lucy gave McKinley a sly grin. “What if you read the story about the strangers in the elevator? It’s such a hot, slow burn. Girl, you would have the audience squirming in their seats, needing to change their underwear!” McKinley and Lucy shared a chuckle, and McKinley’s initial fear of reading out loud dissipated.

In the early days of her writing career, which began in college, McKinley loved sharing her work on stage and listening to the stories written by her peers. But after receiving her diploma and entering the job market, McKinley became disillusioned by the lack of opportunities for writers, which eventually led to depression. But ever since joining the Wicked Orchid team and meeting Alev, McKinley had found passion and inspiration again. Lucy’s offer was just what McKinley needed to give her a confidence boost.

McKinley embraced Lucy, thanking her. “I appreciate you thinking of me. I’ll take a look at my older collection and pick out some stories.” Suddenly Lucy exclaimed, “Oh, I’m so sorry! I was so excited to share my news that I forgot to ask about yours. What’s going on.”

“Oh man, you are never going to believe this! Guess who I’ve been hooking up with?” McKinley asked while taking a seat on the couch. Lucy plopped down beside her. “Who? Girl, you have to tell me!”

McKinley looked at Lucy and squeezed her hand. “Alev, as in my boss at Wicked Orchid.” Lucy’s eyes grew wide. “What? No way! Do you mean *the* Alev King? Wow, how did that even happen?”

McKinley giggled and shrugged. “I don’t know, we just have this magical chemistry, and one night, after the photo shoot, we were so drawn to each other that we couldn’t resist.” McKinley blushed slightly, remembering their first night together. “But you are the only person I’ve told, so please don’t say anything to anyone. Promise?”

Lucy bobbed her head, sticking out her finger. “Pinky swear. But you have to tell me; how is the sex? Are you two dating? How is that going to work?”

McKinley’s face was pasted with a smile; whenever she thought about Alev, her heart fluttered with joy and arousal. “Oh my god, the sex is pure fire! Alev is an amazing lover, and we’ve experimented with all of these toys at the store. You wouldn’t believe the products they have out these days!”

McKinley paused as she thought about Lucy’s questions. “We are trying to keep things professional; no one knows about our affair, so it’s a secret. I wouldn’t say we are dating—just hooking up.” *But honestly, if Alev wanted to date me, I wouldn’t say no. In fact, I think we could make a great couple.* McKinley thought to herself. *Wait, stop getting ahead of yourself. You already know the deal with Alev.*

Regardless, McKinley couldn’t help but feel slightly conflicted, especially after last night. A new form of intimacy

formed between them that McKinley felt throughout her whole body. And while she understood and respected what Alev had told her, McKinley sensed there was more to their relationship than just a sexual affair.

Lucy gasped and clapped her hands. “Wow, I can’t believe it. You are fucking Alev King! But, like, isn’t that weird, at work?” Lucy shook her head slightly. “I mean, I’m happy for you, but I also think you should be careful. Alev King has a reputation for breaking hearts. She may be an excellent businesswoman, but I’m not sure it’s smart to get your feelings involved.”

McKinley tried to sound nonchalant. “Oh, I’m fine. We have a deal, and we are on the same page. We are just having fun, that’s all.” But even as the words came out of her mouth, McKinley knew she was already starting to catch feelings.

“Well, there’s nothing wrong with that, and if you are having fun, then I’m happy for you. It’s good to hear that you are getting laid,” Lucy said with a chuckle. “Gosh, I can’t remember the last time I got some. I think it might have been with that woman in L.A. when I went to dance at The Pearl Room. We hooked up after having a few drinks while the bar was closed.”

McKinley grinned. “Sounds fun! Well, I should crash for a bit. I have to work later tonight but luckily not until 4:00 pm. I definitely need to get some sleep.”

Lucy eyed McKinley. “Oh, so that’s why you got home so late! But, hey, I wanted to ask you something else, really quick. You mentioned the Wicked Orchid staff party on the 20th?”

McKinley nodded. “Yup! I think it should be fun. Apparently, Alev is renting out a lounge, and we’re having it

catered. Plus, everyone there is so cool. I know it will be a blast.”

Slyly, Lucy asked, “So, um, can you bring anyone with you? Or are you going with a date?”

McKinley could tell that Lucy wanted to attend. McKinley had no plans to attend with anyone, although deep in her heart, she wished she could go with Alev. McKinley imagined strolling into the party with Alev, hand-in-hand, revealing their relationship to the company. She knew that was impossible, but McKinley couldn’t help but let her mind wander. *No, no. Don’t even go there. All you are doing is setting yourself up for disappointment.*

McKinley was already hoping Lucy would be her plus one; there was no reason to leave her hanging. “Did you want to come with me? I’m sure you will have fun.”

Lucy squealed with excitement. “Oh my god, yes! It sounds like a great party, and I love the products at Wicked Orchid.” Then, grabbing McKinley’s hand and squeezing it, Lucy exclaimed, “Thanks so much for asking me. What’s the dress code?”

McKinley wasn’t sure, but she assumed it would be more than just black attire. “I don’t know, but I think it would be fun to dress up. I don’t think it will be a formal affair. Just look cute.”

Lucy beamed. “Well, I know how to do that! Is Alev going to be there?”

McKinley nodded. “Yeah, she said she was going. I’ll introduce you if you like.” Lucy replied, “Yes, please. I have to meet her. Do you know if she is bringing a date?”

“I don’t know. She didn’t say, but knowing Alev, I doubt it. She’s all business, and she did mention that she doesn’t really date—she just likes to have fun when she can.” Based on their conversations thus far, McKinley would be shocked if Alev brought someone. To her knowledge, Alev wasn’t seeing anyone, and McKinley could only imagine Alev attending alone. That said, it made McKinley think that perhaps the two of them could secretly spend some time together after the party. *Or maybe, at some point, we could head off to the washroom for a quickie. Yeah, that would definitely be hot! Perhaps we can try and find a way to be together that night. I should ask her...*

“Interesting. Well, I’d love to come with you. Thanks for asking, babe. I’ll let you get some rest.” Lucy hugged McKinley once more before retiring to her bedroom. McKinley got ready for bed. She felt exhausted but happy; her heart was filled with excitement as she replayed the sexy moments she had had with Alev. McKinley tried hard to remain grounded, but something told her that there was more to her affair, and there was something more special budding between the women.

As she drifted off to sleep, McKinley thought to herself, *Just wait and see. For now, manage your expectations, but you never know what could happen.*

“How’s your steak?” Catherine asked as she placed a hand on Alev’s thigh. Alev jerked her leg, slightly irritated by Catherine’s touch and her showy, flirtatious demeanor. The pair were dining at Scallop, a fine-dining seafood restaurant, before heading to the Wicked Orchid staff party. A journalist from The Advocate named Kai Richards had accompanied the women, scribbling notes and asking questions primarily directed at Catherine.

Alev had felt uncomfortable from the start of the evening. As per the plan, Alev met up with Catherine and Kai, whereby the trio would have dinner, and then Alev would bring them to the staff party. It was assumed that Catherine was Alev’s date to the party, but Catherine behaved as though she and Alev were *partners*, and that level of possession made Alev uneasy.

Catherine didn’t seem to notice Alev’s knee-jerk reaction and instead turned to Kai and laughed, “I swear, every time we’ve gone out for dinner, Alev orders the *exact* same thing—medium-rare steak and asparagus on the side, no potato.” The socialite then leaned into Alev as though trying to snuggle against her. “Personally, I like trying new things—especially at a seafood restaurant—but I find her predictability absolutely *adorable*.”

Alev inwardly cringed and focused on the last few morsels of her filet mignon. Catherine had pressed her buttons, dialing in on two of Alev's pet peeves, being spoken of as though she was not in the room and being called adorable. But Alev decided to swallow her anger and look at the bigger picture. According to Catherine, Kai was supposed to ask Alev a few questions about the Wicked Orchid brand. Alev knew she was taking advantage of the situation between her and Catherine. Still, at the same time, Alev felt justified as the suggestion of bringing a reporter to the event was entirely Catherine's idea.

But as the dinner went on, Alev started to become suspicious. So far, all of Kai's questions were directed solely at Catherine and her gallery endeavors, and Kai had yet to address Alev with anything substantial. This, combined with Catherine's overly affectionate behavior, Alev decided to take matters into her own hands.

Placing her fork on the side of her plate, Alev dabbed the sides of her mouth with a linen napkin before turning her attention to Kai. "So, Catherine told me you've been working with The Advocate for over five years. What are your favorite issues or topics to cover?"

Kai leaned on one elbow while playing with designer eyeglass frames. The West Coast reporter embodied laid-back hipster fashion in her casual button-down dress shirt, which was left untucked against a pair of denim. The white suit jacket that had graced her frame upon first meeting Alev was draped against the back of the restaurant chair, and Kai had since rolled up her sleeves, revealing a hint of forearm tattoo. Kai turned to face Alev head-on; for the first time, Kai made direct eye contact with Alev.

“Hmmm, that’s a great question. Well, I’m currently working on a piece that examines the effectiveness of health care for trans women. Oh, and I am meeting with one of the early founders of AIDS Walk to discuss ageism and increasing poverty among older gay men.”

Kai paused for a moment before adding, “I would say my general scope is social issues. But I also believe that uplifting forms of expression, such as art, music, and fashion, are crucial to how queers maintain autonomy over their identity.” Then, Kai turned to Catherine and remarked, “That’s why I wanted to interview your girlfriend. Catherine’s contribution to the arts scene in The Castro has been an inspiration.”

As soon as the word *girlfriend* escaped Kai’s mouth, Alev shot Catherine a look. It was clear to Alev that Catherine had misrepresented their relationship to the reporter. Upon noticing Alev’s expression, Catherine opened her mouth, about to correct the reporter, when Alev waved her hand, silencing Catherine.

With a tight-lipped smile, Alev nodded. “Yes, she is quite talented. It’s an honor to have you join us. I’m also inspired by trailblazers with a vested interest in sexuality and pleasure, particularly for women. Is that a topic that you cover as a journalist?”

Kai bobbed her head enthusiastically. “Oh my goodness, *of course!* In fact, I’ve been curious to explore the Wicked Orchid franchise because it’s such an iconic brand. Are you familiar with the company?”

Alev almost laughed out loud. Clearly, Catherine had set Alev up to appear as her girlfriend for tonight while completely omitting the fact that Alev was the CEO and visionary behind Wicked Orchid. Alev stared down at

Catherine, who looked like she wanted to disappear from the table. Alev's eyes turned into daggers as she subtly mouthed the words *caught you* in Catherine's direction.

Alev was shocked and disappointed, never assuming someone like Catherine could be so conniving. Catherine was rich and sophisticated, but to Alev, she came across as a bit naive, obviously living in a bubble of wealth and status. But now, everything made sense, and Alev was set on turning this interview on its head by removing the spotlight from Catherine and turning it on herself. But Alev's biggest regret was that she was bringing Catherine as her plus one to the party when she truly wanted to bring McKinley.

"Well, Kai, what if I told you that you are speaking to the CEO of Wicked Orchid right now." Alev grinned like a Cheshire cat while Kai's jaw dropped. From the corner of her eye, Alev noticed Catherine bringing her hand to her face, shaking her head in shame.

"No way—I had no idea. I'm so sorry! It's a pleasure to meet you." A frazzled Kai was now tripping over her words, "I mean, it was *always* a pleasure, I just didn't know...I mean, Catherine never said anything...."

Alev remained composed, reassuring the reporter. "Oh, don't worry! Tonight is all about Catherine. I don't want to impose my agenda. But I'll give you my business card if you ever want to chat." Alev couldn't help but look at Catherine with a nasty smirk, hoping Kai wouldn't see.

Kai took the card and turned it over, examining it in her hand. "Wow, so *you're* Alev King. I'll definitely be in contact. This is so exciting, meeting two local queer celebrities in one night. You must be the ultimate power couple, huh!"

Alev looked at Catherine, who quickly averted her eyes. Then, smoothing over the situation, Alev purred, “Well, some may think so, but I prefer to think that we are *individuals* who flourish *separately* within our respective fields. Isn’t that right, Catherine?”

Catherine smiled nervously and nodded. “Yup, that’s right! But, um, what time is it? Maybe we should head to the party soon?”

As much as Alev enjoyed watching Catherine squirm, she checked her watch, and indeed, it was time for the check. Alev gracefully raised a hand to summon the server for the check. She looked poised and in control, but she had had enough of Catherine’s sneaky shenanigans. And Alev was angry at herself for agreeing to bring Catherine as her date after discovering the socialite’s plot to deceive.

After Catherine covered the check, the trio left Scallop and made their way to the Bay Point Parlor, a luxurious lounge with a stunning view of the Golden Gate Bridge. Alev always felt it was essential to hold the staff parties at decadent locations; her employees were just as much of an investment as the Wicked Orchid brand itself. She prided herself on giving them an incredible experience. Alev was a tough boss, but she was just as generous with appreciation as she was with criticism.

The women walked into the lobby and were greeted by a concierge. “Hello, ladies. Where can I direct you?”

“We are part of the Wicked Orchid party; I reserved the section on the upper deck,” Alev said, leading the group. The concierge grinned. “Yes, of course. Please, follow me.”

Alev, Catherine, and Kai followed the host through the main floor of the lounge and were led up a staircase to the

second floor. Immediately, Alev noticed Judith and a few employees mingling at the bar. She left Catherine and Kai to chat while she approached her group.

“Hello everyone, and welcome! I hope you like the space,” Alev greeted her guests. Judith leaned in to kiss Alev on the cheek. “Oh, it’s absolutely stunning! In fact, I think I like this lounge better than last year’s location. Great choice.” Alev returned the cheek kiss, patting her store manager on the arm. “You are welcome and thank you for all of the hard work you’ve done.” Alev was eager to see McKinley but didn’t see her near the bar.

Trying her best to sound casual, Alev asked Judith, “Have you seen any other staff yet? McKinley, or Rachel or...?” As her voice trailed off, Judith replied, craning her neck, “Um, nope. I don’t see McKinley. But Rachel was here earlier. Oh, and Maya was looking for you as well,” referring to Alev’s assistant.

Alev smiled graciously. “Thanks so much, doll. Are we all set to showcase the demo as well?” Judith nodded, winking at Alev. “Yup, everything is all set. But I think that’s why Maya wanted to talk to you. I think she had some questions about where to set up.”

With the Lust for Lexi model now complete, Alev wanted to do a soft reveal, and she thought the staff party would be the perfect occasion. She also wanted to bring McKinley up during the demonstration to congratulate her on the contributions that she brought to the product.

“Alright, let me find Maya. Enjoy the party, and don’t forget to sample the freshly shucked oysters—they pair well with the champagne.” Alev winked back at Judith and turned around, attempting to locate Maya, when she felt a hand on her

elbow. Thinking it could be McKinley, Alev spun around, only to see Catherine, who wore a pleading look.

“Alev, can we talk for a sec? *Please?* I know you’re pissed, but I want to explain myself.” Alev was uncomfortable with Catherine’s pleading as it exuded an air of drama that Alev found inappropriate at a work function.

And while she would have preferred to ignore Catherine completely, Alev knew that she needed to calm this public scene, especially in front of her staff. *And what would McKinley think? No, I should deal with this now before the night goes on.*

Alev hissed under her breath while maintaining a neutral expression. “*Fine.* Let’s head to the washroom. But you have five minutes and nothing more. Besides, aren’t you still chatting with Kai for the article?”

Catherine breathed a sigh of relief. “Thank you. Yes, just five minutes, and don’t worry about Kai. She is probably chatting up one of your employees to learn more about Wicked Orchid.”

Alev smirked, “Good. That feels like karma to me!” Then, pointing towards a narrow hallway, Alev ushered Catherine in the direction of the washroom, being careful to maintain enough physical distance so as not to raise questions from the guests.

Alev and Catherine stepped inside the large, tiled room, which was currently empty. With Alev’s back towards the door, Catherine stepped in front to face her. Alev could tell from the tears in her eyes that Catherine felt terrible. Still, Alev could not excuse such disrespect; when it came to choosing lovers, manipulation and deceit were deal breakers.

“Alev, please, I want you to understand something.” Catherine gripped Alev’s shoulders with a pleading look in her eye. “I know I misrepresented the truth and weaseled my way into the party as your date. But—”

Alev held up a palm, cutting Catherine off. “You did more than that. You lied to the reporter about the type of relationship we had. And apparently, Kai didn’t even know who I was, aside from being *your partner*, which I’m not.”

A small cry escaped Catherine’s mouth as a few tears rolled down her cheek. Alev had never seen her so upset, and she almost felt bad for coming across so harsh. Alev was not a cruel person, and she always held herself with integrity. But because she was always honest about her aversion to romantic commitments, Alev was insulted that Catherine would portray their connection in a different light to a stranger. Most of all, Alev was angry at herself for allowing her ego to be assuaged, and she was sad that she didn’t ask McKinley to accompany her to the party. In hindsight, it would have made sense, seeing as McKinley helped with the Lust for Lexi AI sex toy.

“Listen, I know. And I would understand if you didn’t want to see me again. But Alev, I *care about you*. I care about *us*. I have serious feelings for you, and I just thought,” Catherine sighed, shaking her head, “I don’t know, like maybe if I gave things a little push, it would have inspired you to take me more seriously.”

Alev pursed her lips, not wanting to bring down her wall, but she couldn’t help but soften; the last thing Alev wanted was to hurt anyone. She grabbed Catherine’s hands and spoke, “Catherine, I’ve *told you* what I have the capacity for and what I *don’t*. I was honest with you from the start. I do like you, and I enjoy our hot moments. But it was never going to go there

with us. I'm sorry if you thought otherwise, but I didn't do anything to lead you on."

Sadly, Catherine nodded her head; her eyes lowered to the ground. The women stood in silence until Catherine looked up. "Okay, I'll go. I know I'm not wanted here, and neither is Kai. But I'm glad you two connected, and I hope you get the interview you want. You used me too, Alev. Don't forget that." Suddenly, Catherine put her hands to Alev's face, bringing her in for a kiss. Shocked, Alev froze for a few seconds, unsure what to do.

"Oh, um, shit, sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt." Instantly recognizing the voice, Alev spun around, with Catherine standing behind her. She saw a stunned McKinley, her jaw open. A gorgeous, statuesque Black woman stood beside McKinley.

"McKinley! Um, I, um, this is Catherine. We were just finishing up a conversation." Unbeknownst to Alev, Catherine gave McKinley and Lucy a mean smirk before sauntering off, brushing past Alev on her way out of the washroom. "Good luck with that," Catherine cruelly remarked, turning her nose as she walked past McKinley and Lucy.

The three remaining women stood for a few seconds before Alev tried to break the ice. "Hey, it's great to see you! I'm sorry about that. It was just, you know, a situation—"

"Whatever. You don't have to explain anything to me," McKinley replied coolly as Alev noticed her usually warm brown eyes ice over. "I think we're going to go. Right?" McKinley turned to Lucy for affirmation as she bobbed her head.

"Oh, we're leaving alright," Lucy pointedly, glaring at Alev. "It was a pleasure not to meet you—your reputation

obviously precedes you.” Lucy grabbed McKinley’s hand, and the friends left the washroom, leaving Alev alone.

“Oh my god, what just happened?” Alev brought her hands to her face, reeling from the events of the last five minutes. Alev couldn’t shake the image of McKinley’s cold expression.

Deep in her heart, Alev knew that she had hurt the McKinley, and in turn, that greatly pained Alev. It was then and there that Alev realized that she had lost someone she genuinely cared about, and at this point, there was nothing Alev could do to rectify the circumstances.

McKinley leaned on the bar; her back turned against the narrow hallway that led to the bathroom from which she exited. Lucy faced her, placing a comforting hand on McKinley's arm. McKinley tried her best not to let her feelings show during the party, but the shock of seeing Alev with that woman left her gutted. Even though realistically she knew she had no right to be upset, she couldn't help it.

"Two more, please. And keep 'em coming," Lucy instructed the bartender, who placed tequila shots in front of the roommates. "Here, honey, take this," Lucy said as she handed McKinley a shot of the clear, potent liquid.

"And you know, it's not even that she had brought a date, it's just that she never mentioned anything. Like, why wouldn't she have just told me? At least that way, I could have been prepared," McKinley said as she expressed her discontent while knocking back the drink.

"I know, hun. You're right; there was no reason for her not to be honest. But players like Alev are like that. They are cold and dead inside. They don't care about other people's feelings," Lucy remarked, patting McKinley's arm. Even though McKinley was hurt, deep down, she didn't necessarily

believe Lucy. The connection between her and Alev was too strong to think that Alev didn't care. And McKinley always believed that people could still possess emotions, even if they sometimes made poor decisions. Still, this logic failed to comfort her because the real problem was that McKinley realized that she had fallen hard for Alev; and now, it was too late.

"It's probably for the best anyway. I still hadn't told her about the college program, and I was definitely feeling guilty about that. So maybe it's just a sign from the universe that I need to move on from Wicked Orchid and confirm my enrollment with the school." McKinley sighed as she looked around the party. She had grown close to a few of the employees and had been excited about the opportunities with the brand. Until the washroom incident, McKinley had been caught in the middle, unsure what to do about her future. But at this point, it was apparent that she needed to make a move to protect her heart.

"You still haven't told her? Damn, girl! When are you supposed to give your notice to the college?" Lucy asked.

"I'm down to a few weeks. Honestly, I just didn't know how to decide. Wicked Orchid was giving me more chances to grow with the company, which would utilize my skills. That, combined with my feelings for Alev, just made the whole thing confusing. A huge part of me wanted to follow that path." McKinley furrowed her brow as she shook her head. "But now I feel stupid like I was just another plaything for Alev. How could I not have seen that she would be involved with others and it would just end up with me getting too into her and getting hurt? She told me from the start that she only wanted a physical relationship. I should have been more careful with my own emotions." McKinley played back the

moment of seeing Alev kissing that gorgeous woman and felt more hurt.

“Don’t beat yourself up; you didn’t do anything wrong, and this is not your fault.” Lucy went to embrace McKinley when she suddenly gasped. “Wait, don’t look! I see her about to walk past us.” Lucy gripped McKinley tighter in her arms, shielding her from noticing Alev.

But McKinley couldn’t help herself. She lifted her head slightly from Lucy’s shoulder as her eyes turned to follow the direction from where the pair was walking. After a few seconds, she saw Alev alone. To McKinley, Alev looked dejected, which was surprising. Alev always appeared calm and collected. *I wonder where her date is? And why the heck is she so upset?*

Alev turned slightly, catching McKinley’s eye, which caused McKinley to look away quickly. Her stomach fluttered with a combination of anxiety and an incredible urge to run to Alev. Overcome with opposing emotions, McKinley wanted to hug and yell at Alev at the same time. But, most of all, she wanted answers. But neither woman dared to approach the other, and McKinley remained locked in Lucy’s embrace.

After a few moments, she broke free from Lucy, exclaiming, “Let’s do another shot.” McKinley was about to order a drink when she felt a tap on her shoulder. Turning around, she came face to face with Autumn.

“Hi! I saw you earlier, and I wanted to come over. How are you?” Autumn asked. Then, turning to Lucy she stuck out her hand. “Hey, I’m Autumn. McKinley and I did a shoot together at the store.”

Lucy shook the woman’s hand and warmly replied, “Nice to meet you. Yeah, McKinley told me about that. Xstassy,

right? I love their lingerie.”

Autumn exclaimed, “Yes, it was for an advertising campaign in the store. It was a lot of fun, and we got to keep some of the pieces too.” Autumn turned to McKinley. “How are you enjoying the party?”

McKinley glanced quickly at Alev before answering. “Um, it’s okay. I haven’t been feeling well, to be honest. But the lounge is beautiful.” McKinley wasn’t sure what else to say, and she didn’t want to address any drama with employees at the event.

“Oh no! I’m sorry to hear that, babe. Maybe you are coming down with something?” Autumn delicately put a hand on McKinley’s shoulder. “I wanted to let you know that Alev is going to start the announcements soon, and she was hoping you could join her on stage to talk about the launch of a brand-new toy. I’m excited to hear about it!”

McKinley’s heart sank. She didn’t know how to reply, and while she didn’t want to come off as unprofessional, McKinley was neither ready nor in the mood to stand beside Alev and pretend that everything was fine.

Luckily for McKinley, Lucy jumped in. “Are you sure you want to stay? I know you mentioned that you might have a fever. I just want you to be okay.”

Picking up on Lucy’s cue, McKinley answered, putting a hand to her forehead. “Yeah, I’m actually starting to burn up. Maybe we should leave.” McKinley turned to Autumn, feigning a pained expression. “I’m so sorry, but could you please tell Alev that I needed to leave as I’m not feeling well? I don’t want anyone else to get sick.”

Autumn cooed with sympathy. “Of course, no problem. Please feel better soon. Don’t worry; I’ll let Alev know. Just get better soon; I’ll see you at work.” Gingerly, Autumn hugged McKinley before walking off to find Alev.

“Thank you; that was the perfect excuse. Let’s go before anyone else comes to me,” McKinley whispered to Lucy, and the roommates walked off, hand in hand, exiting the party. McKinley felt a bit guilty leaving without much notice, but she didn’t want to fall apart in front of anyone at the lounge.

As she and Lucy walked down the stairs to the lobby, McKinley couldn’t help but look up towards the staircase and noticed Alev leaning on the rail of the second-floor balcony. She looked so goddamn beautiful, McKinley’s heart ached. Their eyes locked again for a second before McKinley looked away, just in time as a tear rolled down her cheek.

“It’s so nice to see you again after all these years. Please, have a seat,” Dr. Skye pointed to a cushioned chair that was positioned in front of her desk. “I was intrigued when I saw your name on our appointment calendar. I think it’s been about seven years, yes?”

Alev gulped and nodded, suddenly feeling nervous. When Alev had first filed for divorce, she decided to try therapy at the suggestion of her friends and colleagues. Through Alev’s connections within her community, she could schedule sessions with Dr. Barb Skye, a well-known therapist. She specialized in queer relationship dynamics, including aspects of BDSM, power-play, and empowered sexuality.

Dr. Skye was highly sought-after, spending most of her practice in Los Angeles. But luckily for Alev, Dr. Skye had transferred to San Francisco at approximately the same time as Alev’s divorce from her ex-wife, Dallas. The separation almost broke Alev both mentally and emotionally, and if Alev had not received therapy, she would not have become the powerful CEO she was today.

At first, Alev was grateful for Dr. Skye’s guidance. Still, over time, the business began to grow exponentially, and Alev

found herself becoming more removed from the person that Dr. Skye was helping to heal. And after the incident with McKinley and Catherine at the staff party, Alev wanted to take responsibility for her behavior, recognizing that she needed to get her ego in check.

“Yes, I know. The business has been booming, and I am busier than ever. I’m sorry I haven’t kept up with the sessions; I think I just needed to take a break and focus on work,” Alev explained as she settled into her seat.

Dr. Skye nodded, maintaining a neutral expression. “Hm mm. I see. Well, there is never any need to apologize. The great thing about therapy is that you can return to it anytime.” Then, taking a deep breath, Dr. Skye asked, “How have things been with your personal life? Are you in any romantic or sexual relationships?”

Alev bitterly chuckled, putting a hand to her forehead. “That’s why I’m here. Yes, I have had many sexual encounters, but over the years, I haven’t been able to develop anything deeper. I feel like my ability to be truly intimate is just not *there*, you know? And I don’t understand why.” Crossing her legs, Alev shifted into a more comfortable position. “All I know is that my heart is guarding itself against anything that may feel truly authentic, and I’m pushing away opportunities to have a genuine connection.”

Dr. Skye murmured, “Hmm, okay. That’s interesting to know. May I ask, did something specific happen, or is this just a general feeling? And most importantly, Alev,” Dr. Skye leaned in closer to emphasize her point, “Is this something that you truly *want* to change in yourself?”

Alev bit her lip and sighed, “Yes, I think it’s time that I explore these issues. For many years, I was fine with enjoying

simple sexual affairs. I didn't *want* anything more from my lovers, and I always expressed my own limitations. But then I met a woman named McKinley, and my whole world seems to have turned upside down."

The therapist empathically bobbed her head. "Okay. Let's examine this together. Can you tell me more about your relationship with McKinley?"

Alev took the next twenty-five minutes explaining how McKinley came into her life, first as an employee of Wicked Orchid and then transitioned into a lover. Finally, Alev revealed the shame and guilt of hurting McKinley through her lack of communication and transparency, opening herself up in a way that she would never dare within her business life and persona. And even though it was challenging to explore the destructive confines of her ego and shed layers of emotions, Alev found a powerful release in exposing deep honesty with Dr. Skye.

"Wow, very good, Alev. I appreciate you sharing all this with me, and I hope you recognize your strength. From what you've told me, it sounds like you truly care for McKinley and want to consider a future with her." The therapist handed Alev a tissue. "So tell me, what are you so afraid of?"

Alev sighed deeply while playing with the tissue in her hand. "I guess I've worked so hard to preserve my business persona and to maintain this franchise that I'm afraid it could all come crashing down if I had to suffer another heartbreak again."

Tears formed in Alev's eyes when she recalled her failed marriage. "When I discovered that Dallas was cheating on me, it was more than I could bear. My depression was so bad that I could barely get out of bed, let alone run a business. So, once I

could pull myself together, work became my reason for living, my *vice*. It's the one thing that saved my life. After that, I could never, ever put myself or my heart in jeopardy like that again. I just wouldn't survive, and neither would Wicked Orchid."

Dr. Skye leaned back in her chair, thoughtfully placing the tip of her pen to her mouth. She paused for a few moments before speaking. "Alev, I'll be honest; I see two main issues here. The first is that you have strong feelings for McKinley, but you don't seem to trust your emotions or the process of intimacy. Building a relationship takes time and trust—and patience. From what you've shared with me, you have the desire to be with McKinley, but you lack faith in yourself and possibly in her. Does that sound about right?"

Alev nodded, her eyes averting Dr. Skye's stare. The therapist had known Alev long enough to provide clarity to a situation. *Why didn't I see her sooner? I need to start making regular appointments again; she is so fantastic.* "Yes, that's pretty spot on," Alev chuckled. "What's the second issue?"

Clearing her throat, Dr. Syke continued, "You mentioned that Wicked Orchid would never survive if you spiraled into another depression. But let me ask you this: Are you hands-on with the hiring process? Like, are you directly involved with the employment of your staff?"

Alev bobbed her head empathically. "Absolutely. I'm involved with every aspect of my business."

The therapist gave Alev a mischievous grin. "So, what makes you think that anyone you select as an employee would let you down or drop the ball?" Dr. Skye shifted in her seat. "In other words, you need to have more faith in your business decisions and also in your staff. Wicked Orchid would not fall

apart if you were going through a tough time or needed to take some time off from work. You're a stronger leader than you think, Alev. But your lack of trust and need for control will only create more personal and professional isolation."

Alev felt as though a lightbulb had just gone off in her head. "I think you are so right. I guess I never looked at my life like that. My control freak ways making everything more difficult, hey?" Shaking her head, Alev felt a sense of relief, but she also realized her true yearning for love. Alev figured it might be too late to approach McKinley with her revelations, but she needed to ask the therapist. "Dr. Skye, what should I do about McKinley? I don't want to lose her, but I'm afraid I already have."

"As I said, you need to trust in the process, and you need to be honest. I can't give you any other answer. Even if it's too late—which it may not be—you just have to believe that whatever happens is what is meant for you. You cannot control the outcome, but you can determine your choices in the matter."

Glancing quickly at the clock, Dr. Syke said apologetically, "I'm sorry, but our time is up. But I hope all of this was helpful for you."

Alev stood up to shake Dr. Skye's hand. "It was very insightful; thank you so much for your help. Honestly, you've given me a lot to think about, and you're right; I need to let go and trust that not everyone is like my ex-wife." Alev thought for a moment before asking, "Can I make another appointment? Maybe something for late next week, if you are free? I think it might be a good idea to start regular sessions again."

Dr. Skye beamed. “That’s wonderful to hear. And yes, of course. Just check with my receptionist at the front, but I would love to see you again soon, Alev. It’s my pleasure to assist.”

As Alev left the office, she felt a weight lifted from her spirit. Alev knew she needed to see McKinley, even if only to apologize and share her true feelings. As she walked to her car, Alev tried to stay grounded without expectations, but she couldn’t help but fantasize that McKinley would accept her back. More than anything, Alev hoped they could start over from the beginning, as lovers building towards something meaningful and genuine.

Before pulling out of the driveway, Alev picked up her phone to send a text.

Hi McKinley. I know you are upset and hurt, and I want you to know how sorry I am. Would you be open to meeting me for coffee to talk? I’d really love to see you. Please let me know-Alev. Xo.

“Hey, Kins, are you almost ready?” McKinley heard Lucy call out from her bedroom as she stared at herself in the bathroom mirror. McKinley was putting the final touches on her makeup while her eyes oscillated between her reflection and her phone. McKinley knew that she and Lucy needed to leave to make it in time for the annual fundraiser for the San Fran Sex Worker Collective. But at this moment, McKinley felt frozen with indecision on whether she should text Alev back.

“Yup, hold on! Almost done,” McKinley shouted back through the closed door of the brightly tiled room. McKinley glanced at the collection of messages accumulated over the past two days. She had read that Alev was sorry for her actions and that she wanted to meet up to talk. But McKinley wasn’t sure what to do. Part of her wanted nothing more than to run into Alev’s arms and forgive her without question.

But another piece of McKinley couldn’t help but wonder why Alev cared that much. As McKinley dabbed mascara on her lashes, she bitterly thought. *She already told me that she didn’t want anything serious. It was my own stupid fault for catching feelings. I can’t imagine that things have changed*

that drastically overnight. She probably just wants me to absolve her of some guilt, and that's not my responsibility.

With all of the recent drama, McKinley had decided to confirm her application for the Linguistics and Educational Leadership Certificate Course at the Austin Community College. While she had yet to inform Judith at Wicked Orchid, McKinley planned to give her two weeks' notice following tonight's live reading at the fundraiser. At this point, McKinley figured it was best for her to move on and start over in her hometown.

“Okay, I'm ready. How do I look?” McKinley exited the bathroom to see Lucy waiting for her impatiently.

“Girl, I thought you would never come out of there!” Lucy gave McKinley a once-over and nodded with approval. “Very nice! I love the leather corset over the lace bodysuit—nice touch. How are you feeling?”

McKinley exhaled, rolling her shoulders back. “Good, I feel ready. And I'm excited to read these excerpts. I included a new piece that I had written a few days ago, but otherwise, the rest are older, from the anthology.” McKinley failed to mention that the newer writings were based on escapades between her and Alev. But knowing how Lucy felt about Alev, McKinley didn't feel it was necessary to share. She had found a creative release in documenting her tryst, and it was McKinley's way of expressing her emotions.

“Alright, that's great. Let's go; as the MC, I can't be late.” Lucy and McKinley hurried out of the apartment just in time to meet the Lyft arriving in their driveway.

Thirty minutes later, the pair arrived at The Pearl, a popular strip club in the Bay Area that had been rented out for the night by the collective. Lucy and the other members

thought hosting a fundraiser for sex workers on their own turf was only appropriate. McKinley—who had yet to visit the location—was excited to check out its swanky interior.

“I need to check in with the other organizers, but first, let me find out where you need to be.” Lucy linked her arm into McKinley’s and guided her through the crowd, an eclectic mix of women who stood out among various men in suits. Lucy leaned into McKinley’s ear and whispered, “I hope we make a lot of money tonight. I’ve already noticed a few clients and regulars of the club.” McKinley grinned up as Lucy winked at her. The roommates sauntered through the seated areas, past the main stage, to a tall, leather-clad woman who greeted Lucy with a clipboard. McKinley was certain she was some type of Dominatrix in her field.

“Hey, Foxy! How are you?” Lucy embraced Foxy and then turned to introduce her roommate. “This is McKinley, the author I was telling you about.” Foxy stuck out a meaty hand and shook McKinley’s warmly. “Nice to meet you. Lucy told me all about your writing. Congrats on the anthology, by the way.”

McKinley blushed slightly. She wasn’t used to being complimented on her writing. In fact, one of the first times she received praise was from Alev and Maya Cohen for her work on the Lust for Lexi product. “Oh, thanks. I was one of many writers in that collection, but I picked out the spiciest excerpts to read, so I hope everyone likes them.”

“I’m sure they will, doll,” Foxy said in a reassuring voice. “Here, come with me. I will take you backstage where you can relax and prepare for the show. I’ll stick my head in and give you a five-minute warning before you need to start.” Foxy

guided McKinley away from Lucy as her friend gave McKinley the thumbs up.

“Don’t worry, girl. You’re gonna do great!” Lucy beamed as McKinley followed Foxy through a hallway that led to the back of the club. Foxy opened a nondescript door and led McKinley inside. The room featured a long row of empty chairs and brightly lit make-up mirrors. “Usually, this room is pretty busy with dancers, but since The Pearl is closed for the fundraiser, there is lots of room. Pick any seat!”

McKinley smiled gratefully at Foxy. “Awesome, thanks so much. I’ll be ready to go as soon as you call.” The Dominatrix grinned at McKinley before turning her back, leaving McKinley with her thoughts, many of which involved Alev.

McKinley pulled out her tablet, where she had stored her erotica to read for the show. Much of the published writing was taken from the previous anthology, but McKinley decided to include a new piece she had planned as her last read, inspired by her time with Alev.

As she read over her work, muttering quietly to herself, McKinley couldn’t help but feel a deep ache in her heart. *Why do I always do this to myself? Why do I let my emotions get in the way of sex? Sometimes I wish I could be like Alev; cold and detached. It must be so much easier for someone like her.* McKinley looked away from her tablet and sighed deeply. She felt tears start to well up, so she quickly grabbed a tissue and blotted the corners of her eyes so as not to ruin her makeup.

Checking the time, McKinley realized she still had about thirty minutes before Foxy’s five-minute warning. She stood up to stretch, checking out her outfit in the mirror. *My heart may be broken but at least I look cute. Maybe I’ll meet someone new here tonight.* Then McKinley remembered that

she needed to contact the Austin Community College in a few days to confirm her enrollment. *Meh, why bother? I'll be out of San Francisco soon enough. There's no need to start something I obviously won't be here to finish.*

Suddenly, McKinley heard a soft knock at the door. Her heart jumped. *Oh no! Is it that time already? I thought I wasn't on until close to ten. Shit!*

“Hello? McKinley, it's Foxy. Can I come in?” The voice resonated through the entrance to the change room as McKinley answered, “Yup, I'm here. Sorry, I didn't realize it was time to perform. I'm ready!”

Just as McKinley spoke, the door opened, and to McKinley's absolute surprise, both Foxy and Alev stood in the doorway. McKinley's jaw dropped as Foxy spoke, “There's someone here who wanted to wish you good luck. I thought it might be great to have her come and say hi.” Foxy beamed, not knowing the history between Alev and McKinley.

Standing beside Foxy, Alev looked nervous and out of place in her designer pantsuit paired with a crisp suit jacket. It was a funny juxtaposition to have Foxy and Alev stand side-by-side as they were polar opposites in their appearance.

Clearing her throat, Alev replied, “Thank you, Foxy. Um, hi, McKinley. I wanted to wish you luck, but I was hoping we could also chat for a few minutes if you are free?”

McKinley's stomach fluttered with nerves. She was shocked to see Alev here and torn between feelings of excitement and gratitude peppered with a twinge of anger. *What makes you think it's okay just to show up and surprise me like this? What do you even want with me?*

But as hurt as McKinley was, she was also elated. She couldn't ignore her feelings of deep affection and lust toward Alev. And McKinley was also impressed that Alev made an effort to find her. Alev never seemed like the type of person who would go out of her way to do something unless it suited her best. Most of all, McKinley was curious to hear what Alev had to say.

"Yeah, sure. Come in." McKinley replied, trying her best to maintain a neutral expression. She didn't want to give away her true feelings to Alev before knowing why she was there.

Foxy grinned at Alev and McKinley. "Have a nice visit, you two. Don't forget, McKinley, you're on in about twenty minutes, okay?"

McKinley nodded as Alev stepped into the dressing room with Foxy shutting the door behind them. Alev and McKinley stared at one another for a moment, neither knowing what to say.

"Do you want to sit down?" McKinley offered a chair beside her. "How did you know I'd be here?"

"Thanks," Alev said as she sat on a hard, plastic chair. "I'm sorry if this is a surprise. Since I didn't hear from you, I was worried and wanted to try and chat with you in person." Then, tucking a strand of dark hair behind her ear, she continued, "Judith told me about the fundraiser because I understand Wicked Orchid had sponsored some prizes, yes?"

McKinley nodded, suddenly feeling guarded. "Yeah, I was the one who arranged that. But, Alev, what do you *want*? Like, it's obvious to me that I was just a casual fling, and I know you don't want anything serious, so why are you here?"

Alev grabbed McKinley's hands, holding them tight. Alev gazed deeply into McKinley's eyes, and McKinley noticed Alev wore an expression of vulnerability and sadness.

“After the Wicked Orchid staff party, I did some serious thinking. In fact, I even went to see my old therapist, Dr. Barb Skye. I have some intimacy issues to work through, and it's a big reason why I treated you the way I did—the reason I have treated many women that way. I'm not proud of my behavior and want to change it. I want to learn from my mistakes and trauma to make better choices and build relationships that are meaningful and not just about sex.”

Alev looked down and sighed. To McKinley's surprise, a small snuffle escaped from Alev. *Holy shit! Is she crying? This is not the Alev I know!* McKinley couldn't help but place a comforting hand on Alev's knee as she loosened her emotional wall. “I'm so proud of you for taking that step. I hope that it helps you.”

Alev wiped her tears, softening her expression. “McKinley, I need to tell you something, and I hope you can believe me. I love you. I want to be with you. I don't want to play games anymore. I care for you so much, and I'd like the opportunity to build a real relationship with you.” Alev leaned in, squeezing McKinley's hands. “What do you say? Just be honest; I'll understand whatever you are comfortable with. But I couldn't last another day without telling you what is truly in my heart.”

McKinley's jaw dropped; that was the last thing she expected Alev to say. But instead, her heart soared with joy as her mouth formed into a huge smile. “Are you serious? Is that really what you want?” Alev nodded emphatically. “It is, and if this is what you want, I am willing to do whatever it takes.

And I plan on doing more therapy sessions, regardless of whether or not we will be together.”

McKinley was impressed by that statement. She appreciated that Alev recognized her faults and wanted to improve herself; to McKinley, that spoke volumes about her character.

McKinley waited a few seconds as the news sunk in before replying. “Oh, Alev, *yes!* Yes, that is what I want too. I love you and want to be with you in every way, not just in the bedroom. I want to build something special with you too.” McKinley broke down in a mess of joyful tears, leaping from her seat to tightly embrace Alev. But as soon as their warm bodies collided, a thought struck McKinley. She pulled away slightly to ask, “But wait, what about the other woman you were with?”

Alev replied, “Ah, we weren’t really together. I invited her to that party because she had a journalist with her who I thought could give me good publicity. Sure, we have had a sex thing in the past, but it was meaningless for me. I realize this makes me sound shitty, but the very least I owe you now is the cold hard truth. After you left the bathroom, Catherine—that’s her name—stormed off. We were never together after that, but we did talk. I’m ashamed to say this, but I want to move forward with you truthfully, honestly and monogamously. I never had feelings for Catherine. She was a fun affair and I respect her professionally, but it would never go anywhere. Besides, she is a bit conniving, which was a real turn-off for me. And to be honest, I think we were both using each other for our own gains.”

Alev put her hands on McKinley’s shoulders, captivating McKinley with her turquoise-green marble eyes. “But part of

why I want to be in therapy again is to learn from the mistakes I made with Catherine and you and other women in the past. Falling in love with you is what has forced me to challenge my own behaviour and lifestyle. You bring out all the good in me.”

McKinley smiled. “I honestly cannot believe it. There were so many times we were together when you looked at me a certain way and I thought *I can't be imagining this, she feels the same as I do*, but then you would be stone cold again and I didn't know what to do. I never ever wanted to push. Your past is your past. Let's give *us* a real chance. ” McKinley leaned in to kiss Alev, and their mouths met with a warm, urgent passion as though their souls were united for the first time. Their tongues laced together and danced playfully until McKinley broke this kiss. She knew there was something she needed to share with Alev as well.

“While we are all confessional here, there is something I need to tell you,” McKinley took a breath, about to share her news about the school when the women heard another knock at the door.

“McKinley?” She heard Foxy's voice ring through. “Five minutes, girl. Get yourself sorted and wait in line behind the stage.” McKinley looked at Alev with surprise. “Oh gosh! I guess I better get going. Are you going to stay for the show?”

Alev smiled lovingly at McKinley. “I wouldn't dream of missing it, my love. I'll be cheering you on from the front row.” McKinley and Alev shared another passionate kiss before McKinley grabbed her tablet. “Showtime!” She and Alev darted out of the dressing room as McKinley thought, *I need to tell Alev about the school program. But now, I'm more confused than ever. Should I stay or should I go?*

As McKinley mulled over her decision, the curtain began to rise, and she was greeted with a smattering of applause.

Alev sat front and center, enthralled by McKinley's live reading. She couldn't have been prouder or more impressed by McKinley's prose and her seductive delivery.

“When they reached the large, cushioned surface, Ryan ordered, ‘Lie down, relax. I want to watch you touch yourself.’ Beth did as she was told, laying back against the bed and maintaining eye contact with Ryan. Next, Ryan ran her fingers over Beth's naked body, pausing to pinch her nipples as her fingers cascaded across her flesh, traveling between Beth's thighs and resting just below her pubic bone.

The sight of Beth's nude body and implied vulnerability had aroused Ryan to a point where she needed to be inside Beth. ‘Spread your legs wider for me so that I can fuck you again. And this time, I'm going to make you squirt.’”

Whistles and exclamations erupted from the audience as McKinley dramatically paused, shooting Alev a knowing look before finishing her last piece of erotica.

“Ryan winked before positioning herself between Beth's legs. She began by rousing Beth's labia with her mouth, once again seeking out her clit. Ryan started slow so as not to overstimulate the already sensitive area. She observed Beth's

body and breath, getting more and more heated as Beth became more turned on.

As Beth's moans became more audible, Ryan could feel Beth's hips thrust into her mouth, almost as if her pussy was begging to be entered. Ryan played with Beth's wetness, slowly entering a few fingers, feeling for the contractions that would eventually lead to an explosive orgasm."

Upon concluding her live reading, McKinley switched off her tablet, bringing it to the side of her body, signaling the end of her performance. Alev was the first to rise from her seat, kicking off the standing ovation. Other audience members quickly followed suit; at that moment, Alev wanted nothing more than to shower her lover with appreciation and praise.

"Thank you all so much," McKinley responded on the microphone. "I want to point out a few special people in the audience that made this performance possible; without them, I probably wouldn't have made it to this stage." Alev noticed McKinley glance into the crowd, pointing her finger to the tall black woman that Alev saw McKinley with at the staff party. Alev turned in her seat as McKinley called out, "Please give it up for Lucy, our MC for the night! Not only is she a prominent member of the SFSWC, but she is also my beloved roommate and my best friend."

Alev clapped along with the guests in appreciation of Lucy.

Fuck, she is so beautiful and she is an amazing performer- this crowd are enthralled by her.

Alev couldn't believe she had just declared her love for McKinley, but she felt it so strongly, it was undeniable any longer. Could she do it? Could she be the partner to McKinley that she wanted more than anything to be?

“But that’s not all,” McKinley continued. “There is another special woman in the crowd.” McKinley then looked directly at Alev, and her heart fluttered. But before Alev could signal McKinley to stop, McKinley spoke into the microphone, an index finger pointing directly at Alev.

“Some of you may already know Alev King as a community member and successful businesswoman. But you may not know that Alev gave me a chance to be a part of her brand and incredible opportunities for which I am so grateful,” Alev covered her face and shook her head, more appreciative than embarrassed. She never expected McKinley to put her in the spotlight, for Alev felt that McKinley’s successes were hers.

“Babe, will you come on stage?” McKinley asked. Alev couldn’t resist McKinley’s beautiful smile and generous heart. Slowly, she rose from her seat as the crowd cheered. “Please put your hands together for one of tonight’s sponsors; Alev King of Wicked Orchid!”

Alev approached the podium, sweeping McKinley up in a passionate embrace. The women looked at each other for a second before Alev decided to kiss her lover on stage, her first public display of affection towards McKinley.

The audience roared with delight as Alev whispered in McKinley’s ear, “I hope that was okay. I’m so proud of you, and I want everyone to know how much I adore you.” McKinley beamed with joy, bobbing her head as she mouthed the word *yes*. The couple then faced the crowd, hand in hand, as Alev took in the applause.

As Lucy took the stage to conclude the evening, McKinley pulled Alev backstage to the dressing room. Once inside, McKinley shut the door, giving them privacy.

“Babe, I need to tell you something. I tried to share it just before I had to go onstage.” Alev could tell that McKinley was nervous. She felt a flash of concern about what McKinley was about to say. Alev pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes with concern. Then, putting a hand on McKinley’s shoulder, Alev asked, “What is it, my love? Is everything okay?”

McKinley’s eyes darted away from Alev’s for a moment while she appeared to gather her thoughts. Then, taking a deep breath, McKinley began, “So, about a month ago, I received an email from Austin Community College regarding a program I wanted to enroll in. I didn’t believe I would be accepted, which is why I decided to move to San Francisco. But then I was offered to participate in the two-year Linguistics and Educational Leadership Certificate Course.”

Alev felt slightly alarmed while, at the same time, wanting to remain supportive. “Wow! That’s impressive—congratulations. What do you want to do? Are you moving?” Her thoughts then ran to Wicked Orchid and the opportunities she had offered McKinley, closely followed by their brand new relationship.

McKinley exhaled, putting her hands to her temples. “I’ll be honest. I’ve been having a hard time trying to decide because, on the one hand, I was excited about this program. But on the other hand, I am also thrilled and passionate about the responsibilities with Wicked Orchid.” McKinley’s face started to crumple as though she wanted to cry. “I’m sorry I never said anything sooner. I was so confused about everything, especially with you. I wanted to say something before. Please don’t hate me.”

Alev grabbed McKinley’s hands firmly. Then, with reassurance, Alev spoke, “I could never, ever hate you. *I love*

you! I want you to do what's best for you, but I'd be lying if I said I wouldn't miss you terribly if you left. But I would support you wholeheartedly. We can make a long distance relationship work. On the other hand, I think you have been such a great asset to my company and could easily continue to be, and if you wanted, Wicked Orchid could pay for some online courses to continue your studies." Alev gulped as an overwhelming sadness overcame her. "But I won't stand in your way. I just need you to know I will support you completely whatever you want to do with your life. I love you."

Alev said it with meaning and depth and she meant every word of it. McKinley's worried brown eyes eased.

"I love you too. And I'm telling you that I want to stay. I want to help build Wicked Orchid and a real relationship with you." McKinley chuckled as she wiped a single tear from her cheek. "I mean, I'd definitely take you up on some online courses, but I can't imagine leaving you at this point. And I love the brand. I feel there is more for me here than in Austin."

Alev smiled, feeling her insides break with emotion. "So, let's do this, let's make it work. I know we can; we will be an amazing team, McKinley. I want you in my life in every way possible. You're what I've been looking for, for years."

Alev kissed her with an eager, fiery kiss, embracing her in a mess of tears and laughter.

Alev had never imagined and certainly never planned on falling in love again, particularly with her hot young sales assistant.

After a few more kisses, McKinley exclaimed, "We should go back out there. I want to introduce you to Lucy, my

roommate, formally. I want you to know everyone in my life as my partner.”

Alev grabbed McKinley’s hand as they exited the dressing room. “I hope the world is ready for us; the ultimate power couple!” The women looked towards the crowd, squeezing each other’s hands. Alev no longer felt she was in the world alone; she could do anything with her beloved McKinley by her side.

-EPILOGUE-

McKinley was seated comfortably by Alev's side as the couple held hands. The pair faced Dr. Barb Skye as they continued their therapy session. The morning had been rough for McKinley, although by the time she and Alev had reached their appointment, McKinley began to feel better.

“Well, I have to say, you look great, McKinley; healthy and glowing. When are you due?” Dr. Skye asked. McKinley looked lovingly at Alev, squeezing her hand with excitement. “In September, so another three months to go.” Alev interjected, “Yup, this is the home stretch! We can't wait to welcome baby Blake.”

“Did you find out the sex of the baby? Or do you want to be surprised?” the therapist inquired. “I'm just curious because it seems like you already picked a name.”

“Oh no, we want to be surprised. And besides, Blake could be great for a boy or a girl.”

The therapist looked happy for them. “It sounds like the two of you are handling the pregnancy well, and I'm pleased to see this playful bonding. I can tell you are both excited and want to support one another.”

Alev remarked, motioning to Dr. Skye, “Absolutely. It was a tough decision at first because of the pressures associated with maintaining the business. But I thought back to what we discussed during our individual session about delegating and trust, and I knew that we needed to make this step together, to create the family we want and deserve.”

McKinley’s heart soared with love, for this was precisely what she wanted to hear from her wife. When she and Alev got married, McKinley had expressed her desire to have a family. The couple decided to enjoy the first few years of matrimony before seeking out a sperm donor for McKinley. But as they approached their four-year anniversary, Alev still didn’t seem ready, while McKinley was eager to get pregnant.

The disconnect had strained the marriage until Alev decided to seek couples counseling. The guidance from Dr. Skye, combined with Alev’s willingness to trust and delegate, led to the eventual conception of baby Blake, and now, their love felt stronger than ever.

“I can’t tell you how proud I am to hear that. Your commitment to personal growth is quite impressive,” the therapist remarked. Then, pointing at McKinley, Dr. Skye asked, “And how does this make you feel, McKinley? Do you have any concerns about the future of Wicked Orchid? I’m curious since you are an active business partner and are just about to become a mom.”

McKinley inhaled as she processed her thoughts. “Hmmm, let me think. Well, I’m thrilled that we were able to bring the Wicked Orchid franchise to Japan, and naturally, that came with its own excitement but also worries.” Glancing at Alev, McKinley mentioned, “Mariko Nama has been an incredible support, and her business team is solid. The move allowed us

more flexibility in terms of responsibilities while continuing to elevate the brand.”

“And with the promotion of Maya to CFO, I’ve been able to relax into a more peripheral role,” Alec chimed in. Then, chuckling, she added, “I mean, I’ll always be somewhat involved, but these shifts have created the ability for us to prioritize our relationship.”

McKinley grinned, thinking back to the night that she and Alev decided to make their relationship official. “Babe, remember when you mentioned that we could be a power couple when we first got together? At the fundraiser? It actually happened—we made our dreams come true!”

Alev grabbed McKinley’s hand, giving her a loving look. “We certainly did. I never thought my life could look like this.”

Dr. Skye interjected by commenting, “Now, I know that you two are preparing for the upcoming conference. McKinley, how are you feeling about flying and the associated responsibilities? How is Alev supporting you in the process?”

McKinley was excited about the Annual Summit, which was fast approaching. The first time she attended as a co-presenter, introducing the Lust for Lexi toy to the Japanese audience, she and Alev had an intense workload. There was plenty of preparation involved, as McKinley devoted herself to the full-time position with the company. But within the past five years, much has changed.

“Oh, I’m *fine*,” McKinley reassured Dr. Skye as she motioned toward Alev. “You’ve been so great with supporting me, babe.” McKinley added, “Alev checks in regularly to ensure I’m not feeling overwhelmed. Maya has taken over much of the production and logistics in preparation for the

conference. Alev and I are there, mostly to represent the brand and chat with clients and guests face-to-face, but this year is going to be much more social and laid back than previous years.”

“Intuitive, AI-powered sex toys are the hottest thing on the market, and Wicked Orchid is leading the trend with some exciting new products. And I’m so proud to say that McKinley was instrumental in helping us develop the first model,” Alev paused before adding, “Never in a million years did I see myself working alongside a partner; I had always kept those aspects of my life separate.”

Dr. Skye leaned back in her chair before commenting, “I think it’s impressive whenever a couple who works together can balance their personal and romantic relationship. Communication is key, and it seems you are both committed to raising a family while maintaining a brand.”

The therapist then glanced at the clock on the wall. “Well, ladies, our time is up for today. When will I be seeing you next?”

“Our next appointment will be after we return from Japan,” McKinley said. Then, as she rubbed her belly, McKinley added, “I’ll be ready to pop by then!”

The couple stood up, exiting Dr. Skye’s office. McKinley could barely contain her happiness; business was booming, and soon, she and Alev would welcome their new arrival. Thinking back to her early days in San Francisco, McKinley couldn’t believe how far she had come.

“Babe, what time is it?” McKinley asked, suddenly remembering that they were expecting guests at the house. The barbecue was starting at 5:00 pm, and they still needed to pick up Lucy from the airport.

“It’s almost 3:30 pm.” Then, practically reading McKinley’s mind, Alev wrapped her arm around McKinley’s waist, reassuring her. “Don’t worry, my love. It will only take us fifteen minutes to get to the airport. Besides, Emile is taking care of the food and the setup.”

Lately, McKinley found herself oscillating between various emotions as her hormones raged. Alev’s soothing tone was enough to bring McKinley to tears of relief. “Okay, great. I’m just so eager to get there. Lucy and I haven’t seen each other since before I was pregnant. I’m sure she is going to lose her mind when she sees this baby bump!”

As soon as the couple was seated in their vehicle, Alev gently placed her hand on McKinley’s belly with wonder. Alev remarked, “I can’t believe it. We are going to be parents. I’m going to be 58 years old next year. I hope I have the energy to keep up!”

McKinley chuckled, for her wife had more energy than some people less than half her age. “Babe, you’re going to be a great mom. First, we’ll have lots of help from Emile, and Jax is an experienced nanny. You have to admit that we are pretty lucky to have the fortunes we have. I know it’s not conventional but name a queer couple that is!”

Two months prior, McKinley and Alev decided to hire Jax Morales as their full-time, live-in nanny. Jax had offered a long list of references, many of whom included local celebrity couples. In addition, Jax was well-known in the LGBTQ+ community and many queer parents loved how open, caring, and empowering Jax had been with their children.

Alev and McKinley were quite impressed with Jax’s resume and knew immediately that she would be the perfect fit to care for baby Blake. “Yes, that’s true. As soon as we met

Jax, I felt at ease.” Alev nodded in agreement. “And it’s not that I don’t want to be a hands-on parent. I just want to ensure that Blake gets a well-rounded upbringing with lots of love and attention.”

“My love, having a nanny doesn’t mean we won’t be hands on.” McKinley placed a hand on Alev’s knee as her wife merged onto the freeway. “Our lives are busy, and I know that you want to maintain your business ties. Jax and Emile will help provide that balance.” McKinley leaned back in her seat, finding a comfortable position. The bigger she got, the more challenging it became to sit with ease.

The couple drove along the route towards the San Francisco International Airport. Once they arrived, it didn’t take long to spot Lucy, who emerged from the Arrivals gate. Squeals and hugs ensued as McKinley was reunited with her former roommate.

In the parking lot, Lucy exclaimed, “I can’t believe you’re about to be a mom! You are absolutely glowing.” Alev unlocked the car and remarked, “Doesn’t she?” Alev and McKinley quickly kissed before the women entered the car.

As Alev drove home, McKinley and Lucy chatted happily. “So, how is L.A. treating you? How is the agency going?” McKinley asked, referring to Lucy’s modeling company. Once Lucy had moved to Los Angeles, she decided to switch careers and to complete her MBA. Lucy had plenty of offers to model, but she found the industry disposable of the women they hired.

Always business-minded, Lucy decided that if she was to create her own agency, she could represent her clients more compassionately and be the one to call the shots, putting herself in an indispensable role.

In addition, The Geneva Agency—which Lucy had named after her late grandmother—focused mainly on BIPOC and alternative models, highlighting all forms of inclusive beauty. And while Geneva was only two years old, the agency had already earned a place in L.A.’s cutting-edge fashion industry, winning the Best New Small Business Award last year. Lucy’s hard work had her poised for success, and both Alev and McKinley were proud of their close friend.

“Girl, I am the busiest I’ve ever been—not that I’m complaining! We just wrapped up L.A. Fashion Week; I’m telling you, this vacation couldn’t have come at a better time.” Lucy dug into her purse as she spoke from the back seat. “Oh, good, there it is. Sorry, I thought I lost my THC vape!”

Alev turned around, giving Lucy a smirk. “Glad it isn’t lost but no vaping in my car, please.” McKinley couldn’t help but roll her eyes, letting out a short laugh. Maybe it was their age difference, or maybe just Alev, being Alev, but sometimes she found her wife to be so uptight. Before McKinley became pregnant, she occasionally smoked cannabis, albeit never inside their shared home or vehicle. She asked Alev a few times to join her, but marijuana isn’t Alev’s thing. Now that she was carrying baby Blake, McKinley currently didn’t indulge, but she had no issue with Lucy enjoying herself, as long as the smoke wasn’t in an enclosed area.

Putting a hand on Alev’s knee, McKinley commented, “Honey, I think she’s already aware.” Then, turning around to address her best friend, McKinley winked at Lucy, “Don’t worry, you can enjoy your vape outside on the pool deck. We aren’t a cannabis-free home, just no smoking inside.”

“Oh my goodness, I’d never even dream of smoking in your house! But I wanted to check for it because, well, it was

given to me by my crush, and the strain is supposed to be unbelievable.” Lucy tucked the vape back inside her purse and faced the front.

“Wait, you can’t drop a bomb like that without any details!” McKinley exclaimed. “Who is your crush? The last time we spoke, you weren’t seeing anyone.”

“Babe, that was *three weeks ago!* A lot has changed since then.” Lucy playfully giggled before continuing. “So, in L.A., there is this amazing lesbian lounge that also doubles as a *sex club!* I swear, I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s like, this super sexy lesbian utopia and the place even has an outdoor pool!”

“Lix,” Alev commented from the front seat. McKinley turned from Lucy to her wife, whose attention was now divided. “Sorry, what was that?”

“It’s called Lix, right? The club?” Alev asked, and Lucy answered, “Yeah, it is. Have you been?”

“Yeah, I used to go when it first opened.” Alev looked at McKinley. “Obviously, this was before I met you, love. Sometimes, I’d take off for a weekend in L.A. and spend time there.”

Lucy practically shrieked from her seat. “Seriously? Oh my god, I *love it* there! I started hanging out about a month ago, but I’ve already met so many cool women.” From the rearview mirror, McKinley saw Lucy bite her lip with amusement as she added, “And I’ve had a lot of hot fun there, too, if you know what I mean!”

McKinley was immediately intrigued. She was at the stage in her pregnancy where she would experience waves of intense sexual urges. In theory, the thought of going to a place like that

with Alev greatly aroused McKinley. However, McKinley's reality was focused on delivering a healthy baby and settling into motherhood. *Still, what an intriguing-sounding place! I'll have to add that to the bucket list once I can go out socially again.*

"I'm pretty sure I get it," McKinley replied wryly. Then, turning to Alev, McKinley spoke, "I know you've already been there, back in the days of you being a player and all, but would you ever consider going with me?" McKinley felt a little left out. While she knew it was silly to ponder, McKinley wanted reassurance from her wife that she was still sexually desirable, especially as her body rapidly changed.

Alev looked at McKinley. "Of course, I would go with you. I just never thought to ask you because I didn't think you were into a place like that." As their relationship blossomed over the past few years, Alev and McKinley were monogamous, which suited the couple well. While they enjoyed a passionate and varied sex life, the women were only with one another.

For the most part, McKinley was happy with their monogamous lifestyle. When she was younger, McKinley had at times been with more than one person, but as she matured, she began to yearn for a monogamous partner, one lover who fulfilled her emotionally, spiritually, and physically. She had found that with Alev.

Alev differed in the fact that she had come into a monogamous marriage, only to experience infidelity from her now ex-wife. Alev's voracious appetite for sex and avoidance of emotional connection came from a place of hurt and fear. With McKinley, she had found solace with a partner she could

trust, and their bond morphed perfectly into a monogamous marriage.

As far as McKinley knew, their marriage and devotion were as strong as ever. But in the back of her mind, she wondered if things might eventually evolve with them, and if McKinley was being honest with herself, the idea of playing with and including more lovers within their sex life captivated McKinley's erotic imagination.

Rubbing her belly, McKinley answered Alev. "I mean, I didn't give it much thought at the time, but maybe it might be a fun thing to try as we continue to grow together."

Lucy piped up from the back seat. "It's not like I haven't met monogamous couples there. As I'm sure you know, Alev, many women also go there to dance and party. The playrooms are optional. But yeah, I definitely recommend taking a trip there when you feel ready."

Alev asked Lucy, "Do you know if the same owner is still there? She was a butch woman with white-blond hair, very attractive. She'd watch the club from the top floor for a while, but she would always make her way down to the dance floor, and eventually, she would choose a playmate or two for the night." Alev muttered under her breath, "Damn, what was her name again?"

Lucy pondered Alev's question. "Hmmm, I'm not sure. Tall with white-blond hair? I don't know if I've noticed anyone by that description." Lucy paused before exclaiming, "Does the name *Lucky* ring a bell? She's the General Manager. And actually, that's my current crush. Maybe I should text her to ask."

Lucy was about to pull out her phone when McKinley asked, "You're seeing the General Manager who works in a

lesbian sex club? That sounds pretty interesting!”

“Right? It’s a pretty new relationship, and we aren’t rushing into anything at this point, but I’m definitely having a lot of fun!” Lucy called out from her seat.

The trio continued to chat as Alev steered off the freeway, taking the winding road that led to the couple’s mansion. Their housekeeper, Emile, was waiting at the top of the driveway, waving at the black Porsche-Cayenne SUV.

“We’re here!” McKinley announced. Turning to address Lucy, she added, “Emile will help you with your bags.” But Lucy hesitated. “No, no, it’s fine. Don’t worry; I got it—I don’t want to be a bother.” McKinley and Alev watched with amusement as Lucy wrestled with the first of three large suitcases. McKinley appreciated how self-sufficient and proud her best friend was, but she wanted Lucy to understand that it was okay to accept the help offered.

Just as McKinley was about to protest, Emile sauntered gracefully down the driveway, ready to rescue Lucy from her struggles. “Hello, ma’am. Please, allow me.” Emile had gentle and maternal energy about her, which made McKinley feel even more excited to bring their baby into such a loving home.

Lucy followed Emile up the paved slope, with McKinley and Alev close behind, hand in hand. Filled with emotion and love for her wife, McKinley said quietly, “There are so many things I want to experience with you and our family. The next chapter of our lives is coming fast, and I want to soak up every bit of it.”

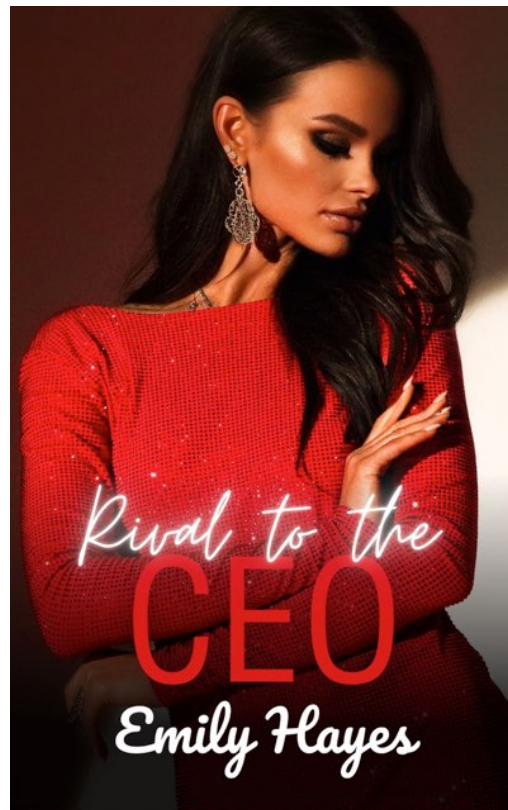
Alev stopped under the foyer that led to the front door, pulling McKinley close. “Whatever we do and go, we will always be together, my love. Our future is forever.” McKinley

melted against Alev's warm lips, knowing they had only just begun their incredible journey.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

I really hope you loved this story as much as I loved writing it. The CEO series is such a huge favourite of mine.

The next CEO book is [Rival to the CEO](#) and it releases on 26th January 2023 but you can pre-order it before this date at the following link mybook.to/CEO5



Clashing with the stunning CEO of your new company on your first day perhaps isn't the best career move, is it?

Melanie Fox has got the promotion of her life to Head of Sales for a multi million dollar company. Melanie knows she is the best at her job and all she has to do now for the future of her career is convince the CEO, Vanessa Reiss, of her brilliance.

But, Vanessa doesn't agree with her sales strategy for their new product; in fact, Vanessa strongly disagrees and Melanie isn't the kind of woman to back down.

She's clashing with her new boss at every turn and sparks are flying between them, but she can't help but be blown away by the force of nature that is CEO Vanessa Reiss, the most attractive and impressive woman she has ever met.

Melanie can't stop thinking about her boss, and also about the fierce rivalry between them.

Where will the intensity between them lead to? And will Melanie ever get what she wants professionally and personally?

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