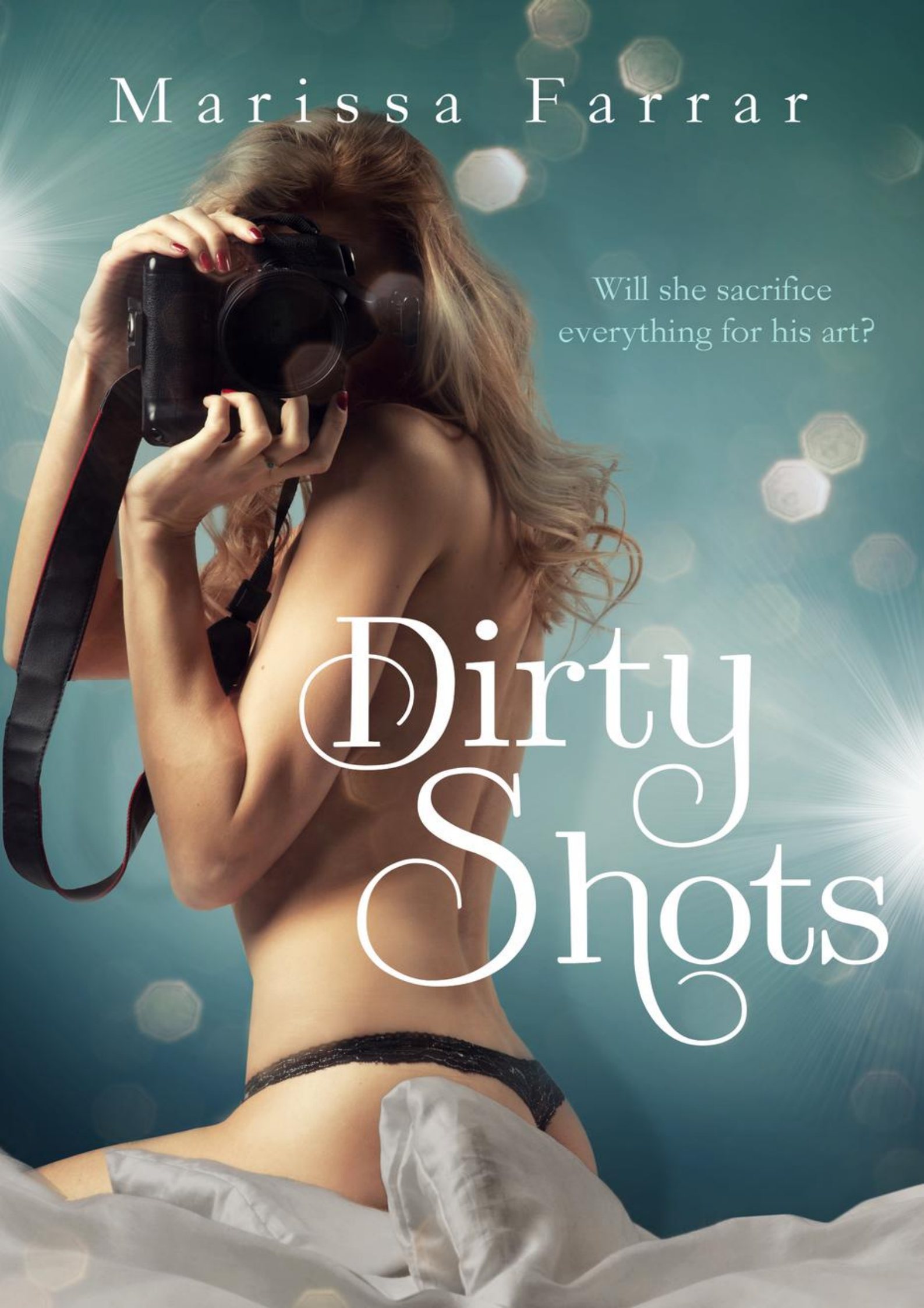


Marissa Farrar

Will she sacrifice  
everything for his art?

# Dirty Shots



**Dirty Shots**

**Marissa Farrar**



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# Chapter One

## Eric

### **‘Female Model Wanted for Photo Shoot.’**

Eric Rutherford stared at the folded newspaper on his desk, and the advertisement contained within the small printed box. He didn't need to read any further to know what the ad said—after all, he'd been the one who'd written it—but he continued nevertheless.

“Some alternative modeling expected,” he read. “Pay dependent on applicant's experience.”

It sounded vague enough to generate interest for what he wanted, and he already had a surprisingly large volume of applicants lined up for interviews that day. He guessed the financial climate had something to go with it—people needed to bring in a little extra money. He'd scheduled their interviews thirty minutes apart, and the first interviewee would be arriving soon. He was anxious as to the type of women he'd meet today. In his heart, he felt he'd know the right one as soon as he saw her, but there was always a chance she wouldn't make an appearance and he'd have to start from scratch. That was the last thing he wanted. He was working under the idea that once the right woman saw *him*, she'd feel less inclined to run away. He knew he didn't look like a pervert—or a photographer either, for that matter—more like a young, successful investment banker on his day off. His clean-cut style, six-foot frame, shock of dark hair, and deep brown eyes normally captured a woman's attention.

Eric chewed at a snag on his fingernail and stared over the top of his computer to look through the windows which stretched across the length of his apartment. It was one of the

things he'd initially loved about this place—the amount of light. After moving in, he'd found the view of Lower East Side of Lower Manhattan's busy cafés and even busier night life to be a great distraction when he needed it.

Having been published in numerous art journals across the world and his work displayed in multiple galleries right here in New York, Eric could use his name to find a model, but he didn't want someone coming in expecting him to be the Eric Rutherford he portrayed to the rest of the world. Unfortunately, it would only take a few keywords plugged into Google to learn of his success, but that success was based on his portrait work, mainly consisting of older people and children. They wouldn't find anything linking his name to the sort of work he desired so greatly to produce.

How could he explain what he wanted without looking like a pervert or a weirdo? He was simply a man who had an eye for the female form, for the perfect way light curved off a hip or breast. He wanted to photograph the dip of a woman's stomach and the shadows cast as she spread her legs before him.

Yes, it was about sex. But it wasn't about *having* sex. He wanted his photographs to inspire people to grab their partners and appreciate the beauty of each other's bodies.

Creating this art meant everything to him. He hoped to find a woman willing to trust him enough to model with a few accessories. He wanted to bind rope across her breasts, tight enough that the coarse fibers left an imprint on her skin. He wanted to have her on her knees, with her hands handcuffed to her ankles. He wanted to whip a rounded pale bottom with a leather flogger, and then photograph the red stripes left on her skin. There was something about the purity of these marks and how exposed and vulnerable they left a person that he found beautiful.

Eric sighed. The chances of ever finding a woman keen to do that stuff seemed near impossible. In the past, he'd tried to persuade a couple of girlfriends to pose for him, but they either didn't want to go much beyond a little light spanking in the bedroom, or didn't like the idea of being photographed.

The last thing he ever wanted was to create art a woman wasn't one hundred percent comfortable with. He wanted the model to enjoy the experience as much as he would.

The intercom buzzed and he bit down on his nerves and allowed the first woman up to his loft-style apartment.

It turned out he'd overcompensated with the thirty minute slot. The first woman had been keen, but too old for his liking. The next had blushed up to her bleached-blond roots the moment he'd mentioned the possibility of photographing her tied up and had beat a quick exit. The next was a professional glamour model with fake tits and a portfolio, not the type of woman he was looking for at all.

Lunchtime arrived and Eric had a break for an hour. He fixed himself coffee and a sandwich, then sat back, his feet rested on the desk in front of him. He had a feeling his fears were coming true. The right woman wouldn't be gracing his doorstep today.

A knock at the door made him sit up straight, his feet jerking from his desk and almost spilling his coffee. People didn't normally knock—they used the buzzer on the intercom.

The knock came again, tentative this time.

“One minute,” he called.

Standing, he smoothed down the black slacks and dress shirt he always wore, then went to the door and swung it open. A slim blonde stood before him. Her blue eyes were huge in her petite face and they traveled up and down his body before lighting with a shy smile.

“Hi, I'm sorry to disturb you. Someone else in the building let me in ...” She trailed off, uncertain. “I'm early, I know. Sorry. I should come back later.”

The young woman began to turn away, but Eric reached out and caught her by the elbow. “No, no. Stay, please.”

He stepped back from the door, allowing her into the apartment. She walked past him and a hint of vanilla perfume wafted over him. Quickly, he closed the door behind her and she turned back to him, an expectant smile touching her lips.

Her angelic face transfixed him and he thought his heart might burst from his chest. *This is her. The one.* If she said it wasn't her thing, he thought he would never get over the disappointment.

Flustered, Eric rushed back to his desk to pick up the list of applicants. Quickly scanning the list, he found her name, Anya.

“Are you Swedish?” he asked, assessing her blonde hair and fair skin.

She shook her head. “American born, but my parents are from Finland.”

“I see.” Despite the American upbringing, he could still detect a faint European accent he assumed she'd picked up from her parents.

“Did you want an all-American girl?” she asked, a teasing note to her voice.

He shook his head. “No, I just want the *right* girl.”

“How will you know when you find her?”

“I'll know.”

The majority of his apartment also served as his studio—only his bedroom and bathroom were divided from the rest of his work space. Mounted background rollers were positioned on the ceiling and held the nine feet of seamless white paper providing the background. Around the rollers was a rail system which allowed the lights to be positioned however he needed them. A stool was placed in the center of the studio, his camera resting on a tripod about ten feet away.

“Do you want me to sit there?” she asked, looking over to the stool.

“If that's all right.” He watched her, carefully judging her reaction, but she just gave a slight shrug and crossed the room to hop up on the stool.

“Are you going to photograph me now?”



“Only if you want me to. People often look different on camera, and it allows me to assess how photogenic you are. Not that you’re not beautiful, of course!”

“And what happens to the photos if I don’t get the job?”

“I’ll delete them. It’s a digital camera.”

She smiled. “I thought using digital was frowned upon in photography circles.”

Eric placed himself behind the camera and flicked off the lens cover. “Digital has come a long way.”

“So what do you want me to do?” she asked, her head tilted to one side, her long hair flowing past her shoulder.

He snapped off a couple of shots—head and shoulders, nothing more.

“For the time being, nothing else. But I am looking for someone who will work with me to create more erotic images.”

She arched her fine eyebrows. “Erotic? So are you talking about nudity?”

He nodded. “But if you’re not comfortable with that, you’re perfectly welcome to leave.”

“How naked are you talking?”

“We’ll start off slow—the line of your back, arch of your foot, the length of your thigh. But, if you’re comfortable, I do want to take things further.”

“Further?”

He paused, considering his words. He didn’t want to scare her off, but he also didn’t want to mislead her. “Can I show you something?” He turned his back and headed toward his laptop. He glanced over his shoulder to make sure she was following.

She was.

He sat in front of his computer, clicked on the mouse and brought up a folder of images. “These are the sort of

photographs I take my inspiration from. I hope you can see there is nothing tawdry about them. They're erotic, but they're also art."

Anya leaned in, standing just behind and to one side of him, her body only inches from his. The faint halo of her perfume surrounded him—vanilla and citrus—and something thrummed deep in his loins. Her wide blue eyes focused on the screen and then she placed her hand over the top of his—the one holding the mouse—and pressed her own finger on his, clicking the images forward.

Black and white shots of a woman, chains bound around her full breasts, crushing them against her torso. Another photograph of a woman's bottom, legs, and hands. She wore spiked heels, her ankles handcuffed to her wrists. Another woman blindfolded, the black silk scarf wrapped around her head and brought back around to gag her mouth.

*She's going to think I'm a pervert.*

"They're beautiful," she said, a hint of a smile on her bowed lips.

"And so are you," he replied. "What I want to create will be a joint project. This isn't like a normal photographer and model relationship. I want us to create these kinds of images together. You need to be completely at ease with your body."

She continued to stare at the monitor, but didn't respond.

Nerves fluttered in his stomach. "So, what do you think?"

She turned her face to his and he couldn't help admiring her flawless skin, her delicate bone structure.

*God, she's stunning!* He felt a primal need to photograph her—a desperate hunger. If she said no, he thought he might have to stop searching for his model. No one else would do.

"Can I think about it?"

His stomach dropped. "Of course." He gave her a bright smile, hoping to hide his disappointment.

"May I call you tomorrow?"

He reached across his desk and picked up a business card. "You can call me anytime you want. I'll be waiting."

His eyes locked with hers and she stared at him, a half-smile playing on her lips. He suddenly felt like the roles had been reversed and it was she who was interviewing him.

She plucked the card from his fingers and waved it at him. "I'll let you know."

With that, she headed to the front door of his apartment, her heels clicking on the dark wood floor. He rushed after her, opening the door for her. She threw a smile over her shoulder and walked to the elevator.

Eric closed the door behind her and leaned against it with a sigh.

His mind made up, he crossed the room back to his desk and proceeded to cancel the rest of the day's interviews.

## Chapter Two

### Eric

**His cell rang a little** after eight a.m. the following morning as he was about to leave the gym he frequented in downtown New York. He glanced at the screen, but didn't recognize the number.

"Hello, Eric Rutherford."

He recognized her voice, with that slight European twang, as soon as she spoke. "It's not too early, is it?"

"Anya!" He dropped his workout bag on the floor and turned around to lean against the wall as he spoke. "No, it's not too early. I'm just leaving the gym, in fact."

"You work out," she said, no question in her tone.

"I like to keep fit."

"I thought so."

In truth, his routine gym visits—every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday mornings at seven a.m. sharp—were a way of keeping himself in check. It was too easy to lose track of time when he was working, to lose himself in the piece only to emerge several days later realizing he'd not slept or eaten.

He hesitated. "So ... did you give my job offer any more consideration?"

"Yes, but I don't want to be paid."

"Oh." He wasn't sure he'd understood what she was saying. "But you want the job?"

“Yes. I would like you to photograph me. Naked, like the women in the pictures.”

Her voice was like something exotic, jasmine-scented honey. The way she spoke made his groin tighten, blood rushing to his cock. He bit down, forcing the reaction away. He couldn't photograph her if he had that reaction at the *idea* of her being naked. It simply wouldn't work. He'd only embarrass them both.

“Why don't you want to be paid if you'd like to do the work?”

“I don't need the money. Copies of the photographs would be enough.”

“I see.” He needed to be careful. He wanted her to be his model, but she needed to understand the rules. “You realize if I let you have copies of the photographs, you wouldn't be able to distribute them anywhere.”

She laughed and his heart tightened at the sound. “Of course not, Mr. Rutherford. Why would I want to distribute pictures of myself like that? But what about yourself? If these are going to be images of me, will I have any say in what happens to them?”

He chose his words carefully. “I'd like to use the images for my portfolio, for my website. I'm a photographer and an artist, Anya, but these images won't be sold.”

“They'd just be for you.”

A thrill went through him. When he spoke, his voice came out hoarser than he'd anticipated. “Yes.”

“Okay, then. When would you like to start?”

Eric glanced at his watch out of habit. He already knew the time. “Are you free after lunch? Say, two o'clock at my apartment?”

“Perfect. I'll see you later.”

Eric hung up, surprised to find his heart beating harder than normal, his stomach churning in anticipation. He had a couple of meetings that morning—a newly refurbished five-

star hotel who wanted to commission a set of huge landscape photographs for their lobby and then another appointment with a wealthy couple who wanted to have their family portrait done. It was comparatively mundane work, but it paid the bills and left a respectable amount over to play with. Then, that afternoon, he would have the opportunity to indulge in his new project.

He struggled to concentrate during his meetings, his mind wandering to Anya, with her porcelain complexion and innocent look. He wondered how far she'd allow him to go, if she'd spread her legs for him and allow him to photograph her most intimate folds close up. He wanted that desperately, to photograph right into the depths of her body, into what made her a woman.

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**Eric paced the floor of** his apartment, checking his watch every two minutes. It wasn't like him to be nervous, and the emotion sat uneasily on his broad shoulders.

What if she changed her mind and didn't show? He thought he might lose a little piece of himself if that happened. He couldn't explain his reason for feeling so strongly about a woman in whose company he'd only spent minutes. The possibility made him feel like a man dying of thirst in a desert who spots the most beautiful, clear pool of water and shade of green palms, only to reach the oasis and discover it a mirage all along, the promise of relief snatched from him at the final moment.

The buzzer sounded and his heart leapt into his throat.

She was here!

He went to his front door and pressed the intercom. "Anya?"

Her voice came back, sounding tinny through the equipment. "Hello, Mr. Rutherford. Are you ready for me?"

"Of course."

Eric hit the button to grant entry to the building and then opened his apartment door, waiting for her, trying not to

appear as flustered as he felt. Within a minute, the elevator doors slid open and she stepped out. Her almost white-blond hair was free around her face, falling just past her shoulders. She had dressed simply in a close-fitting white t-shirt and jeans.

“Come in,” he said. “Make yourself at home.”

To his surprise, she strode across his apartment, toward his studio, peeling her clothes off as she went. She pulled her t-shirt up over her head, exposing curvy breasts clad in a lacy bra, dropping the item to the floor. Next went her jeans, unbuttoned and shucked from her rounded hips, then kicked from her feet.

“You didn’t have to—” he started, but stopped when she shot him a look somewhere between confusion and annoyance.

“Have to what? Take off my clothes? I thought that was the idea, Mr. Rutherford.”

“Call me Eric, please. I just meant you didn’t have to take them off right away.”

“There is nothing wrong with the human body, Eric. We have nothing to be ashamed of in our nudity.”

His cheeks colored. Damn, he was supposed to be the professional. “No, of course not.”

She slipped the straps of her bra from her shoulders and then reached behind her back and unclipped the clasp. Slightly leaning forward, she allowed the item to fall from her body, leaving her breasts exposed.

Eric let out the breath he’d been holding. Her breasts were exactly as he’d been hoping, big, but not too big, her nipples large and dark compared to her pale skin. He wished it was colder in the room. If he ever got her to wear nipple clamps, she’d need her nipples to be hard. He allowed his mind to wander.

*Imagine her letting you make them hard, taking each one between your lips, sucking it to the top of your mouth and grating their sensitive peaks with your teeth.*

No, that wasn't what this was about. He wouldn't let himself go there.

Finally, Anya slipped off her panties. Just as she had in her interview, she hopped up on the stool in front of the camera. She sat with her back straight, shoulders back so her breasts jutted out. She crossed her legs, momentarily giving him a flash of golden pubic hair.

She gave him a coy smile. "So when do we start?"

Eric grabbed the camera from the stand and approached. The sunlight shafting through the window, catching the curve of her thigh and running down her slender calf, right down to the dip of her insole, had caught his eye.

He dropped to his knees to one side of her. "Right now."

He snapped a number of shots. As soon as he started working, the nerves vanished. He stopped thinking of her sexually and focused only on getting the perfect picture.

"Can you move?" he asked. "Stretch out your legs."

She uncrossed her legs and pointed one foot, while bringing the other back to rest against the silver footrest. She leaned backward, balancing on top of the stool, her stomach muscles taking the strain. He photographed the shadows on her ribs cast by her breasts. Then she stood, twisting around, and he captured the perfect curve of her bottom, the line of her back. She moved fluidly and with grace, like a dancer, as he'd somehow known she would. He forgot everything else except the images, catching that perfect shot.

Caught up in the bubble of capturing such beauty, he lost track of time. But when he noticed Anya begin to wane, her body losing the strength and suppleness she'd had at the start, he realized the time had come to finish.

He set down the camera back in the stand. "Thank you, Anya. That was amazing, you were amazing."

She turned to look at him, standing completely naked in front of him. "You have what you needed?"

He nodded. "Yes, for the moment."



Anya bent to retrieve her clothes, dressing as quickly and methodically as she had undressed. He couldn't tear his eyes from her the whole time.

“So,” she said, pulling her hair from the back of her t-shirt, allowing it to fall in a soft halo around her face. “When do you want me back?”

His heart sang. She wanted to come back! “Same time tomorrow?”

She frowned slightly, thinking. “I have to be somewhere until three. Is four okay?”

Eric smiled. “Perfect.”

He saw her out and closed the door gently behind her. The room seemed empty without her presence, bereft somehow.

*What would she be doing all afternoon?* He knew nothing about her—if she even had a boyfriend. But it was none of his business. She was here to be photographed, that was all.

Eric attached his camera to his laptop and went through the images. They were as beautiful as he'd hoped. Both the camera and the light seemed to love her. He could hardly wait to apply some filters to the pictures, to put some into monochrome and play with the light.

Already, he could see the potential promise of perfection.

# Chapter Three

## Anya

**“Ms. Rhinne? Are we boring you?”**

Startled, Anya realized she'd been daydreaming, her gaze locked on the clock positioned above the doors of the lecture hall. Her head snapped back around to the front to discover most of the other students turned in their seats and staring at her.

She forced a bright smile. “No, of course not, Professor Wright.”

Her lecturer turned back to his slides, the other students losing interest in her. Anya tried to make herself focus, but her mind kept drifting to thoughts of Eric Rutherford and the session they'd spent together. She pressed her thighs together, a tingling flush of heat racing from between her legs and tightening at her core. Being photographed by Eric Rutherford was the sexiest thing she'd ever done in her life.

She'd struggled to act as cool as she had. The ad attracted her with the promise of a chance of earning a few extra dollars to help her with tuition fees. Her heart had almost stopped when Eric Rutherford opened the door, all floppy dark hair and brooding eyes, though she'd done her best to conceal her reaction. When he offered her the job, she needed to stop herself hopping up and down and clapping her hands in glee. She'd known who Eric Rutherford was ever since her late teens when he broke into the art world with his black and white portrait photography of old men and women, somehow capturing both their strength and their fragility with his work. He'd been like a young rock star of the art scene, bursting onto it to have every spotlight turned on him, only to fall from

grace spectacularly with some kind of breakdown he described in interviews only as his ‘dark days.’

But she had a feeling Eric wouldn’t have thought much of her if she showed herself to be some kind of pathetic groupie, so she’d played it cool. She kept her mouth shut and literally laid herself bare for him.

Now she found herself obsessed with thoughts of the photographer. The minutes dragged by, painfully slow, and she wished she could go to sleep to make the time go faster, only to be woken in time to make her next meeting with Eric.

Anya tried to focus on what Professor Wright, her lecturer of fine art, was saying, but even though she loved her major, she struggled to pick apart his words to make coherent sentences. Everything he said seemed to be a drone.

Finally, the lecturer closed his laptop and called an end to class. Anya breathed a sigh of relief and began to gather her belongings, shutting down her own laptop and pushing it into her bag. Eric was expecting her in the next hour, and she wanted to make it back to her room and freshen up before heading over to his place.

She trotted down the steps, toward the stage the lecturer had been speaking from, and headed out into the corridor, joining the river of students which flowed down the hall. Someone stepped into pace with her, and she glanced over to find Gavin Hollis, the college’s football star, walking beside her. Instantly, she bristled, her head snapping away to focus on the hall ahead. She hoped if she pretended he wasn’t there, he might just go away.

He didn’t.

“Hey, Anya. Where you going?”

“What is it to you?”

He walked with his chest pushed out, like a proud peacock, and spoke too loudly, as if hoping everyone else would hear. “I wondered what you were doing later. Me and a couple of the guys are throwing a party at the house. You wanna come?”

She cocked an eyebrow. “You know I don’t date college guys, Gavin. Go hit on someone else.”

“Aww, Anya.” He motioned up and down his body with his hand. “You know you want some of this.”

She snorted in derision.

He dropped back a pace, allowing her to walk on, but a mocking laugh followed her. “You won’t be able to control yourself forever.”

She ignored him. She’d never been interested in any of the guys at college. They all seemed like boys to her—only interested in making an impression on their friends, never a thought for the women they conquered. She had no intention of letting one of these boys paw over her like an overeager puppy, only to report back every detail, and probably add some untruths of their own, to their friends. Her sights were set much higher.

Crossing campus, Anya headed up to her room to grab her towel and wash bag. She wanted to make sure her skin was silky smooth before she met with Eric. It was important that when he photographed her she was as perfect as possible. Yes, things could easily be blended away with Photoshop these days, but she didn’t want Eric to feel he needed to do such things. The images should not be her enemy, reminding Eric of all the imperfections she knew she had.

She pushed open the door to her room to find her roommate, Nadine, lying on her bed on her stomach. She was looking down at her tablet, smiling at something she was watching online, but glanced up as Anya entered.

Nadine propped herself up on her side and flipped her long, dark hair away from her face. “Hey, stranger. Any chance you’re staying around this evening? There’s a big party. Everyone is going.”

Anya shook her head. “Sorry, sweetie. I’m going out.”

Her eyes went wide. “Ooh! You’re seeing this mysterious guy again, aren’t you?”

Anya opened her mouth, but her roommate waved her down. “No, no. Don’t say anything. Let me guess. He’s married, isn’t he?”

She laughed. “I hope not!”

“Okay, he’s seriously ugly and you’re too embarrassed to be seen in public with him.”

The image of his high cheekbones, deep brown eyes, and shock of dark hair sprang to mind. She shook her head. “Not a chance.”

“Who is he, then? I can’t believe you’re not telling me.”

She grabbed her wash bag. “I need to go and get ready. Mind your own business for once!”

Her friend’s voice chased her out. “Not going to happen!”

Thankfully, she found the bathroom empty. Anya took a shower and then shaved, waxed, plucked, and moisturized every inch of her skin. She sprayed herself lightly with her fragrance, Shalimar by Guerlain, and then applied a little makeup. She’d gotten the impression Eric liked it when her face appeared innocent, a contrast to the positions he photographed her in.

Instead of heading back to her room to get ready, she stayed in the bathroom, wanting to avoid Nadine’s line of enquiry. She didn’t want anyone else knowing about what she was doing with Eric. She worried about it getting back to her straight-laced family, though no one at the college had ever met her family or probably ever would. It was too easy for news like this to spread like wildfire. Especially with social media. If people discovered Eric Rutherford was photographing her in explicit poses, she would never be able to walk through campus again without someone firing comments at her.

Her life wouldn’t be worth living.

# Chapter Four

## Eric

**Anya turned up at precisely** four o'clock. The moment she entered the apartment, something inside him changed, as though she filled a part of him he'd not even known was missing.

"You surprised me yesterday, Eric," she said as soon as she walked through the door.

"Oh? How so?"

"You seemed ... tame. With your photography, I mean."

"Are you telling me you expected it to be more explicit?"

She smiled at him. "After the photographs you showed me the first day, yes, of course."

A thrill went through him. "How much more explicit?"

"I was expecting things to be far more intimate ..."

"I wanted to take things slowly. To build up to those kind of photographs."

She dumped her purse on the floor. "I'm a grown woman, Eric. And even if I look innocent, I can assure you I'm not. I've shown men my pussy before."

He swallowed; her use of language had shocked him. "Okay. I'm happy to move to the next step if you are."

She smiled, an expression that combined an innocence mixed with a devilish mind that made him want to grab her, turn her over his knee, and spank her ... hard. "Oh, I'm ready. I think I made that pretty clear."

Today, she wore a short, pleated, kilt-like skirt, and a white shirt, demurely done up to the neck. As he watched, she slipped the top button of her blouse from its corresponding hole and worked her way down, exposing her bra and naked skin. She wore ankle boots, but made no attempt to remove them. Neither did she remove her skirt. Instead, she unclipped her bra and dropped it to the floor, exposing her beautiful breasts, and then lifted her skirt, hooked her thumbs into the top of her panties and rolled them down her legs. The underwear caught in the straps of her boots for a moment and she let out a girlish giggle, hopping on one foot to free them.

She managed it and looked up at him, laughter dancing in her eyes, a blush warming her creamy cheeks. The sight made his heart lurch, and it wasn't just because she now stood topless and panty-less before him. No, it was the expression on her face, her way of appearing both demure and sexy at the same time.

Anya got down onto the white paper covered floor of his studio set-up. She reached down to flip the skirt up so it ruffled around her flat stomach and spread her legs for him, her feet planted on the floor, her knees bent. Then she reclined, half-propped up on her elbows so she could focus her gaze on both him and the camera.

Eric tried to still his thumping heart, taking a couple of surreptitious long breaths. He flicked on the spotlight he had positioned on the set, directing its beam to that secret place between her thighs. She watched him, a serious expression on her face, no longer the laughing girl.

He got behind the lens, focusing the zoom, his gaze drawn between her thighs, taking in every detail.

The puffy swell of her outer lips, shaven clean and pink, except for the small patch of curls left on her mound. The slender, slightly wrinkled lips of her labia peeped through, framing the swollen dark slit. The way she reclined, with her hips tilted upward, meant he also had a view of the tight pucker of her anus and the faint lines where her buttocks met her thighs.

She reached between her thighs and used her forefinger and middle finger to create an inverted V, pulling her pussy lips back, making her clit pop forward, exposing the delicate, shiny flesh of her inner labia.

He snapped photo after photo. Raw, intimate images.

Without needing to be told, Anya flipped herself over and lifted her bottom toward him, flashing her swollen lips beneath her perfect cheeks. Like any great model, she continued to move, an ebbing, flowing being who seemed to know exactly what positions the camera would love.

Eric could hardly wait to review the photographs. The anticipation of looking back at the beauty the camera had captured was almost as much pleasure as taking the images themselves.

Outside the apartment windows, daylight began to dim, evening quickly encroaching. Though he could continue like this all night, it was unfair to keep her here as he wasn't even paying her. He didn't want her to get sick of what they were doing together.

Reluctantly, he lowered the lens. "That was amazing. Thank you."

"We're done?"

He nodded. "For today. It's good to keep things fresh."

She gave him a smile of, what, surely not disappointment? Was she disappointed he'd not taken things further?

Anya set about picking up her discarded clothing and redressing. His heart sank at the sight of her covering her flawless, porcelain skin, the dark buds of her nipples, the narrow inward curve of her waist.

He longed to ask her out to dinner, or at least offer her a glass of wine. He wanted to know her, know all about her, even though he felt like in a way he already did. Her lack of inhibitions, her playfulness, her way of being completely direct, all of those qualities enthralled him, and he wanted more. He wanted to find out what foods she liked and disliked, what music she listened to in her apartment, who she went



home to after she left here. But that wasn't the reason for her being here; that wasn't what he'd offered her at the start. This was supposed to be a professional relationship, and him doing any of those things would breach the line of what made them purely artistic comrades and become something more—if not lovers, then at least friends. If he did such a thing, would he be able to photograph her impartially? Hell, would she even say yes?

Oblivious to his thoughts, Anya reclaimed her purse and headed to the door.

*Don't leave*, he inwardly begged.

But he couldn't give voice to his thoughts. To do so would be breaking the boundaries he'd so rigidly set for himself.

"Same time tomorrow?" he managed to croak.

She swung her head around, her blonde hair moving in a sheet of white gold. "I'll look forward to it." Then she stopped, hesitating. "Can I say something?"

"Err, well, yes ..." He fell over his words, wondering what was coming up. "Of course."

"Tomorrow I'd like to try something a bit kinkier. Do you think we could do that?"

His mind set in a whirl. *Does she think I'll say no?*

"Yes, of course. I was just ... you know... building up to things."

She flashed him that angelic smile again and his heart contracted. An angel and demon all rolled into one. He hoped he could capture those contrasting qualities in his pictures.

"I'm all built up, Eric," she said. "You can do whatever you want."

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**Eric woke the following morning** and climbed out of bed with a sense of impatient excitement. There seemed to be too many hours until Anya would be back in his apartment, and he knew each one would drag slowly and painfully by. That day

he was due at a New York college to give a lecture to a group of students. Normally, he enjoyed teaching, allowing his enthusiasm and expertise to inspire others, but that morning the lecture felt like a hurdle to get over before he could spend more time with Anya.

*Anya, Anya, Anya.*

*Does she think of me?* Was she spending her waking moments filled with a tantalizing energy at the memory of what they'd done and at the prospect of what would come next? Or did all thoughts of him and the camera vanish from her head the moment she walked out the door?

Was this just another job to her?

No, she'd not wanted to be paid. She came back here because she enjoyed the creation of their art.

Just the thought of her made his whole body thrum with excitement. The image of her face occupied his every thought—the last thing in his mind when he fell asleep, the first thing when he woke. He wanted to submerge himself in her energy. She seemed to be his new fixation.

No, he couldn't allow himself to think that way. He'd suffered from obsessing over his work before, something that had taken him to the darkest point of his life. He'd conquered those problems a long time ago. And besides, this was different. It was her claiming his thoughts, not just his work, despite the two things going hand in hand.

Eric stripped off his shorts, stepped into a steaming hot shower, and started to soap himself down. The four times weekly gym trips not only helped him to keep to a fixed routine, they also kept his body hard and lean.

With the beautiful blonde on his mind, the water coursed down his body like a lover's fingers. He reached out, placed his palms on the glass walls surrounding him, and hung his head, allowing the water to drum the back of his neck. Images of Anya, half naked and exposed for him, filled his head. Blood flowed to his cock, his balls tightening with a pleasurable ache. *No.* He tried to push the thought of her away.

He couldn't allow himself to go there. How would he look at her again without thinking about what his body wanted him to do to her? But it wasn't working, his erection continuing to lengthen and grow.

"Fuck, it," he growled, grabbing his rock-hard dick in his soapy hand. As soon as he tightened his grip, his body sagged in relief. This was what he needed. He started to masturbate slowly, stroking the satin, soap-slicked skin with a firm hold, his eyes squeezed shut. In his head, he brought forth the memory of Anya's beautiful pussy, her tight, wet slit. How would it feel to push himself inside her, to have her inner muscles hold him tight? He imagined sliding his cock in and out of her, fucking her harder, faster, while her glorious breasts bounced with his every movement and her face twisted in pleasure.

He quickened his movements, his ass clenched tight, as his orgasm built. His mind switched from the thought of pounding Anya's pussy to having her on her knees in front of him, taking his erection in her mouth, those wide blue eyes staring up at him in her mock innocence. He imagined winding his hands in the back of her hair, of forcing her deeper onto his dick, of fucking her face.

He wanted her to do anything he told her, to accept anything he planned for her, and for her to want to do so willingly just to keep him happy. Would she ever do such a thing? Would they ever reach that point of complete mutual trust?

With a groan, he exploded onto the glass, coating it with streams of milky cum. His body went weak as the throes of his orgasm shuddered through him.

Eric took a deep, shaky breath, one arm still propped against the glass to hold himself up. Damn, the things that woman seemed to be able to do to him, even if it was all in his head.

He needed to hustle or he was going to be late. Quickly, he rinsed himself off, toweling the water off his hard body and short, dark hair. He felt better, as though he'd finally released a

dam that had been building for the last few days. He dressed in his usual black shirt and slacks, edgy without being gothic. He wanted the students to feel they could relate to him, hopefully look up to him, without seeming like he was trying too hard.

Cutting it close, he took a cab downtown and made it on time. The dean was waiting for him and showed him into the lecture hall, where a laptop and projector had already been set up. All Eric needed to do was load his memory stick onto the computer.

Students began to file in. Engrossed in getting the laptop set up, he barely glanced up.

When the students finished entering, he straightened. He clapped his hands together and a hush fell over the small crowd.

“Good morning, everyone. My name is Eric Rutherford and I’m a multi-published photographer and fine art artist. I’m here today to discuss the usage of hard and soft light in portrait photography. I’m happy to answer any burning questions as we go along, but, if you *can* wait, I will be taking questions at the end.”

He began to run through his slides depicting some of his own work and explained the techniques he’d used to achieve them. The audience listened, seemingly rapt, even emitting a laugh when the things he said required such a response.

“I have a question,” a voice shouted from the crowd.

All heads turned. Eric’s eyes raked the students’ faces, trying to see who had spoken. But lights were on him on the stage, making them hard to distinguish. He lifted a hand to shade his eyes, squinting.

“Yes?”

*The voice ... so familiar.* Then his eyes locked on her clear, blue gaze and his breath caught. What was she doing here?

Anya leaned forward, her elbows rested on her knees. “If I wanted to create more, say, intimate, photographs, what sort of lighting would you recommend?”

He fixed his eyes on her. “When you say intimate, are you talking about nudity?”

“I mean like, erotic photo shoots.”

A nervous, embarrassed titter rippled through the audience.

He wouldn't let her fluster him. “Well, that would completely depend on your surroundings. If you're in a room where there is plenty of sunlight, for example, your need for other lighting might be limited. Perhaps you could see me afterward to discuss this further.”

She sat back, a smile on her face.

Trying to force her presence from his mind, he continued with the lecture. What was she doing here? Was she studying here? He wished he could ask someone, another student ... the dean, perhaps. But he didn't want to appear as though he was showing too much interest in a student. Not that she was underage of course, or even that he was a full time lecturer here and it would be inappropriate, but he didn't think it would look very professional.

Eric remembered that morning in the shower and heat burned in his cheeks. That was hardly the most professional thing he'd ever done either, masturbating over one of his models. Would she see his guilt in his eyes?

Finally, he finished up his lecture. “That's it for today, folks. Thanks, everyone, for coming.”

People began to stand and pour out through the double doors. His eyes darted over them, trying to spot Anya, but she was gone.

*She called me*, he remembered. He'd still have that number on his phone.

He scrolled through, locating the call and the number it had come from, and pressed ‘dial.’ But the phone went straight through to a standard voice mail, not even personalized with her own recording.

“It's me. What was that today?” He hesitated, not wanting to drill her with questions, terrified he might scare her off. “I

hope I'm still seeing you later.”

Then he hung up.

Damn it. He wanted her to be submissive to him, yet she seemed to be the one playing him. She was the one in control.

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**Back in his apartment, Eric** waited for Anya with his nerves on edge. Not only did he have a hundred things he wanted to ask her, he also had something prepared which he hoped she'd want to do.

She walked into his apartment and headed straight to his studio area, not mentioning what had happened earlier. He couldn't let it go so easily.

“What were you doing at the university today, Anya?”

She turned to him with her innocent smile. “Perhaps I was following you.”

“Really? How did you know where I'd be?”

She shrugged. “I saw a poster in the hall. I'm a student at the college.”

“Is that right?” He didn't know whether to believe her or not. She was such an enigma. He couldn't tell when she was being serious.

“Am I not allowed to speak to you outside of this apartment?” she asked.

“Yes, of course you are.” She always managed to trip him up. “I just ...” ... *want to know more about you.*

He couldn't say it. He couldn't allow her into his life as any more than a subject of his art.

“Good.” She smiled. “So, what do you have planned for me today?”

From his box of tricks, he lifted a length of hemp rope. Her eyes widened, but she nodded and began to undress.

This was his time now. He would take control of her, harness her to his own will.

He bound the rope around her body, first around the narrowest part of her waist, knotting it at her navel. Then he brought one end up, between her breasts and across, to loop over her shoulder and down her slender back, down to her waist. He repeated the motion with the other end of the rope, tying it tight so the ridges dug into her soft, delicate skin. The result was that the rope tightened around each breast individually, squeezing them toward him. Her nipples were rock-hard, crinkled peaks, and he longed to touch them, graze his palm across the hardened nubs. But he did not.

“It’s not hurting you?” he asked.

Her lips were slack, her breathing shallow, but she shook her head. “It’s fine.”

He’d finally managed to affect her, he could tell.

Eric stepped back and lifted his camera, moving around her to snap shots of her bound breasts, stomach, and shoulders. Already, he could see the red marks of the rope and the thought of removing the rope to photograph those marks made him dizzy with anticipation.

But he wasn’t finished yet. He picked up another length. “Can you handle more?” he asked.

“Yes. Oh, yes.”

Gently, he reached down and nudged her naked thighs apart. Again, he started with a loop around her waist, knotted, instead, at the base of her spine. This time he headed downward, pulling the rope between her thighs so it pressed between the crack of her bottom. He looped it back over the length of rope at her navel and pulled tight, the coarse rope pressing between the delicate lips of her pussy, right against her clitoris.

Anya gasped and then exhaled a small, shuddery breath.

“Is this okay?” he asked her again, not wanting to hurt her, but still wanting to take their art to the edge.

She nodded frantically.

Eric continued to wrap the rope around her body, framing her buttocks, encasing her thighs.

“Lie back,” he instructed. “Spread your legs.”

She did as she was told.

Such perfect contrast, the coarse material against the delicate lips of her pussy. The contact against her clit sending the blood rushing to her most sensitive area. The inner lips almost purple with stimulation. He took a number of shots.

“Turn over.”

She rolled onto her stomach.

“Lift your ass in the air.”

Every movement would be creating more friction against her clit. He saw her arousal in the wetness on her pussy lips when she lifted her ass for him, heard it in the moan she tried to stifle against the wooden floor. The rope hid the perfect star of her anus and, for that he experienced a momentary dip of disappointment, though it didn't last long. He knew what his next project would be—to capture her sweet little ass. Perhaps she would even allow him to penetrate her with something? He had a slim, silver butt plug that would look stunning as it slipped into that tight little hole, the light glinting off the metal.

Oh, fuck. The idea caused more blood to rush to his cock, his balls tightening, his dick throbbing. Or perhaps his cock would look better in her ass, swelling the spot at her lower back as he held himself deep.

He had to stop now.

“Okay,” he forced himself to say. “I think we've done enough for today. You did beautifully.”

She turned her head to look at him. “You're not going to leave me like this?”

How did she mean, still tied up or ultimately unsatisfied?

“No, of course not.”



He got to his knees beside her, carefully undoing the knots around her middle. With tenderness, he unraveled the rope, revealing the red marks he knew would be imprinted into her skin. The rope fell in a pile beside her and she rolled her shoulders, about to move.

“Wait, just one minute.” He held a hand out, stilling her. “I can’t miss this.”

Eric grabbed his camera again, taking shots of the imprints on her skin, her shoulders, hips, and thighs.

She turned her face to him, her eyes locking with his. “Are we done?”

“Yes.”

The air between them buzzed with tension. He wanted to kiss her, to capture her pink, plump lips with his own, but he forced himself to step back, needing to keep control of himself. His life was about control, a strict regime which kept him on track. If he allowed himself to veer too far from it, he didn’t know if he’d find his way back again. Desperate to create perfection, he’d suffered from obsessive behavior about his work, something that had plunged him into a depression, feeling like he’d never be able to achieve what his heart and soul desired. He’d work every hour, trying to obtain that perfect image, neglecting sleep and food, running himself into the ground.

Anya had the power to bring back his obsessive behavior, but she also held the promise of perfection he’d sought his whole life.

Would she be his downfall, he wondered. Or his savior?

# Chapter Five

## Anya

Anya emerged from the subway, squinting against the bright midday sunlight. She was meeting a family friend for lunch, and was already running late. Clutching her purse to her side, she hurried across the street to the café where she was supposed to be joining him.

Justin was already waiting for her outside, and he bent and kissed her on the cheek. “Anya, looking more grown up than ever.”

She rolled her eyes. “I’ve been a grown up for a few years now, Justin. Are you going to comment on how I’ve grown every time we see each other?”

He grinned. “Absolutely. It’s the payoff I get from being your big brother’s best friend.”

“So how long are you in New York for?”

“Only two days.”

She had the feeling the only reason Justin wanted to meet her was because her brother, or possibly father, had asked him to check up on her. She didn’t like the feeling that her family was making sure she was behaving herself, and resented Justin for acting like their spy. She’d tried to put him off, claiming she was busy, but she knew if she didn’t meet him it would only make her parents suspicious. They’d immediately think she’d become an alcoholic or a druggie overnight, or had had her face pierced or head-to-toe tattoos done. If she didn’t see Justin, they would end up thinking they needed to investigate themselves, and that was the last thing she wanted.

“Look, Justin, I only have about a half hour, so I’ve only got time for coffee and a quick sandwich, okay?”

He shrugged. “Fine with me. I just wanted to catch up and make sure you were safe all alone in this big old city.”

*Yep. Checking up on me.*

If only they knew the truth.

The previous evening with Eric Rutherford had been like nothing she’d ever experienced before. How was it possible for a man to bind her up, naked, with rope, and not lay a single finger on her? She knew he was a professional, but apparently he also had the self-control of a monk. She’d been so turned on, practically panting and on the verge of orgasm, with the rope pressing against her clit, and he hadn’t so much as touched her.

Perhaps he was gay, or was already in a relationship with someone he hadn’t mentioned.

Or perhaps he simply didn’t find her attractive.

Yet he’d told her he thought she was beautiful, and he certainly didn’t give the impression of being gay.

They headed into the café and ordered. Anya ate quickly, answering all of Justin’s questions with questions of her own. Luckily, Justin had always enjoyed talking about himself, so it was easy to get him rambling on about his own life. As soon as she’d wolfed down her sandwich and slurped her coffee, she signaled for the check.

“I’ll get it,” he said. “My treat.”

*Yeah, right. I bet my parents have already paid.* But she kept her mouth shut and thanked him instead. She wanted to get out of there so she could have the rest of the afternoon to get an essay finished in order to have time to go to Eric’s apartment later. Her mind kept going to the possibilities of what he would have waiting for her, and she had to hide the little thrill of excitement that raced through her at the thought.

Justin paid and they left the café together. He held out his arm to her to slip her hand through. She’d known him almost

her whole life, and thought of him more as an older brother than anything else, so to slip her arm though his felt natural.

“Let me walk you back to campus,” he said.

“No need. I’ll get the subway. It’s only across the street.”

“Ah, okay. I’ll walk you to the subway, then.”

Anya laughed. “All thirty steps.”

Suddenly, her eyes clocked someone walking toward them and her heart leapt in her chest. She’d recognize his dark hair and long, determined stride anywhere. But the moment he noticed her, his stride faltered.

Eric Rutherford.

She remembered Justin at her side, and panic filled her. What could she say to him to stop him mentioning her modeling in front of Justin? Would Justin recognize Eric from the numerous interviews he gave, and question how Anya knew him?

Justin must have noticed the change in her body language, in the slowing of her step and tension in her body, because he glanced down at her curiously and then back up to Eric.

“Anya!” Eric said in surprise, coming to a halt in front of them, his gaze also darting between her and Justin, probably wondering who Justin was.

“Oh, hello,” she said, flustered. “How are you?”

“I’m good, thank you. I had a meeting a couple of blocks over.”

Anya glanced at her brother’s friend and realized she wasn’t going to get away without introducing them. She just hoped Justin wouldn’t ask too many questions. “I’m sorry, Justin, this is Mr. Rutherford.” She thought of something and latched onto it. “He’s one of the lecturers at school.”

Justin lifted his chin in acknowledgement. “And this is Justin,” she introduced to Eric. “A friend of my brother.”

“Right.”

The tension almost crackled between them, an awkward situation everyone seemed keen to escape from.

“Well,” she said. “I’ll let you get on with your day.”

He gave a slow nod, his brows drawing together, a line appearing between them. “It was nice seeing you again.”

“You too.” She gave him an awkward smile over her shoulder as she almost dragged Justin away.

She exhaled a sigh of relief as she increased the distance between them, though she wasn’t able to ignore the uncomfortable feeling in her stomach, anxiety prickling her skin.

Had she imagined the hurt and confusion in his eyes when he’d seen her with Justin, and then how she’s introduced him as no more than her lecturer? His reaction confused her. Did he want her? Did it make him jealous to see her with Justin? Then why hadn’t he tried to touch her? Was he so focused on being a professional that he wouldn’t give in to his desires?

She didn’t know, but she didn’t think she’d imagined the friction between them.

## Chapter Six

### Eric

So she was seeing someone, Eric assumed, considering the cool introduction. He should hardly be surprised ... a beautiful, adventurous woman like her. Of course someone would have snapped her up.

*She's only a model. She means nothing to you.*

But then why did he feel like someone had just punched him in the gut, punctured the skin, and ripped his insides out?

He made his way home, not bothering to catch a cab. Instead, he walked the whole way, needing the exercise to burn his emotions out and clear his head. When he got back, he sat down at his computer and looked at the images they had already created. Over and over again, he scrolled through them, judging each photograph with a critical eye. Only when the buzzer alerted him to someone at the main door of the building did he notice the light outside of his window had grown softer and he'd lost the whole afternoon.

"Damn it," he swore softly. He'd forgotten to eat. Though his appetite hadn't yet returned, he needed to be careful. When he'd hit his darkest point several years earlier, he'd lost nearly forty pounds simply by forgetting to eat. He couldn't afford to slide back to that place.

The buzzer went off again.

Eric put his computer into sleep mode and got to his feet. Without bothering to ask who was there, he hit the button to release the door.

Within a minute, a tentative knock came at his apartment door. He closed his eyes and focused himself. He didn't have the right to quiz Anya about who she'd been with or about their relationship. This was a job to her, nothing more.

He opened the door, a smile he saved for gallery owners and potential clients firmly on his face. She stood with what seemed to be a remorseful smile on her doll-like face. Her hands were clasped behind her back, a position which pushed her breasts toward him. Immediately, the thought of her naked in that stance flashed through his head.

"Anya," he said, pushing the image from his head, and stepped away from the door to let her in. "Thanks so much for coming."

"I'm sorry about earlier. My family's very protective of me. I'm not sure how they'd react if they knew I was doing something like this."

"It's okay, Anya. You don't have to explain yourself. What you do outside of this studio is none of my concern."

"Really? Because you seemed upset."

"I told you. It's none of my business."

"I'm not fucking Justin, if that's what's bothering you. He's in town for a few days and I promised we'd catch up for coffee."

She touched his arm lightly and his eyes flicked to the contact.

"That's all we had, Eric. Just coffee."

Was she telling the truth? She had no reason to lie to him, but he didn't like the way his emotions were ruling his head. Even though he was telling her that her business was her business, he couldn't escape the uncomfortable churning sensation in his stomach that told him he wanted more.

"You're here to work, Anya. As I said, what you do outside of the studio is your own business."

Anya turned and walked away, stripping off her clothes as she went. Nothing could distract him from his possessive train

of thought more than watching her get naked.

“So what do you have planned for me today?”

“That would depend.”

She looked over her shoulder at him, one eyebrow arched.  
“On?”

“On how you felt about the shoot yesterday and if you’re up for more of the same.”

“I loved yesterday, Eric. All I’ve been able to think about is what you might have planned for me today.”

He couldn’t help himself, a smile tugged at his lips. “Very well, but just like yesterday, if at any point you feel uncomfortable and you want me to stop, all you have to do is say, okay?”

“Eric, I trust you.”

*Do you?*

“Why do you trust me, Anya? What reasons have I given you to trust me?”

She stood before him, completely naked, her breasts jutting forward, the small powder puff of blonde hair nestled at the juncture of her thighs. “Because I’ve opened myself up to you in a way I’ve done to no other man and you haven’t so much as laid a finger on me.”

He remembered what he’d done in the shower the previous morning and glanced away guiltily. To hide the emotions he felt sure would be clear in his eyes, he busied himself by reaching into the box where he kept all the accessories he’d gathered for the photo shoot. With a clinking of metal, he pulled out a set of handcuffs and placed them on the floor, followed by a spreader bar. Her eyes widened at the spreader.

“Is that what I think it is?” she asked.

“It’s designed to hold either the arms, or more often, the feet apart at the ankles. These cuffs,” he lifted one in his palm, “are designed to go around your wrists or ankles, and then the



bar can be adjusted, depending on how wide you need to be spread.”

A smile played on her lips. “Sounds kinky.”

He held her gaze, one corner of his lips quirking up. “I thought you wanted kinky.”

Without another word, she held out her wrists to him, but Eric shook his head, dropping the spreader and picking the handcuffs back up. “Turn around.”

She did as she was told and he reached down to grasp her hand from her side, pulling it behind her body and clicking on the cool circle of metal. He took her other hand and repeated the motion.

“Are you trying to punish me, Eric?” she said, a teasing tone to her voice.

“Why? Do you need to be punished?”

“I guess you’ll find that out at some point.”

Not knowing what to make of her words, he busied himself with the spreader bar. “I want you to get down on your knees.”

Carefully, her hands cuffed behind her back, she did as he asked.

“Put your face, shoulders and breasts on the floor, but keep your bottom lifted high, your legs spread.”

“If I try to lean forward like this, I’ll smack my face on the floor.”

She was right; he’d clearly not thought the practicalities through. He should have done the cuffs last.

“Here, let me help you.” Careful not to allow his hand to brush her breasts, he reached around her body and supported her upper chest, so she was able to lean forward into the position he wanted without fear of hurting herself.

In this position, he attached one cuff of the bar to her ankle and then spread her legs farther to attach the other one. A small chain connected each cuff to the bar, allowing some movement but not enough for her to close her legs to him.

He'd never been this close to her before, not naked with her pussy spread open just inches from his face.

Eric cleared his throat and forced himself to his feet. His job was to photograph her, not imagine how she would taste as he pushed his tongue inside her.

He adjusted the lighting hanging from the rail on the ceiling and then picked up his camera. He started with shots of her face, one cheek crushed against the white paper-covered floor, her eyes wide and innocent, portraying her vulnerability. Such contrast to the pose she was in. He moved to her back and hands, taking shots of the metal bound around her slender wrists.

Finally, he moved the camera to aim between her thighs, at the way her spread position exposed her pussy and ass to him in all their perfection.

“Are you going to fuck me like this?” she asked out of the blue.

He lowered the camera in shock. “That isn't what this is about.”

She twisted her neck as best she could and locked eyes with him. “What if that's what I want this to be about?”

“Anya ...”

But he didn't know what he was going to say. Surely he didn't intend on telling her no? The position she was in, with her cheek pressed against the floor, her ankles forced apart, her perfect heart-shaped bottom pushed into the air, was just ripe for fucking hard. Between her slender thighs, the swollen lips of her vulva peeped out. He didn't think he imagined the sheen on her pussy or the inside of her thighs.

His balls ached and his cock lengthened in his pants. Her gaze shifted, resting on the increasingly obvious bulge in his crotch.

“Anya,” he tried again. “It's crossing a line. I don't want to be that kind of man ...”

“But I want to be that kind of girl,” she said. She spread her ankles wider, pulling the small chains between the spreader bar taut. The metal clinked in response. The position widened her stance, her thighs even more spread than before, exposing the star of her asshole and the delicate inner folds of her pussy.

“Oh, God,” he moaned.

*Fuck it.* He might want to be a professional when it came to his photography, but he was still a man.

With one swift move, he undid his belt and whipped it from the loops of his pants. He dropped to his knees and took her bottom between his hands and lowered his face to her wet slit like a man starving. The scent of her juices filled his senses, a musky but sweet perfume. He buried his tongue between her folds, seeking her waiting hole. Hardening his tongue, he slipped inside her easily, her arousal and juices opening her up to him. Her cream covered his mouth, moistening his chin, and he moved in and out, feeling her inner muscles tighten and contract around his tongue.

Anya writhed and moaned beneath his attention, but he wasn't going to let her come yet.

Eric knelt up behind her, admiring the view. He'd never had someone so submissive to him before, allowing him to do such things to her without any trepidation at the possibility that he might hurt her in some way. He knew she trusted him implicitly.

He took the rock-hard length of his cock in one hand and gave it a couple of strokes. The head was purple and bulbous, the length ridged with veins standing out beneath the silky skin. His balls throbbed with a heavy ache and he longed to bury himself in her silken heat. It was what he'd been dreaming of doing from the moment she'd first walked into his apartment.

With her head twisted so she could watch him, her cheek pressed against the floor, her gaze locked on his face, he slowly ran the head of his cock along the opening of her pussy. He groaned at the heat of her, smearing himself with a mixture

of his saliva and her desire. Then he grasped her bottom, one cheek in each hand, and thrust himself deep.

Anya gave a little cry of shock. She was tight, so tight. But he didn't want this to be some sweet and gentle lovemaking. He wanted to fuck her, and fuck her hard. With her ankles joined and her hands locked behind her back, there was nothing she could do to alter his pace or try to stimulate herself. Everything she experienced was all him.

Eric held himself deep, feeling her clench around him. He wished he could photograph her like this, a close up of her pussy lips stretched around the girth of his dick. Maybe one day he'd be able to, or perhaps she'd allow him to bring a male model in here to screw her while he took the photographs. The idea of watching another man fuck her almost made him come, so he forced the idea away, concentrating on not giving in to his urges.

Eric slipped his pinky finger into his mouth, lubricating the digit with his saliva. He wondered if she'd ever had it in the ass. Probably, she was hardly the shy, reserved type. But when he pressed his finger against the star of her anus, she was tight enough to make him speculate.

Anya groaned and pushed back on him, encouraging him to slide his finger into her ass. He did so, pushing past the taut ring and burying his finger deep in the intimate place.

He moved slowly at first, gradually building speed and rhythm. She bounced back and forth in front of him, her cheek pressed hard against the floor as he fucked her.

“Oh, yes, Eric,” she cried. “That feels so fucking good.”

Her encouragement made him thrust harder, his eyes flicking down to where his cock entered her body, watching how her cream slicked his thick erection when he pulled out of her to the point of almost slipping from her body before pushing back in, deep.

With his other hand, he reached around her body, sliding between her legs so his palm rested on her mound, his forefinger and middle finger finding her clit. The contact

elicited a deep-throated groan from Anya, the sound causing his balls to tighten. He was going to come soon.

His release came suddenly and abruptly, a buildup of energy pouring inside of her, as though he was sharing a piece of his soul with her, connected with her in that moment in a way impossible with anyone else. The world narrowed down to that tiny point of focus—how he felt releasing himself inside of her. He cried out as he came, his finger and cock buried to the hilt. He felt his hand on her mound tighten involuntarily, pressing hard on her clit as she came as well, her inner muscles pulsing around his still rock-hard erection.

They held together for a moment, both their bodies lifting as one as they panted for breath.

When his breathing returned to normal, Eric slid his finger from her ass and reached down and uncuffed her hands. She lay there, recovering herself, and then groaned again, releasing her shoulders and pushing herself up to her knees. Her cheeks and chest were flushed with a mottled pink.

*I did that to her,* he thought.

Her legs were still spread, his cum and her cream mixing together to slide from her pussy and down her thighs. How he wanted to photograph that sight, though he wouldn't, not yet, anyway. He didn't want to spoil this intimate moment. And he hoped that she would let him repeat their fucking and perhaps allow him to photograph her afterward then.

Eric, still on his knees, reached out and slid an arm around her waist, his hand creeping up to cup one of her breasts. He nuzzled her neck. She twisted her head to kiss him and their lips met, the kiss long and sweet and intense, tongues exploring every inch of each other's mouths. How strange that they'd shared their first kiss after they'd had sex.

Anya broke the kiss with a giggle. "My ankles, Eric. My legs are about to collapse."

He grinned and retrieved the key, undoing the spreader bar. Together, they fell to the floor, curled up on the white paper of his photographic background. Eric held her against him, his

arms around her waist, fitting her bottom against his softening cock, her back pressed to his chest.

He pressed his face against her hair. “You know, I feel bad.”

She twisted around in his arms to face him. “That isn’t exactly what I was hoping to hear, especially not after what we’ve just done.”

He smiled. “That wasn’t what I meant. It’s just that we’ve been through so much, been on such a journey together, but I barely know anything about you.”

“You know everything you need to know. You’ve seen me at my most vulnerable and my most empowered.”

“But that’s not the same as knowing about you. I don’t even know if you’re actually a student.”

A smile tugged at the corner of her lips. “I’m studying fine art.”

His heart lifted, and he gaped at her. “Fine art?”

She snuggled into his arms and lowered her head to feather kisses along his shoulder. “Yes, Mr. Rutherford. And I’ve known who you were since the moment I saw you. I’m a big fan and I’ve dreaming of fucking you for years.”

“And yet you kept me waiting?”

“I couldn’t let you think you had me at first sight.”

“Are you saying I did?”

“Of course. And now I have what I want, too.”

“And what’s that?”

“Why, you of course. I’ll do anything for you, and for your work. Anything at all.”

How far could he take this, he wondered? A photographer with the perfect model, a woman willing to push boundaries, to go to any extreme to please him. And he wanted to please her, to take her where she wanted to go, to give her pleasure and together create the ultimate portraits of sexual perfection.

How far ...?

# Chapter Seven

## Anya

**The next day, Anya stood outside Eric's building** and schooled her face into that of the self-assured woman of the world she aspired to be. She reached out and pressed the button for his apartment.

His voice came through the speaker, dark and sexy. "Come on up."

She loved that he'd not even asked who was at the door, knowing it would be her. Anya let herself think that meant there was no one else, but she had no idea if he was photographing any other women, never mind sleeping with them. He didn't seem like the type of man to be dating several women at once, but really, what did she know? Perhaps his reluctance to have sex with her initially had nothing to do with his preference for keeping his professional and personal life separate, and everything to do with a girlfriend he had hidden away somewhere.

The door buzzed open, and she caught the elevator up to his apartment. When the doors slid open, he was already standing in the open doorway to his place, leaning in a relaxed stance against the frame, his arms folded, one foot hooked over the other ankle. The sight of him sent a jolt through her. Immediately, the image of him binding rope around her bare breasts filled her head.

Eric smiled, his eyes lighting as they settled on her. "Anya." He straightened and stepped toward her and placed a chaste kiss on her cheek. His five o'clock shadow grated as his lips met her skin, and the scent of him sent a thrill through her. "You look beautiful, as always."



She brushed off the compliment, not knowing what to say without appearing to agree with him. Instead she said, “I’m looking forward to what you have planned for me this evening.”

His eyes twinkled. “You think I plan these things? And there was me thinking this was all spontaneous.”

“What? Ankle spreaders and handcuffs can spontaneously appear?”

He chuckled. “Okay, you may have a point.”

She swept into his apartment, pulling her coat from her shoulders. Whenever she was seeing Eric she always made an effort with her clothes. She didn’t want him to think of her as some penniless student.

She glanced around. The blackout blinds on the floor to ceiling windows had been pulled down, and the far corner of the apartment, where Eric had his studio set up, was brightly lit. On the other side of the lighting props, she spotted a box which she knew contained many of Eric’s toys for photographing her—ropes, handcuffs, gags, spreader bars—and she was sure some toys he’d not yet introduced her to. That was the exciting part.

“Can I get you something to drink?” he offered, following her into the apartment and closing the door behind them.

“Dry white wine, if you’ve got it.”

He headed toward the kitchen area, reaching onto a shelf to take down a couple of expensive looking wine glasses, and then opened a special chilled wine rack with a glass front and selected a bottle. “Sauvignon Blanc?”

She nodded and smiled. “Lovely.”

Anya wished she wasn’t so nervous. Before tonight, she’d known her place in Eric’s apartment, throwing herself into the role of his model so she didn’t have any time or space to doubt herself. Now, after Eric had stepped over that line between personal and professional, she sensed the relationship between them had changed. No longer could she cling to the cool and aloof persona she had tried to wear. Her heart longed to reach

out to him, to allow him to see her for the person she really was. When she'd left his apartment the previous night, it was with soft kisses and promises to return the next day. Now she was here, she wasn't sure if she was supposed to be here as a date, or simply as his model again. The uncertainty made her anxious, and she hated feeling like she wasn't in control.

Eric walked back over to her, a glass in each hand, and passed one to her. The cold of the wine had already chilled the glass, causing condensation to moisten the outside. She longed to touch him, or for him to touch her. There seemed to be a gulf between them that hadn't existed last night, and she just wanted to place them back into that intimacy, that moment. Had something happened she wasn't aware of?

"Eric," she started. "About last night—"

He held up his free hand. "Oh no, there's no need for you to say anything. I crossed a line I shouldn't have crossed, Anya. I'm sorry about that."

She studied his face, her stomach dropping. "You are?"

"I mean, I'm not sorry about what happened. But I shouldn't have taken advantage of you."

"Eric, you didn't take advantage of me. I'm pretty sure I made what I wanted perfectly clear."

"But you were tied up. You couldn't move."

"I know. That's what made it all the more sexy."

Something in his face darkened.

"What is it?" she asked.

He gave his head a slight shake. "When I was thinking about what happened, I started to worry that I had taken things too far, or that I misunderstood what you said to me. In the position you were in, you wouldn't have been able to do anything to stop me."

Her mouth fell open. "You worried that you'd ...?" She couldn't even bring herself to say the words. "Forced me?"

“No! Well, yes ...” He ran his hand through his dark hair. “Hell, I don’t know what I thought.”

“What about afterward, how you held me? Do you really think I would have stayed and let you hold me if that was true?”

His shoulders sagged. “You’re right, of course you are. I just ... I’ve lost track of time in the past, not known what I’ve been doing for hours at a time when I’m lost in my work.”

“Is that how you think of me still? As your work?”

“You are my project,” he said, his dark eyes meeting hers and focusing on her with a passion she almost found frightening. “You’re so much more as well, but you and this photography are the most important things in my life right now.”

Her heart contracted, her stomach flip-flopping. While part of her wanted to be at his very center, his focus purely on her, the other part of her was intimidated by his intensity. But then she’d known he was like this. Eric Rutherford, the photographic genius who would vanish from the world to work on something, only to emerge months later, exhausted and missing half his body weight. His bouts of depression were well documented in fine art magazines. Though he was reported to have fought and beaten the black dog with regular exercise and a strict healthy eating regime, in that moment she glimpsed the person he might have been in those darker days.

He must have caught the expression on her face. “I’m sorry,” he said again, his full mouth curving at one corner in a bashful smile. “I’m freaking you out. Please don’t freak out.”

The smile made him seem more like himself again. She took a big gulp of the wine—expensive and delicious—and felt herself relax. “I’m not freaking out. I promise.”

He took a drink of his own wine and placed the glass on a small side table. “Good. Then where shall we start?”

“Do you still want to photograph me?”

He cocked an eyebrow. “Do you want to be photographed?”

During her time with Eric, she'd never felt so sexy or in control of her own sexuality. It made her feel powerful, as if the whole world was focusing on her through the lens of Eric's camera.

She nodded.

He took the wine glass from her hand and set it down beside his. "How do you feel about being penetrated, Anya?"

She suppressed a smile. "After last night, I'm surprised you need to ask that question."

"It's something that came to me while we were ... you know."

"Having sex?" she offered, widening her eyes in mock innocence.

He grinned again, that boyish charm. "Yes, that." He crossed the room to the leather box with the lid—the type someone might use to store work folders in—removed the lid, and delved inside. She watched with curiosity, her stomach tight in knots of trepidation. She trusted that he wouldn't do anything she didn't want to do one hundred percent, but she still didn't like the idea of having to tell Eric 'no.'

He found what he was looking for and straightened. In his hand was a slim box in royal blue. The exterior held no clues as to what was contained inside. He flipped open the lid. She almost expected to see a designer watch, but instead a silver cylinder met her eyes, wider at one end and then tapering off, with a flat end on the thick part.

"Is that what I think it is?"

He studied her face, as if trying to gauge her reaction. "It's a butt plug. Have you used one before?"

She stifled the giggle that tried to burst from her lips. She wanted him to think of her as experienced, but she couldn't lie to him. "No, I haven't. Will it hurt?"

He gave a shy grin which made her want to jump him. "I've never had one inserted, so I couldn't say for sure. But they're supposed to be for pleasure, not pain. If at any point

you felt uncomfortable or you weren't enjoying what we were doing, all you'd need to say is stop."

"Aren't we supposed to have some other kind of special word?"

"I'm not going to beat you, Anya."

"I know. But what if I say 'don't stop' and you mishear me?"

He laughed. "Very well. What would you like to use?"

She thought for a moment and then said, "How about elephant?"

"Elephant? Why elephant?"

She shrugged. "You're not likely to get that mixed up with anything else."

He seemed to be trying to suppress another smile. "Okay, elephant it is. I think if you yell that in the middle of everything, it'll be enough to break the mood anyway."

They grinned at each other, and Anya relaxed further. Perhaps it was the wine, but she suspected it was that they could still be at ease with each other. He still wanted to photograph her, and she still wanted him to. Yes, they'd had sex, but that didn't mean their situation had changed.

Something occurred to her. "Um, Eric. The butt plug hasn't been ... umm ... used before, has it?"

He frowned. "No, Anya. Of course not. Everything here is all for you. I went out and bought it specially. I would never use your props on another woman."

She breathed a sigh of relief. He hadn't admitted there might be other women, but at least she didn't need to worry about whose skin the handcuffs had last been pressed against, or whose breasts the ropes had last bound.

"So when do you want to get started?"

"I'm ready now." She picked her glass back up and gulped down the last of her wine, feeling the slight burn down the back of her throat, the flush of color the alcohol brought to her

cheeks. The studio was set up much as it always had been, with the white paper rollers providing the background, and more white paper on the floor. Eric never needed to photograph her with any other kind of background. It was her body he was interested in, nothing else.

She'd worn a fitted black dress and a pair of heels. She was normally a jeans and t-shirt kind of girl, but she'd wanted to make an impression. Where the previous times she'd been to his apartment she'd felt like she was going to work—albeit wonderful work—this time she'd felt more like she was going on a date. Her clothes reflected that, and the fact he'd poured her a glass of wine. Even so, it was like no other date she'd ever been on.

Eric stood close behind her, the heat of his body filling the inches between them, his spicy aftershave in her nostrils. His hands reached up and swept her hair to one side to expose the zipper holding her dress together. He rested one hand on her shoulder, as if to keep her grounded. With the other he took hold of the zipper and slowly pulled it down. Her breath caught in anticipation, the comparative cool of the apartment kissing her skin. She wished he could have removed the dress to discover her without underwear, but her curves meant there was no way she'd go out in public without a bra.

He pushed the straps from her shoulders, allowing the dress to slide down the rest of her body and puddle around her feet. Anya stepped out from the circle, so she stood in just her heels, lacy black bra, and matching thong. Eric caught her hand and slowly turned her back around to face him. His dark eyes ran across her skin, drinking her in. She fought her natural instinct to cover herself, remembering who she was in Eric's presence, how he'd given her the confidence to show off her body in a way she never had before. She'd always been so self-conscious, thought of herself as being too small, too curvy. It had taken all of her self-control to act the way she had in front of Eric in order to get the job as his model. She'd known who he was, known he'd need someone who was comfortable with her body. The way she'd acted that first day, just walking across his apartment and stripping off her clothes, had taken every ounce of courage. She always longed to be tall

and slender, but Eric didn't seem to mind. He didn't seem to mind at all.

He caught her hands and lifted them out from her sides so he could study her. "You look amazing, but you know you're going to have to lose the underwear."

The effort she'd made embarrassed her. "Of course, I know that."

"Allow me."

Suddenly, she no longer cared about being self-conscious.

He reached around so his arms laced behind her back, his fingers finding the catch of her bra. The motion brought him close to her, her mouth and nose against his throat, her senses swamped in him. With a deft movement, he unclipped the bra and removed it with one hand, dropping it to the floor beside her. Instantly, her nipples responded, tightening at the cool air and the proximity to Eric. Her breath was shallow and fast, her breasts lifting and falling with every gasp.

His eyes raked down her body. "God, you're beautiful."

He hooked his thumbs into her panties and slowly rolled them down her thighs, crouching as he did so. She used his shoulder to balance, and stepped out of them. He was still on his knees, his mouth aligned with the little puff of blonde hair she allowed to remain on her mound when she got a wax. His breath heated her sensitive skin, and her shallow breathing became one long inhale as he leaned forward and placed his lips against her lower ones.

Automatically, Anya reached down, her hand lacing in his soft, thick hair. Her eyes squeezed shut as his probing tongue pushed against her folds, licking slowly up and down, opening her to him. His tongue flicked her clit, sending sparks racing through her, and she gave a little whimper.

"Oh, Eric."

She stood in nothing but her heels. Eric fully dressed in a dark shirt and slacks. He made her feel so wanton. His hands slipped around to clasp her bottom, one cheek in each hand,

pulling her closer to his mouth. His tongue delved deep, and her legs began to tremble.

Then he pulled away.

Anya let out an involuntary groan. “No, don’t stop.”

He looked up at her, his mouth slick with her juices, and smiled. “We’re supposed to be working.”

“You’re too cruel.”

Eric got to his feet. “Nah, I’m just getting started.”

She had a sudden urge to taste herself on his mouth. She slid her arm around his neck and pressed herself to him, her breasts crushing against the material of his shirt, the buttons leaving small imprints on her skin. Her mouth found his and she lapped gently at his tongue, tasting her own musky desire. His hands traced light lines on her back, running from her shoulder blades to the dimples at the bottom of her spine. Then he went lower, fingertips dipping between the cleft of her buttocks, to brush gently over her asshole.

She shivered in a mixture of desire and anticipation.

He broke the kiss. “Are you ready for this?” he murmured against her mouth.

She nodded against him.

From the back pocket of his pants, he pulled out the silver vessel. With it, he also removed a small cylinder of lubricant. He held out his palm to her, showing her the two objects. “You’re going to want me to use the lube,” he said. “Trust me.”

“I do.” Her voice came out hoarse, ragged in her throat. Every muscle in her body was taut with anticipation. She was frightened of the pain. She was frightened of letting Eric down.

“Go down on all fours,” he told her.

She did as he told her. She was still wearing her shoes, the heel a three inch stiletto, slender straps around her ankles holding the shoes to her feet. If she sat back, the points of the



stilettos would dig into the fleshy part of her bottom. She suspected Eric would like that.

Eric's hands kept up movement across her body, a steady relaxing flow, smoothing from her shoulders, down her back, and to her bottom. She arched against him like a cat, part of her having to resist the urge to purr in pleasure. They hadn't even gotten started yet.

One of his hands left her, and she heard the crack of a lid opening. "It's going to be cold," he warned her. Not trusting herself to speak, Anya simply nodded again.

His finger ran down the crack of her ass, pausing to apply pressure to her anus. She stiffened, and the cold gel dribbled onto the sensitive spot. She gave a little gasp, tensing further, but as her skin began to warm the gel, and Eric renewed his attention on her body, her shoulders dropped. A slow breath exhaled from deep in her lungs.

"Relax, baby," he murmured. "This will be easy as long as you don't tense up."

*That's like telling someone not to look down.*

She'd had his finger before, but she thought it might have only been his pinky. Now he used his index finger to massage the lubricant into her ass. Just the touch on the outside was enough to send her heady with arousal, and she closed her eyes to focus. Her pussy quivered, wishing it had something to clench against.

*Could I come like this? From anal penetration alone?*

He slipped his finger inside her ass, and Anya gasped. She felt him stretch her, a strange combination of pleasure and pain. Her fingers clutched at the paper beneath her, pulling it up into little rifts, like a crinkly bed sheet.

His voice came from over her shoulder as he kneeled behind her. "Is this okay?"

"Oh, yes," she managed.

He worked her, loosening the tight muscle until he was able to thrust his finger in and out of her ass with ease. "Think

you can take another one?”

She was panting now, barely able to speak. But she nodded. An orgasm was so close, her pussy begging to be touched, her clit swollen and unsatisfied. She knew just a little pressure against the sensitive nub would send her over the edge.

Eric's other hand had been placed against her lower back, but now it lifted and she felt more lubricant squirt onto her skin. She wished he would put it on his hand first to warm it up, but with one of his hands busy, his finger embedded in her ass, it would be a difficult maneuver to pull off.

He eased a second finger into her ass, the slight sting of pain as her back passage widened to allow him in making her hiss air in over her teeth. He paused. “Still okay?”

“Yes,” she managed. “Don't stop.”

He worked slowly and gently, using the two digits to fuck her. As it got easier, she found herself pressing back on his hand, increasing their pace.

“Oh, fuck, Anya. You have no idea how much this is turning me on.”

She twisted her neck around to catch sight of his face. She was looking through hazy, lust-ridden eyes, and everything had taken on a dreamy quality, but there was no mistaking the dark, hooded expression of desire on Eric's features.

But Anya couldn't think about that now. She needed to come, and she couldn't hold off any longer. Not caring what she looked like, she dropped her chest down so she was supported on one arm, her forearm flat against the floor. She reached beneath her body, between her thighs. Her fingers slid through the blonde curls and settled on her clit. A cry of relief escaped her lips. Her clitoris had never been so sensitized before, and she used two fingers to rub fast circles while Eric continued to finger-fuck her ass.

Her orgasm exploded over her, washing in powerful waves that began at her core and spread out to encompass her whole

body. Her pussy and ass worked together, clenching tight against Eric's fingers as she came.

When she finally stilled, Eric slipped his hand from her body.

She slumped to the floor, still on all fours and huddled in on herself. Unable to move, she just lay there, panting.

“Are you okay?” Eric asked her.

She managed a small laugh and turned her face to him. “That was intense.” She realized something, “but you didn't get to take any photographs.”

“Not a problem.” He smiled conspiratorially, as if this had all been planned. It occurred to her that it probably had. “You're ready for the plug now. Then I'll get my pictures.”

“Just give me a minute, okay?”

“Of course.”

Getting to her feet, her legs trembling, she went to the bathroom to freshen up. Using a flannel she found beside the tub, she wiped the moisture from her body. She splashed a little water on her face, hoping to tamp down the red flush that was high in her cheeks and across her chest. She wiped at the dark marks beneath her eyes where her mascara had smudged. She'd thought to grab her purse on the way into the bathroom, and so used a little of the powder she'd brought with her. Yes, she'd just had an amazing orgasm, but she was still aware she was about to be photographed.

# Chapter Eight

## Anya

Anya left the bathroom, still wearing nothing but her heels. She dropped the purse. Eric had poured her another glass of wine, and she took it gratefully, though she'd have preferred water to quench her thirst. Still, the wine was delicious, and she wasn't complaining. Eric had replaced the sheets of white paper on the floor and now stood at his tripod, making adjustments to his camera. He glanced at her over the camera, his eyes trailing up and down her naked body.

"You're killing me, Anya," he said. "You can't just stand there, all flushed, naked apart from a set of heels, drinking a glass of wine, and not expect me to want to bend you over that couch and take you here and now."

His words sent a thrill through her. "Eric, your photographs ...?"

He seemed to have to tear his eyes from her. "I know. You're just too distracting."

"Get the pictures taken," she said, feeling brazen. "Then I'll let you fuck me."

"This is going to be the quickest shoot in the history of photography."

Without needing to be told, Anya put down her glass, crossed back to his studio area, and got down on her hands and knees again.

"This will be easier now," he said, producing the plug again. It looked big, but the thick end probably wasn't much thicker than Eric's two fingers. He was right; she did feel more

relaxed about it now. He'd already shown her that she could do it.

He applied more lubricant, and then placed the slender tip of the plug against her anus. It was unbelievably cold, and she said so.

"Sorry, I thought having it in my pocket would warm it up a bit."

"Don't worry, just keep going."

He applied pressure and the tip of the plug slipped inside her ass. She was already loose for him, but her muscles still instinctively tightened at the intrusion.

"It's okay," he told her, obviously having sensed her tensing up. "We'll take this slowly."

The plug slid inside her, another fraction of an inch, then a little more. She was aware of her muscles working both with and against him, pulling the item inside her while contracting to prevent entry. The effect was strange, completely different from having Eric's supple, warm fingers inside her.

He straightened, his hands leaving her body. "There. It's fully in."

Eric stood and grabbed his camera. He gave her instructions, though just being under his scrutiny was enough to let Anya know how to move for him. "Arch your back a little more," he told her. "Yes, that's beautiful."

With each stretch of her limbs or elongation of her back, she paused just long enough for him to snap some images, before she moved to the next pose. Having the plug in her ass gave her something else to think about. She wanted to display the toy to the best of her ability, but was also hyper-aware of the possibility of it slipping out. And as she moved, her arousal built once more.

"Will you fuck me like this?" she asked him.

He didn't even need to respond. He dropped to his knees beside her, his arm snaking around her back to pull her up onto her knees as well. His hand slid up, lacing in her hair, and his

lips found hers. She relished the kiss, his tongue gentle yet firm as it explored her mouth. She'd expected him to be fierce and desperate—she'd already had one orgasm, but he'd been kept waiting—but instead he was slow and gentle with her.

Carefully, he reclined her onto the white sheets beneath them. She found herself having to clench her muscles to prevent the plug slipping from her body. She stretched back, her arms palm up either side of her head, her breasts jutting upward and heaving as she breathed. Her eyes stayed focused on Eric's face, but his gaze roamed up and down her body. He spread her legs, his palms pressed gently on the inside of her thighs, opening her to him. Her feet were flat on the floor, her knees bent.

Eric stood, leaving her in that position, and began to unbutton his shirt. There was no sign of teasing on his face, the seriousness of his expression making her heart race. Slowly, he unbuttoned his shirt, revealing his toned, gym-hard torso beneath. He shucked the material from his shoulder and dropped it to the ground behind him. Next went his belt, flicking the buckle open and yanking the length from the belt loops. For a moment, he hesitated, and she wondered what thoughts had come into his head—whipping her bottom with the leather, perhaps, or tying her hands above her head. But he did neither, perhaps storing the idea away for another time, and simply let the belt join the discarded shirt. He kicked off his shoes and began to work on his pants. She could see the bulge beneath his fly, the long length she knew would be inside her soon. It was everything she could do to stop herself trembling in anticipation. Everything was heightened from the plug in her ass, and she wanted him so badly she thought she might explode with it.

Eric seemed to sense her urgency, and did everything too slow to tease her, to continue building her so when she finally did find release, she might lose her mind.

He popped the button of his fly and pulled down the zipper. His erection sprang free, long and hard and thick. She stared, panting with want, desperate to touch him. But instead Eric's hand circled around his cock, massaging up and down,

his big palm stroking the smooth, purple head, his thumb flicking over the drop of pre-cum to lubricate his own way. She stared as he masturbated himself, his eyes locked on the secret spot between her thighs.

*This is the sexiest thing I've ever seen.*

He let the pants fall from his hips and stepped out of them. Then he knelt between her spread thighs, his lower lip slack with desire as he took in the sight of her slick pussy and the head of the plug stopping her anus just below.

He bent down, placing his mouth to her pussy and giving her slit a couple of long, slow licks.

She whimpered. "Just take me Eric. I need you."

He straightened, lifting his body above hers, positioned his cock at her entrance, and gently pushed.

She felt the resistance of having her ass filled with the plug, while his erection pushed firm but unforgiving into her pussy. Eric's face twisted in pleasure, his breath ragged. She was so wet, it should have eased his passage, but even though the plug was relatively small, she'd never been so full. She forced herself to slow her breathing, relaxing her muscles further, and then Eric gave another push and he was deep inside.

"Oh, God," he breathed. His eyes were shut, but then flicked open to focus on her face. "Does this feel all right?"

"It feels fucking amazing."

And it did. She'd never been so full in her life. He began to move, sliding in and out of her, his balls slapping against the head of the butt plug, causing fresh sensations of pleasure to build inside her. She didn't think she could take much more, lifting her hips to thrust against him. She raised her feet from the floor and hooked her heels onto his shoulders so his thrusts were as deep as they could be. Then he reached beneath her, his fingers finding the plug, and he applied more pressure, pushing it deeper where it had begun to slide out. Her orgasm broke, washing over her in waves of excruciating pleasure. Her head spun with its force. And Eric exploded inside her,

slamming into her as he yelled out, thrusting again and again and again.

They held together, panting, until their breathing returned to normal. Eric slid from her body, deftly removing the plug as he did so, and using some of the paper they'd been lying on to clean themselves up.

“Don't go home tonight, Anya,” he said, pulling her into his arms. “Stay here with me.”

She twisted to face him, their bodies pressed together, content and sated. “But I don't have a change of clothes. I can't go to campus in the morning wearing a little black dress. What will I look like?”

“I'll buy you new clothes first thing. Whatever you want.”

“You're crazy.”

“You've made me that way.”

A dark shadow fell over his words. He had once danced on the periphery of madness. She only knew what she did from the things he'd revealed during magazine interviews, and then, of course, the few things he'd mentioned to her.

She pushed her thoughts from her mind and snuggled down into his arms. What he'd gone through in the past didn't matter.

All that mattered was the here and now.

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**Anya woke to find herself** alone. Sitting up in bed, she ran a hand through her messy hair, and looked around for any clue as to where Eric might have gone. On the end of the bed was a bag from Calvin Klein. She got to her knees and reached down to fish it up toward her. A note was pinned to the top:

*Sorry, had to get to the gym. Didn't want to wake you. Promised you new clothes – hope you like them. Make yourself at home. Hope to see you later???*

*E.*

He'd left.



Her stomach dipped in disappointment. It wasn't as if he'd gone to a business meeting or anything. How could a workout beat a morning with her? But then she remembered how she'd told him she needed to be back on campus that morning. Hopefully that was the reason he'd gone, thinking she had class. She did, but not until mid-morning.

Curious, she pulled the clothes from the bag. A simple pair of dark blue, boot-cut jeans, and a white, fitted t-shirt. Being a man, he hadn't considered that her underwear was black and so would show through the t-shirt. But then she saw another bag, La Perla, and pulled out a gorgeous but simple t-shirt bra and matching panties. He had thought of everything. Except the shoes, but she could get away with walking in heels.

She quickly showered and dressed, then caught a cab across town to campus. She needed her laptop and books, and her feet were killing her. She longed for a pair of sneakers.

The cab pulled up outside, and she paid the driver, feeling curious eyes glancing her way. Most of the students couldn't afford to get cabs, and if they did they were saved for a Saturday night, not a Wednesday morning. Her heels sank into the grass as she cut across campus, trying to save a few minutes. A wolf whistle cut through the general bustle of the students. Instinctively, her head turned to source the sound, but as soon as she saw who it had come from, she whipped her head back around again, trying to pretend she hadn't noticed.

"Where are you going in those shoes, Anya?" Gavin called out. "You look like you should be a stripper. In fact, is that where you were last night? We missed you at the party."

"Get lost," she muttered.

He hurried the last few steps and then grabbed her arm, pulling her to a stop. "So what's with you never showing at our parties, huh? Did you have somewhere better to be?"

She shook him off. "Unsurprisingly, Gavin, yes, I did."

His top lip lifted in a snarl. "You need to stop acting like you're better than everyone else."

She couldn't help herself, forcing a snarl of her own. "Maybe it isn't an act."

"God, you're such a bitch."

She put her head down, her heart hammering, and kept walking. She needed to ignore jerks like Gavin. He was the sort of guy who expected women to throw themselves at him, and if they didn't, he took it as a personal insult. She didn't know why he'd focused on her in particular, but she just wanted to stay off his radar.

Unfortunately, Gavin didn't seem to have the same opinion, his words chasing her as she walked. "Just remember karma's a bitch, bitch."

## Chapter Nine

### Anya

**Anya sat through her classes**, one eye on the clock, the other on her cell phone. She wanted to send Eric a message, but didn't want to appear needy. Finally, the phone vibrated in her purse and she snatched it eagerly, holding the screen below the level of her seat so her lecturer wouldn't notice.

*Sorry I couldn't stay this morning. Hope you liked the clothes. Same time tonight?*

She hugged herself in excitement. The memory of his touch on her skin stayed with her, her body aching in that pleasurable way that reminded her of all the things they'd done the previous night. She found her mind constantly filled with Eric, the scent of him, the way he looked at her, the way he made her feel as though they were the only two people in the world. It was hard to believe they'd only known each other for a week now. How had she filled her time before he'd entered her life?

Later that day, as afternoon turned to evening, Anya made her way back to Eric's apartment. She was surprised to find him standing outside on the sidewalk, his hands shoved into the pockets of a smart suit, giving a casual look to the outfit. His eyes scanned the street, and as soon as he saw her, he straightened, a smile breaking on his face. Unable to help herself, she smiled back, a reflex as natural as anything they'd done.

"What are you doing out here?" she asked as she approached.

"Waiting for you."

“Did someone throw you out of your own place?” she teased. She’d rarely seen him outside of his apartment.

He laughed. “No, but I figured it was about time I threw myself out. As much as I want to keep your beauty all to myself, I thought you deserved to be wined and dined.”

A little ball of happiness swelled inside her. “You mean we’re going out to dinner? Why didn’t you tell me? I’d have dressed up a little.”

He glanced down at her outfit—a knee length leather skirt, soft cream sweater, and heels. “You look beautiful just as you are.”

She glowed with pleasure, glancing down at the sidewalk. “Thank you.”

He held his hand out to her, and she took it. They walked down the main road, and then turned off onto a side street. Up ahead, a couple of small tables were positioned on the narrow sidewalk, an old fashioned canopy protruding from the restaurant. A couple sat, sipping coffee and reading—the man a newspaper, the woman a paperback—not speaking to one another.

Eric pushed open the door, and, above their heads, a bell tinkled. The restaurant was tiny, only about ten tables, none seating more than four people. It was still early, so only a couple were taken, but the air was redolent with the scent of garlic, tomatoes, and some kind of spice. A waiter in his late fifties caught sight of them entering. He hustled from around the counter, his stomach straining at the small white apron he had tied around his middle, and opening his arms in greeting. “Mr. Rutherford! You came back to see me.”

Eric laughed and Anya glanced up at him, enjoying the sound and the recognition in Eric’s face. “No offence, Mateo, but I didn’t exactly come here to see you. It’s your pasta I’m here for.”

He waved a hand. “No offence, no offence. And you bring beautiful lady. What more could I ask? Come, sit. Sit!”

He guided them to the table in the window, pulling the chair out for Anya, before placing a couple of menus in front of them. “I can get you drinks?”

“Yes, please.” Eric looked up at her. “White wine okay? Or would you prefer something else?”

She smiled. “White wine sounds lovely. Thank you.”

He ordered, and they both studied the menu.

“This is wonderful,” she said. “Do you come here often?”

He smiled at her. “Is that a pick up line?”

She grinned back. “Why, do I need one?”

They stared at each other, caught in a moment. It became too intense, and Anya glanced away, her cheeks heated.

Eric cleared his throat. “In answer to your question, yes, I do, though more often than not I get Mateo to deliver.”

“The waiter?”

“No ... Well, yes. He’s the waiter but he’s also the owner. His food is wonderful, but I don’t take much time to sit and eat out very often. I’m normally too busy with work.”

She was pleased he’d taken the time out for her.

“So what do you recommend?”

“I guess ‘all of it’ wouldn’t be much help?” He glanced back down at the menu. “I love anything with seafood. The calamari and chili is amazing and goes perfectly with the wine.”

“Sounds good.”

Mateo—the owner—took their order and disappeared into the kitchen.

Eric reached across the table and took her hand. She was surprised and touched by this small gesture of intimacy, as if they were a real couple. She didn’t know what they were; they’d not exactly had a talk about their relationship or future. Being a model he’d screwed didn’t automatically make her his girlfriend.

“Actually, Anya, there’s something I want to talk to you about.”

Her stomach did a nervous flip. *Uh oh*. Was this where he told her they were getting too serious and wanted to break it off? Was he dumping her? Or firing her?

She voiced none of these concerns, just looked at him with her tongue tied and her stomach in knots.

He continued, “I spoke to a friend of mine who owns a big gallery here in New York. He wants to get together tomorrow, and I wondered how you felt about me showing him some of your photographs.” He rushed on, almost at a ramble, and she realized he was nervous, too. Somehow, knowing this made her feel better, as if they were on more of a level playing field.

“This is a big deal for me, Anya. It’ll be the first time anyone other than you has seen the new direction my art has taken. It will cause some ripples when people start finding out, and I could really do with some of his advice about how to handle any negative publicity.”

Her eyes widened. “Is that likely to happen?”

“Possibly. The portrait work I’ve done before has been highly regarded ...”

“I know that, Eric. I knew who you were before I ever met you.”

He blushed, the sight endearing in his strong, handsome face, and glanced away. “Yes, of course. I forgot. So I hope you understand why I’d want to get feedback from another professional.”

The thought of other people seeing her photographs made the butterflies in her stomach flutter madly, but she told herself not to be stupid. Of course Eric would want to show his colleagues.

“You don’t need to ask my permission, Eric. It’s your work, not mine.”

He let out an audible breath of relief. She’d clearly made him feel better, though she wasn’t completely sure how she

felt herself. Something uneasy sat inside her, but she couldn't pinpoint what it was. Naturally, she was nervous about someone else seeing such intimate images, but she knew Eric had taken the shots beautifully, and they were tasteful and erotic, not pornographic. Perhaps it was just the idea of his work being out there, available for others to criticize should they want to.

Their food arrived, steaming plates of pasta sprinkled with fresh parsley. The smell made her mouth water. She'd always loved her food, something her figure had so far not hated her for. Sure, she was curvy, but those curves hadn't yet morphed to fat. At twenty-two, she knew she had time on her side, but she would probably have to try to curb her appetite as she got older, and perhaps even make a trip or two to the gym. For now, she was going to enjoy her meal. The calamari was tender, the pasta cooked perfectly with just enough bite. The zing of fresh chili heated her tongue, and she relished the fresh tang of lemon juice and capers.

They ate in companionable silence, both of them seeming to realize that long pasta probably wasn't the best date food, but neither caring. They cleared their bowls.

Anya sat back with her hands on her stomach, giving a sigh of contentment. "You were right. That *was* amazing."

"So you don't have any room for dessert?"

"Are you kidding? I love dessert."

Eric didn't order any, opting only for a double espresso. Their orders arrived and she glanced at her own dish of layers of sponge cake, cream, coffee liqueur, and chocolate, and then at his tiny shot of caffeine.

"Now you're going to make me feel like an absolute pig," she said.

Nevertheless, she dug in, pushing the silver spoon through the soft, creamy layers.

He watched her mouth closely as she licked cream from her spoon. She noticed his tongue sneak out, licking his own lips, his teeth biting gently.

Knowing what she was doing to him, she lowered the spoon again, scooping up more of the coffee and chocolate flavored dessert, and slowly raised it to her mouth. It was her turn to let her tongue sneak out, her lips opening provocatively as she licked the cream from the spoon. She kept her eyes fixed on his, her cheeks rounding as she tried to prevent the grin threatening to break across her face.

Eric leaned across the table toward her. “Anya, you’re killing me.”

She couldn’t prevent the smile any longer, tilted her head to one side. “I’m only eating my dessert, Eric.”

“You know exactly what you’re doing,” he growled.

She finished the last mouthful of tiramisu and put her spoon down before leaning across the table to meet him. “So take me back to your place.”

His shoulders slumped and he sat back. “I can’t, Anya. That meeting I told you about is happening first thing tomorrow morning and I’ve still got work to do on my portfolio. Plus, I can’t afford to be exhausted—which I will be if I take you back with me. You have a wonderful habit of not letting me get much sleep.”

She tried not to show her disappointment, smiling brightly. “Oh, sure. I understand.”

“But tomorrow night,” he promised. “Are you busy? I feel like I’m dominating all of your time.”

*That’s not the only thing you’re dominating,* she thought but didn’t say, images of handcuffs and ropes dancing in her mind. She shook her head. “I’m not busy.”

“Great.”

Eric motioned Mateo over and paid the bill. Anya reached into her purse for her share, but he waved her down. “Don’t be crazy. It was my treat.”

They left the restaurant, stepping out onto the street. Night had fallen while they were eating, so now streetlights illuminated the way. Anya didn’t want the evening to end,



hating that she hadn't had her fix of him—at least not physically.

Fired by the wine, she grabbed him by his shirt collar and pulled him down into an alley which ran off the street the restaurant was on. He was so much bigger than she was, only that she'd taken him by surprise had allowed her to yank him off course.

“Anya!” he exclaimed.

She wound her arms around his neck, stepping into his body to press him up against the red brick wall of the adjoining building. “Shh,” she said, standing on tiptoes to press her mouth to his, silencing any protest. His breath tasted of pasta and coffee, and she knew her mouth must taste the same.

His hands found her hips, pulling her closer, and she felt the already hard length of him and marveled at how quickly she'd elicited that reaction.

“People could walk past at any moment.”

“So, let them.”

“Anya, this really isn't—” But once more she stopped his mouth with her own, her tongue flicking against his with an urgency she wanted to rouse in him, too. She sensed him hesitate for a moment longer, then the tenseness of his body relaxed into her and he kissed her back, hard.

Anya groaned in pleasure and relief, knowing she'd gotten what she wanted. Still on tiptoes, she crushed her mound against the rapidly hardening erection in his pants, feeling like a wanton teenager simulating sex through their clothing. Somehow, knowing someone could catch them at any minute only heightened her arousal. Eric's hands left her hip and reached beneath her sweater, cupping her breast through the lacy material of her bra, squeezing the nipple hard enough to send little shocks of pain through her. She wished they could take off her sweater and his shirt, and press her naked body against his, but that was taking things a little too far. It might have been spring, but the evenings were still cool, never mind

the possibility of someone catching them naked. They would never be able to brush that off as just heavy petting.

Anya pulled away an inch and reached down between them to unzip his fly. She slipped her slender hand into the gap, feeling the hardness and the heat of him. He was too big for her to tug through the hole, so she used her other hand to yank open his belt and pop the top button, freeing him. Eric groaned as her hand massaged his cock in a firm, slow motion.

With sudden urgency, he reached down and yanked her skirt up, exposing her ass, and pulled her panties to one side. She was already wet, her underwear damp with her arousal, and roughly he pushed two fingers inside her.

They clung to each other, kissing with fierce passion. She broke the kiss to bury her face in his neck, panting, clinging to him with one hand while she masturbated him with the other.

“Oh, fuck.” He switched their positions, moving them around so she was the one with her back against the wall. He pulled his fingers from her, lifted her, with his other arm supporting her thighs. Eric positioned his cock at her slit, and with one hard movement, pushed inside her. She gasped and clung to him tighter, loving the way he filled her so completely. She buried her face in his neck, her mouth seeking his skin, her teeth digging into his flesh as he pounded into her, harder and harder. It was rough, ugly, brutal, with the dirt of the alley beneath their feet, the wall crumbling at her back with moss and soot. Where everything they’d done before had been related to beauty, this was fucking for the sheer act of fucking, both of them finding their release.

She cried out when she came, her pussy contracting around his cock, milking him. His thrusts grew more frantic, and then he jerked hard, once, twice, three times, releasing himself inside her.

They clung to each other, panting.

“Quick, my purse,” she gasped as she felt him softening inside her. “I need tissues.”

Eric snatched her purse from where she'd dropped it on the ground. They rearranged themselves, Anya lining her panties with some tissues to catch the mess. They laughed and grinned sheepishly at one another.

“Jesus, Anya. The things you make me do.”

She thought he would take her home with him now, to pour her some more wine and curl up with her on the couch, but instead he said, “I need to call you a cab.”

Her face must have dropped.

“I'm sorry, Anya. I did explain ...”

“Your work, I know.” She forced an understanding expression. “You have a meeting and your work is important.”

He gave a relieved smile. “Thank you for understanding.”

“Hey, I knew who you were before we got involved. The mysterious Eric Rutherford. Photographer extraordinaire.”

Even so, she felt bereft at not being able to spend the night with him. Her whole body had been yearning for him the entire day, and one quick fuck against a wall was not going to satisfy her. If he felt anything like she felt about him, he wouldn't be able to do this, even for his work, but she guessed that work came first for Eric. Perhaps it always would.

Would she be able to handle that? Would she be able to live her life with a man who always treated her like second best?

# Chapter Ten

## Eric

**The following morning, Eric crossed** the road at a brisk stride, his leather portfolio clutched in one hand and banging against his thigh as he walked. He dodged traffic, heading toward the building with the floor to ceiling blackened glass windows, posters advertising the previous night's exhibition still stuck to the smooth surface. The Blanc Art Space, located in lower Manhattan, was owned by his friend, Logan Blanc. Logan came from old money, not that this prevented the two of them becoming firm friends at Art College. Logan's parents had financed the studio, but Logan's eye for what sold had made the gallery a success.

He recognized the name the posters displayed, a hip young thing right out of art school. This was his competition, the reason he had to work as hard as he did. Sometimes he felt like he was running to keep still, but the truth was he was simply trying to stay ahead of the pack.

The exhibition had already taken place the previous night. Eric knew from experience that bottles of expensive imported beer, and even more expensive champagne, would have been served from ice filled silver buckets. Smartly dressed men and women would have moved around each other elegantly, as though in a dance, stopping to speak in low tones about the art displayed and the potential of that particular artist. Eric had received his invitation, plus one, months earlier, but, as usual, he'd been too busy to attend such an event.

*I should have taken Anya*, he thought with a sudden pang of longing. He'd felt strange that morning, waking up without her in his bed. Even though she'd only stayed with him for one

night, he'd become used to her in his apartment, the small lump beneath his bedcovers, the smell of her sleeping, and of sex on his sheets. He liked to turn and find her propped up at the kitchen counter on a stool, sipping coffee, or else with her legs tucked up beneath her body as she drank the wine he'd poured.

She'd have enjoyed the exhibition. He imagined her in a sleek black dress and heels as he introduced her to numerous people in the art world. Or perhaps he was giving himself too much credit. Would she even want to be seen out so publically with him?

Eric rapped his knuckles on the door and hit the buzzer for the intercom. The sound of movement came from inside, bottles clinking together as someone either picked them up or set them down. Then the door cracked open. Logan's tousled, blond head appeared in the gap, his green eyes smudged with dark shadows.

"Late night, was it?" Eric asked with a grin. He wondered why he'd bothered to make the effort to be fresh today, when Logan clearly hadn't. But then, he guessed, this meeting was more important to him than his friend.

The door opened fully. Logan stood in the gap wearing faded jeans, his shirt partially un-tucked. He tugged a hand through his curls. "As far as I can remember," he laughed. "Come on through. It's good to see you again. I was worried you'd gone back into hiding."

Eric entered, surveying the remnants of the exhibition. The gallery was a vast, white space, broken only by pillars which were strategically placed as dividers to create smaller pockets of privacy. Oil paintings were hung on the walls, abstract landscapes on a large scale. Most of the pieces had small colored stickers in the corners to show they were sold.

"Well, it looks like you had a profitable night," Eric observed.

"It was, my friend. Just clearing up the mess now, and then I'll be adding up the profit." He rubbed his hands together in

mock glee. Eric rolled his eyes. He knew his friend didn't need the money.

Logan picked up a silver bucket sitting on the floor beside a pillar, inverted, empty beer bottles protruding from the top. Eric collected a couple of empty champagne glasses from a table and followed his friend as he headed into the back of the gallery and out into the offices beyond.

"I don't know about you," Logan called over his shoulder, "but I could kill for some seriously strong coffee."

"Sure."

"Then we can check out this new project of yours."

They'd entered a small kitchenette containing a sink, refrigerator, coffee machine, and microwave. Another door on the far side led off the area. Eric knew from experience that this door led to Logan's office.

Logan set the bucket down by the sink, to join a number of other identical silver pails. "Dump the glasses there," he said, nodding toward the kitchen worktop. "They're all rented, and someone will be here to collect them in an hour or so." Eric did as he was told, and Logan got to work pouring their coffee. He pushed a mug into Eric's hands and headed through the kitchen and into the office. Eric followed.

Logan took a seat in a comfortable leather chair on the far side of his desk, and nodded for Eric to take a seat on the opposite side. "I have to say I'm intrigued. It's not often you'd come to me with your work. Normally people are hunting you down to display your stuff."

Eric sank into the chair. "Yeah, well, this work is a little different from my normal stuff."

"So you said on the phone." Logan took a gulp of his coffee and sat back. "Sock it to me."

Eric took a deep breath and slid his portfolio across the desk. He was always nervous when it came to showing anyone a new project, but this one was particularly personal to him. His friend reached out and pulled the portfolio closer, unclipped the folder, and swung it open.

All the images were in black and white. The first photograph was one of the earlier pictures of Anya. She was wearing a short skirt flipped up, naked beneath, her fingers pulling open the lips of her pussy in an inverted V. He loved the expression on her face, sulky, almost petulant, as if the V of her fingers was a deliberate insult.

Logan flipped the page.

A photograph of her bound chest, a close up shot, focusing on the inky pools of shadows beneath her breasts, the marks the rope left on her skin. The peak of one nipple poked between the coarse material of the rope.

The page turned.

An image from only a couple of nights ago—Anya's pussy, and, just above, the silver circle of the plug in her ass, the light glinting from the smooth metal, the dip of darkness and promise below.

Eric glanced up at Logan's face, trying to judge his reaction. He didn't know what he'd thought his friend would say, but Eric knew Logan wouldn't have the sort of reaction of most men—perhaps a wolf whistle and a slap on the back. His expression gave nothing away. His face was serious, his gaze flicking over the images, drinking them in with a professional eye. So far, Logan's only external reaction was a slight high flush to his cheeks, and that could have been due to his hangover or even the hot coffee.

After looking at all of the images, Logan sat back and slapped the portfolio shut. He lifted his gaze to Eric's. "A lot of people aren't going to like them."

"I know."

"Have you considered publishing them in a different name?"

"No. I don't want to. They're my work. I own them and whatever backlash comes with them."

"You might find they affect any future 'regular' commissions."

“I’m willing to take that risk.”

A smile broke across his face. “In which case, I love them. Edgy, obviously sexy. Great use of light and shadows, as always with your work. It’s clearly you, but you in a completely new direction.”

“That’s what I was aiming for.”

“The best pictures are the ones where you can see her face. She’s got a certain ... quality to her. Like she’s innocent, but knows something you don’t, all at the same time.”

Eric smiled. “I noticed that, too.”

He grinned and leaned forward. “So, who’s the girl?”

“Her name is Anya.”

“She’s pretty.”

“She’s more than that.”

“Are you screwing her?”

He exhaled. “Logan, you know I’m not like that.”

“Come on. Even a monk like you couldn’t keep your hands off a woman in those kinds of poses.”

“*She’s* not like that.”

He lifted a quizzical eyebrow. “No?”

“Okay, look, I didn’t start anything intentionally.”

Logan chuckled. “So you are screwing her.”

“It’s not just sex, Logan.”

His friend’s face darkened. “You’ve got feelings for her. Well, I can see why, but you know you need to be careful.”

“I’m fine. I’ve got things under control.”

“I just care about you, buddy. You know that.”

“I know, and I’m thankful. But anyway, you’re getting off the subject. This isn’t about my sex life. I want your opinion about the photographs.”



“They’re beautiful, and I think they’ll sell. There’s a market for this kind of stuff lately. It all seems to have come on trend.”

“I don’t want to sell them.”

His green gaze snapped up. “What? Why not?”

“I don’t want other people to own a part of her. I’m happy to exhibit, but nothing more.”

“If you run an exhibition where no one can buy, it could go one of two ways. People will be so desperate to see the work no one is allowed to own, it will be all over the media, and you’ll be offered disgustingly large sums of money just to see if you do have a price.” He exhaled. “Or else people will think you’ve lost the plot again, and come to see the pictures anyway.”

“I didn’t lose the plot,” Eric muttered, the turn of phrase jarring him.

“Sorry. But either way, the media will probably be involved. People will talk about the subject matter, and about you and your mental health. You understand, don’t you?”

“I want people to talk, Logan. Isn’t that part of the fun of creating art, to make people talk, to think about the pieces, to shock and inspire?”

“Well, you’re certainly going to do that.”

“So will you exhibit them for me?”

“An exhibition where there’s no profit margin?”

“Come on, Logan, you don’t need the money. If the media are going to be as involved as you think, you’ll make the money in infamy.”

He folded his arms across his chest and laughed. “True.”

“Plus, you can always sell tickets. I don’t want or need a cut.”

Logan shrugged. “Works well for me.”

“So when do you have an opening?”

He reached across the desk and turned on his computer. With a couple of clicks on the mouse, he pulled up a calendar. “I have a spot in ten days. It would be one night only. Can you be ready by then?”

Eric rubbed a hand across his mouth. The date was far sooner than he’d anticipated. “Got anything further in the future?”

“Sure. A lot further. If you don’t take that spot, the next opening is ...” He scrolled the calendar forward. “Five months from now.”

“Five months? Seriously?”

“What can I say? The gallery is busy.”

“Ten days,” he mused. “Will anyone be able to attend at such short notice?”

“They will when they know it’s you. If you want, I can get out the press releases on your behalf. I’ll make sure people are here.”

He felt like a snowball that had just been given a hefty shove off the top of a mountain. This thing was gathering momentum, a momentum he hadn’t quite been prepared for, and now he’d gotten things started, he wasn’t quite sure he could stop.

The words were out of his mouth before he allowed himself time to change his mind and go back on this whole thing.

“Okay, let’s do it. Nothing like a challenge to keep life interesting.”

“And I hope I’ll get to meet the lovely Anya at the opening.” He spoke with a twinkle in his eye.

“Of course, she’ll want to be there.”

But in the pit of his stomach, nerves roiled. He’d only mentioned to Anya that he would be showing her photographs to his friend, not that they’d be displayed for the world and media to see. She’d said she didn’t mind, and that he didn’t

have to ask her permission—which he supposed he didn't—  
yet something sat uneasy with him.

What would Anya's reaction be when he told her.

# Chapter Eleven

## Eric

**Breaking his usual routine, Eric** headed to the gym. He needed somewhere he could think with a clear head. Somewhere he wouldn't be surrounded with images and thoughts of Anya.

He hoped he was doing the right thing by exhibiting his work, and wasn't about to commit professional suicide.

*No*, he told himself, *plenty of photographers are held in high esteem with their erotic work*. There was no reason he couldn't join their ranks. His problem only occurred because this kind of work simply wasn't expected from Eric Rutherford. The art world expected introvert pieces, deep studies of the human soul, and, despite Eric believing what he and Anya created contained the same qualities, he knew it would take awhile for the critics to come up to speed.

The sickening sensation in the pit of his stomach didn't go away at his own reassurances.

He paid enough money to have his own locker at the gym, and he kept a spare set of workout clothes in it, in case of times like these. Because most other people had started work by now, the place was relatively quiet, so he changed in peace.

Over the next hour, Eric worked hard, his feet pounding the treadmill on an incline until the sweat dampened his hair, dripped down his torso, and soaked into his shirt. Still, he found no release, nerves coiled tightly inside him. He moved on to the weights, pushing his muscles to the point of exhaustion, until they trembled and could lift no more. The anxious, nervous sensation inside him remained.

But he knew one thing that would fix it.

Eric wiped down the gym equipment and made his way to the men's changing room. Quickly, he showered and changed, before plucking his cell phone from his jacket pocket. He hesitated, his phone in one hand. He didn't want her to think he was just making a booty call. He wanted to talk to Anya about the exhibition anyway. She needed to know, and besides, he wanted her by his side. He could imagine her on the night of the opening, sophisticated and elegant as everyone around them admired her.

He had her number on speed dial, so hit the button before he could change his mind.

"Hi, Eric!" she answered, her voice bright. She sounded pleased to hear from him, and the fact she'd not asked who was calling meant she'd saved his number to her phone, something that, albeit absurdly, pleased him. "How are you?"

"I'm missing you. Are you free?"

He heard her breath hitch. "No, not right now. I've got class to go to, but I can come over right after."

"How long?" He felt almost desperate in his need to see her, to feast on her like a fine meal, to savor her like an expensive wine.

"A couple of hours at most."

"Okay, great."

She hesitated. "Eric, I'm glad you phoned."

"Me too."

"I'll see you soon."

He hung up and left the gym to begin the walk home. He'd rather walk than get a cab. He normally would anyway, but his motivation for doing so was different today. Walking minimized the time he'd spend in the apartment on his own. He knew what he would do as soon as he walked through the door—he would start to analyze and overanalyze every single photograph in his collection, trying to figure out which ones were good enough to be seen and scrutinized by the public

eye. The art world could be a cruel scene, and if the critics didn't like what he'd done, they would tear him apart like a pack of wolves over a hare.

The fact this work was erotic didn't change anything. No matter how brilliant his work was, he always felt as though it wasn't good enough. He'd study the photographs for hours at a time, scrutinizing every single aspect—depth, composition, light, did he get the position exactly right, could he have done something differently? In the past, he'd repeated photo shoots over and over, wanting to capture precisely the right atmosphere, but he couldn't do that with Anya, could he? She said she knew who he was, but in truth she only knew the Eric portrayed by the media. She didn't understand what it was like to be inside his head.

He took a longer route home, wanting to fill his time before Anya arrived. He eventually reached his apartment, his legs aching after his time in the gym and his long walk, the lean muscles straining and taut beneath his skin. He would fuck Anya and then coax her into his bath, hot water and bubbles hopefully easing both his mind and body.

Inside his apartment, Eric forced himself to stay away from both his camera and computer, busying himself by making fresh coffee and flicking through the morning's mail.

The buzzer sounded, and his heart leapt. She was here. He buzzed her up and then went to his front door, opening it to wait for her. The doors to the elevator slid open, revealing her like some precious pearl inside a shell.

She walked toward him, a high flush in her creamy cheeks. "I've got a surprise for you," she said, catching him out. She gave him a smile he couldn't quite read, before brushing past him into the apartment.

He pushed the door shut behind her. "You do?"

"I hope you won't be mad."

"I couldn't be mad with you."

She lifted her eyebrows. "Are you sure about that?"

She crossed the room to his desk, bent over, and pulled her skirt up, revealing a tiny black thong. Something was nestled beneath the thin strip of lace, something silver and shiny. Something he recognized.

“Anya!”

She looked over her shoulder at him and wiggled her behind. “You’re not angry, are you? I mean, it’s not like I was stealing it. You said you’d never use the toys on another woman.”

“No, I ... I hadn’t even noticed it was missing.”

“I wanted to prepare for you.”

“For another shoot?”

“No, Eric. For you.”

“Oh ...” What she was saying finally sank in. He’d been too preoccupied with what was on his own mind. “Oh!”

“Why are you still standing there, staring at me? You’re starting to make me nervous.”

“Cause I’m a fucking idiot.”

He stepped toward her, closing the gap. The gorgeous, creamy curves of her bottom and the smooth length of her thighs met his hands first. The heat of her skin against his palms released something that had been wound tightly inside him ever since first thing that morning. He felt himself relax. This was what he had wanted, to lose himself in her, like she was his addiction and sex was the drug. And it seemed she wanted exactly the same thing.

His cock throbbed, what had already been a semi swelling with blood, becoming hard and thick inside his pants. He stroked her skin, cupping the solid weight of her ass. With one thumb, he hooked the panties to one side while the other trailed down, over the head of the plug. She let out a little moan as he made contact with the toy, and she stepped her feet farther apart. The movement sent the scent of her arousal floating up to his nostrils. He could see the sheen of her cream on the inside of her thighs, the dampness of her panties.

“I want you inside me,” she said twisting her neck to look back at him again. “I want your cock in my ass.”

His breathing grew labored, his mouth dry. His fingers moved lower, dipping into the warm, wet heat of her pussy. He knew she was already aroused, but in order to take him the way she wanted, she would need to be as relaxed as possible. He was a lot bigger than either the plug or his fingers.

Eric pushed two fingers inside her pussy, and her breathing quickened. Her inner muscles clamped around his digits, hot and wet. In a sudden rush of necessity, she lifted herself slightly and shoved away everything on the desk below her—pens, paper, a stapler, and calculator, the items clattering to the floor—so she could bend over farther, her breasts pressing against the desktop, her bottom protruding even more.

He used his free hand to snap open his belt and yank down his zipper, freeing his cock. Closing his hand around his erection, he inhaled deeply as he squeezed himself and began to move his hand up and down the hard length. Anya was like sex personified, bent over his desk with the plug in her ass, creaming over his fingers. He was lucky he hadn't come over her already.

“Eric, wait.” She turned her face to him, two bright spots of color high in her cheeks. He didn't want to wait, but then she said, “I want to taste you.”

He slipped his fingers from her, allowing her to turn around. Her blue eyes burned into his, her lips pink and full, and she dropped to her knees in front of him, the desk at her back. She clasped his erection in her hand to steady it. Her lips opened, her tongue sneaking out to lap at the head, licking the drop of pre-cum, making him stiffen and moan.

Keeping her gaze locked on his, her lips opened and she enveloped the head of his cock into her wet, heated mouth. The inside of her mouth felt smooth as silk, the back of her throat like heaven.

“Oh, God. That feels so good.”



His hand found her head, his fingers lacing in her soft locks. His balls throbbed, heavy and tight. Her pretty lips created suction around his dick, her tongue licking and dancing along his length as she bobbed back and forth. But he didn't want to come in her mouth, as much as he loved the idea of her swallowing his seed. No, she'd come here wanting something, and he intended to give it to her.

“Anya, you need to stop now. You're going to make me come.”

She let his cock slide from her lips, giving one final lick to the tip which made him shiver with desire. She pushed her hair from her face and got to her feet. Stepping into him, her arms slipped around his neck, and she kissed him long and hard, their lips meshing. He tasted the salt of his pre-cum on her tongue. His cock was squeezed between their bodies, and Eric realized Anya was still wearing all of her clothes. That needed to change.

Taking hold of both sides of her shirt, he yanked, causing buttons to pop and scatter over the floor. He'd ruined the shirt, but he'd buy her another one. He fell to the soft, pale skin of her throat, his mouth and tongue working their way across her skin with tiny bites and nibbles. She tasted fresh and fragrant, the slight citrus tang of her perfume against his palate. He moved down to her breasts, sucking one hardened nipple through the lace of her bra, scraping the nub with his teeth, and then repeating the motion to the next. Her chest heaved with her breathing, her fingers running through his hair.

“Now,” she said above him, her voice breathless. “I want you now.”

Wasting no more time, he lifted his head and stood straight, before he turned her around to face the desk. He placed his palm against her lower back, bending her over again. He lifted up her skirt, balancing it on her lower back so he exposed her round, creamy bottom. Hooking his fingers in the tiny slip of her panties, he slid them down her thighs and around her feet before letting her step out of them. He stood up again, the length of his erection bumping against the soft skin of her ass.

His fingers found the smooth head of the butt plug. He took hold of it and carefully pulled the toy from her body, placing it on the desk beside her.

“Lube,” she said, suddenly. “We need lube.”

“Shit.”

He’d thrown the tube in his desk drawer after their last session. Quickly, he kicked off his pants and shoes, and then, feeling ridiculous in just his shirt, stripped it off, too. Naked, his erection bobbing out in front of him, he moved around to the other side of the desk and pulled open the drawers, rummaging through until his fingers closed around the necessary item.

He moved back around to stand behind Anya where she was still positioned bent over the desk. “Ready?”

She nodded.

Eric squeezed cool gel onto his hand, massaging the silky liquid down the length of his cock, until his body began to heat it up. Then he applied some to Anya. Her asshole was widened from the plug, and he easily used his fingers to slip some of the gel inside. Being shy with the lube wasn’t an option when it came to riding her the back way.

Anya moaned and gasped as he massaged her, her fingers opening and closing in small fists, as if she needed something to grab hold of but didn’t know what. Eric removed his hand from her to close his fingers around his cock, and positioned himself at her asshole. “Breathe deeply, Anya, and relax. If you need me to stop, just say so.”

“Elephant, right,” she managed, turning her face to him, a smile dancing in the contorted expression of arousal that had taken over her features.

He returned the smile at the mention of their as-yet-unused safeword. “Yeah, elephant.”

He pushed gently but firmly in the center of her anus. The head of his cock swelled against her tight hole. At first he thought he was going to be too big, but then he slipped inside,

the tight ring of her sphincter gripping him. Anya moaned again.

He was panting now, “Is this all right?”

“Yes, Jesus! Keep going.”

The inside of her body was so tight and hot, like a heated fist gripping him. He nudged again, gently, slipping in a little farther.

“Oh, God,” Anya groaned.

He felt her press back on him, encouraging him. He applied more lube, greasing the way, and then pushed deeper. He was almost half way in now. Not wanting to go in any more than she could take, he began to pull out again, just an inch or two, to give him room to thrust. His hands gripped her bottom, one cheek in each palm, and he began to move inside her. With each thrust, he felt her widen for him, allowing him deeper. Anya was making small moans of pleasure, her body rocking with his movement. He increased his rhythm, the pleasure building in his balls, starting to take over his head. Would she want him to come in her ass? They should have discussed it beforehand.

“Anya, I’m going to come, should I ...”

She seemed to know what he was going to say. “No, I want you inside me. I’m close now, keep going.”

He reached beneath her body, his fingers finding the swollen nub of her clit, rubbing in the fast but gentle circles he knew she liked. The moment he made contact, her whole body tightened, and she pushed back on him harder, driving his cock deeper.

He pounded into her, his balls slapping against her pussy as he thrust. In the back of his mind, he wondered if he was hurting her, but even as her small cries turned to mewls of lust, he knew he wouldn’t be able to stop even if she wanted him to. He’d never been this wound up sexually, as if the need to come had taken over his mind and body, and he’d have to come whatever else happened. His orgasm built, higher and higher, his balls tingling and hot.

“Oh, fuck, Anya. I’m going to come.”

“I’m coming, I’m coming.”

Even as she said the words, her whole body tightened. He felt the pulse of her pussy contracting in her back passage, too, thrumming against his cock.

Eric shattered, his climax exploding through him. Her ass clamped around his cock as he came, spurting inside her in long, hot streams of cum.

He pulled Anya up against him and lowered his forehead to her shoulder, holding her tight as the final spasms of orgasm released them from its hold. His legs were weak, his head spinning from the intensity of what he’d just experienced. Had he ever fucked a woman like that before? He felt as though he’d emptied his power and strength into her, as though he’d shared with her the essence of who he was. He’d never before experienced such connection and oneness with another human being.

He grew soft and slipped from her body. Knowing they’d make a mess, he scooped her up in his arms and carried her to the bathroom.

She laughed, thumping his shoulder playfully. “Eric, I’m not a child.”

He kissed the top of her head. “I know you’re not, but I still want to take care of you.”

He deposited her gently on her feet, and reached into the shower and turned it on full. He removed the small amount of clothing she was wearing and pulled her beneath the spray. He’d thought he’d be exhausted, but being with Anya had given him renewed strength. He stood behind her, her back and bottom pressed against his chest and groin as the hot water ran down their bodies. But his sexual desire had been sated for the moment, at least. With care, he soaped her body, cleaning her intimately, washing away the residues he’d left on her skin.

“I only have men’s shampoo,” he said, holding up the bottle.

She smiled. "That's fine."

He tipped her head back slightly, the water running through her blonde locks, darkening the color. He squeezed some shampoo onto his hand and gently soaped her hair and rinsed it. She turned to him, taking the bottle to return the favor. Her small hands ran over him, stroking the soap over his body. This was different from the sexual frenzy they'd been in before. This was intimacy, the simple yet personal act of washing one another.

They rinsed off and stepped out of the shower, wrapping themselves in thick, cream towels that were warming on the radiator. They hurried across the apartment, toward his bed, and climbed beneath the covers.

Anya twisted in his arms to face him. "I never asked how your meeting went this morning."

"Well. It went well."

She laughed and playfully shoved his chest. "Come on. You can give me more than that. This friend of yours must have had something else to say."

"He thought the photographs were beautiful. He warned me that I may get some backlash from the press and the art world because of their nature."

"Because they're so sexy, you mean." She reached down and cupped his balls, but for once he didn't respond to her.

Why was he struggling to tell her? The nervous energy he'd put down to the anticipation of the change in his career grew stronger. Perhaps he misread his own emotions. Was he actually anxious over Anya's reaction?

"What's wrong?" she asked, removing her hand, worry tightening her lovely features.

"Nothing."

"Yes, there is." She squeezed his hand in reassurance, and his unease deepened. "Come on. You can tell me. Did your friend not like them, really?"

“No, he did.” If he was going to go through with the exhibition, he had to tell her. Letting her find out because she’d seen a poster at college or an article in a magazine would not do. It wouldn’t do at all. Still, he had to force the words from his mouth. “The friend I saw this morning is Logan Blanc, the owner of the Blanc Art Space.”

She smiled and nodded encouragingly. “I know it.”

“He loved the photographs so much he wants us to have an exhibition there. One night only.”

She stiffened in his arms. “But I thought none of the photographs would be sold.”

“They won’t be. This is purely an exhibition. People can look but not buy.”

“And when is this exhibition happening?”

He took a breath. “In ten days.”

She pulled away from him, shock written on her expression, her blue eyes wide, her face pale. “What? Ten days from now?” Something fluttered over her expression and a hand went to her mouth. “No, it can’t be. My parents are in town that weekend.”

“Can’t you put off seeing them for one night? I want you to be there.”

“It’s not that! What if they want to see the exhibition? What if they recognize me?”

“They won’t see the exhibition. I can make sure tickets are sold only to people in the art scene who we know.”

“You don’t understand. My parents are Trent and Saara Bergman.”

Eric felt as if she’d punched him in the gut. “The art critics?”

She nodded. “They’re who I got my love of art from.”

“But your name? Your surname isn’t Bergman?”

“I use my mother’s maiden name of Rhinne. I didn’t want people at school to think I was getting a special deal because of who my parents are.”

“Jesus.”

Her eyes widened. “My father is Catholic. If he gets any hint of what I’ve been doing, he’ll probably disown me.”

“Anya, why didn’t you tell me this before?”

“I didn’t want you to treat me different if you knew who my parents were.”

“As if it would have made any difference!”

“Wouldn’t it have? Really?”

He dug deep, trying to figure out his own emotions. Would he have been as open with her if he’d known? He’d like to think he could have been, but doing such things to Trent and Saara Bergman’s daughter, knowing he’d want the art world to see the photographs eventually ... would he have truly expressed his art in the way he’d wanted? He’d have been editing himself, knowing whose daughter he was photographing so intimately.

His chin dropped, his eyes closing briefly. “You should have told me,” he repeated.

“I know, and I’m sorry. I just wanted this so badly—wanted *you* so badly. I couldn’t bring myself to tell you, and I hoped you wouldn’t need to find out.” She took a breath. “It’s the reason I told you I didn’t want to be paid. I thought as long as you didn’t have to see my real surname because you weren’t writing a check or transferring money into an account, then you would never even need to think about who I was.”

He let this sink in. He felt as though he had the right to be angry—she had deliberately deceived him, but she was too important to him to lose over some stupid thing like a name. They needed to find their way past this.

Eric moved back slightly in the bed, so he could look directly into her face. “You’re going to have to tell your parents.”

Her eyes widened in fear. “No, I can’t do that! I told you, they will never speak to me again.”

“Then you should have thought of that before!”

“What about if you don’t use any of the pictures where you can see who I am? And then I just won’t go to the exhibition.”

“No, Anya. The photographs where we can see your face are the best images. Even Logan Blanc said so. He thought exactly what I did, about how you have this ethereal quality, while still looking so sexy.”

She looked horrified, withdrawing farther from him. “No, you can’t!”

“I have to use the photographs with your face in them, Anya. Can’t you see?” He reached out and touched her cheek, but she jerked away. “It’s your face that brings such an innocent quality to the photographs. Yes, they are erotic, but the photographs that show your face stand head and shoulders above the rest. You look like an angel.”

She sat up, swinging her legs off the side of the bed so she sat perched on the edge. “So what are you saying? That you’re going to go through with the exhibition, no matter what I say?”

“You must have realized other people would see the photographs, Anya.” He was starting to get angry now, his voice restrained but heated.

“Yes, but I hadn’t realized it was all going to be quite so ... public.”

“I’m a photographer, and photographers display their work. I promised you I wouldn’t sell the images, and I meant that. I have no intention of allowing your naked form to be hanging in some other man’s house for him to enjoy anytime he wants, but I do want my art to be appreciated.”

She stared at him, angry tears beginning to well in her eyes. “But my parents? They don’t even believe in sex before marriage.”



“What do you want me to do, Anya? Am I supposed to never show any of your pictures? Destroy them and hire a new model to do the work all over again?”

Her face paled at the mention of a new model. “You would replace me?”

His emotions were in a whirl. He was so confused right now. He was furious with her, yet he cared about her more than he wanted to admit. He hated how her innocent face was tightened to the point of looking as though she might shatter into a million pieces. He wanted to comfort her and tell her it would be all right, but at the same time a voice in his head yelled ‘all that work!’ If she wouldn’t allow him to show his photographs, then there was almost no point in all those hours he’d spent agonizing over them.

Maybe this was his fault. He should have been more specific in the contract, made her understand that, though he had no intention of selling the work, so no one else would have her beautiful face or body hanging on their walls, he always intended for the work to be seen. Perhaps then the implication of who her parents were would have stood more soundly in her mind.

What was the point in creating art if no one was allowed to admire its beauty?

“What else am I supposed to do, Anya? Please, tell me. I don’t want to hire anyone else, but you can’t expect me to give up my work for you.”

She stared at him, her lips pressed tight together, the tears in her eyes trembling. “Fine,” she finally managed. “Hire someone else. Fuck her, too, if that’s what you want. See if I care.”

With that, she climbed from his bed, clutching the sheet to her chest, and ran from the room. She grabbed her discarded clothes as she went, pulling the items on. The buttons on her shirt had popped off when he’d torn the shirt from her body, so she had to clutch it together to cover her breasts. Without another word, she headed to his front door, not even looking at him, her face white with anger.

He opened his mouth to call her back and then closed it again. What could he say? He lifted a hand, gripping it in his hair. “Fuck,” he hissed. Then louder, “Fuck, fuck, *fuck!*”

He didn’t want to lose her, but he was stuck.

Did he have to choose between the work he loved and the woman he was quickly falling for?

## Chapter Twelve

### Anya

Anya ran from Eric's apartment, clutching her clothes around her, tears streaming down her face.

How stupid she'd been. She didn't know how she'd thought she'd get away with hiding who she really was from Eric. She'd just wanted to be with him so badly, she'd lied to herself as well, about the chances of him finding out the truth. She might have been able to hide the secret for longer had he not thrown the news of the exhibition at her, but the minute he'd told her about it, and she'd realized it was the same weekend her parents were in town, she'd had no choice but to come clean.

She gave a choked sigh and shook her head. Of course her parents would have found out eventually anyway. Eric Rutherford was famous in the art world. This change of direction would be talked about in every circle, and her parents would be right at the helm of several of them.

What had she thought would happen? That he'd fall in love with her so completely, he'd be too jealous of the idea of other men seeing the photographs that he'd never show them to another person? She'd been stupid and naive. He was Eric Rutherford, a man known to be obsessed with his art. What did she think was so special about her that he would give that up?

Afternoon was fading to evening, and she couldn't walk back to campus like this.

She glanced behind her, hoping to see Eric coming after her, but the street was empty of anyone but strangers.

He wasn't coming, and she could only blame herself for that. She'd lied to him and put him in a terrible position. She didn't deserve to have him chasing after her.

Luckily, she'd managed to grab her purse on the way out, and she had just enough cash to be able to grab a cab. She looked a mess, with her makeup smeared from her tears and her clothes torn. Clutching her shirt together with one hand, she used the other to try to flag down any passing cabs. The first couple of vehicles drove right past, probably thinking she was trouble and wouldn't have any money, but the third stopped.

"Oh, thank you so much," she said, pulling open the back door and sliding onto the seat.

The driver looked back at her. "You're not going to run on me, are you?"

Anya delved into her purse and pulled out some cash. "No, I have money. I can pay in advance, if you need."

He shook his head. "Nah. Where you headed?"

She told him.

The driver looked her up and down and frowned slightly. "You okay, miss?"

"Yeah, I'm fine."

"You haven't been attacked or something?"

She gave a forced laugh. "Oh, no, nothing like that. I had a fight with my boyfriend. I'm fine, honestly."

"I've got a daughter not much younger than you. If she had a boyfriend who left her in the state you're in right now, I'd be telling her to get rid of him, shortly before I paid him a visit myself."

"I'm fine, I promise. It isn't how it looks."

The man gave a 'humph,' but turned back to the front and pulled the car back out into traffic.

It did look bad, her with her torn shirt and tear-stained face. She thought her own father would act in a very similar

way once he found out the news.

After a drive across the city, the cab pulled up in the campus parking lot, and Anya paid the driver and climbed out. She needed to get to her room before anyone saw her, but now was the time when people were just starting to go out for the evening, not go home.

Clutching her shirt even more tightly around her chest, and holding her purse against her torso to try to hide the gaps, she put her head down and walked as quickly as she could without breaking into a run, toward her dorm.

“Hey, Anya!”

Her heart dropped, but she didn’t lift her head at the call. She recognized the voice all too well. Of all the people to see her, it would have to be him.

“Hey, don’t ignore me.” Gavin’s voice was closer now. She lifted her head slightly focusing on the building that housed her room. She just needed to get inside and then she could slam the door on him.

“I’m being serious, Anya. Look at the fucking state of you. What are you up to these days? Are you hooking, or something?”

The word shocked her into stillness and she twisted her face to him. “No, I am most certainly not! How dare you!”

“Really?” A smug smile spread across his face. “I think I’m going to ask some questions around campus. I’m sure someone will know something.”

Angry tears filled her eyes. If Gavin started spreading rumors that she was prostituting herself, her reputation would be ruined.

# Chapter Thirteen

## Eric

Though Eric had tried to stop himself going after her, he'd only managed a matter of ten minutes before he'd given in. He'd run out onto the street, but not seen her anywhere. He had a Lexus he rarely used, kept in the parking garage beneath his building, and so he took the car to try to catch up with her.

He hoped Anya was all right. She'd been pretty upset when she'd left. He hoped she'd have money for a cab, and wouldn't be attempting to walk home. It was already getting dark, and she shouldn't be walking the streets when she was so upset, and with her clothes torn. She would be asking for trouble.

Their fight had his stomach in knots. Could he have an exhibition without her blessing, or bring himself to cancel and keep his work to himself? Either option didn't seem like an option at all.

How was this going to be reconcilable? He felt mad at her for not telling him about her parents, but at the same time he was glad she hadn't. If she'd told him, they would never have created the images they had, and he couldn't go back on his work. Ever.

But a voice in his head spoke up. *Even if it means losing her?*

He sighed. That, he didn't know.

Something else occurred to him. Despite the heavy workout, the long walk, and then the fuck with Anya followed by their fight, he'd completely forgotten to eat. *Shit*. He'd not eaten all day. He had to be careful. It was too easy to slip back

into bad habits, and forgetting to eat, sometimes for days at a time when he was working on an all encompassing project, was one of them.

He drove slowly along the route to Anya's college, knowing she was staying in one of the dorms on campus. He kept his head twisted to watch the sidewalk, his eyes locking onto any small, blonde women walking down the street. None of them were Anya.

Perhaps she had caught a cab? He hoped so. He didn't like to worry about her, and right now all he could do was think about her, the argument they'd had sitting like lead in his heart.

He reached the campus and pulled up outside. There were no parking spots, so he double parked, figuring he wouldn't be too long. He couldn't go walking into her dorm, but he could slip one of the other female students some money in order for them to go and find out if Anya had made it home safely. Of course, she might lie to get him off her back, but at least he'd feel like he'd done his best.

He climbed out of the car and froze, his heart hammering.

Anya was standing with someone, a guy, on the path in front of the main college building. *Who the hell is that?* He couldn't tell for sure at this distance, but they appeared to be arguing. Anya held her shirt together between her breasts with one hand, while she gestured with the other. The young man stood with his hands on his hips, shaking his head.

A pang of guilt for upsetting her so much she'd felt the necessity to run home half-dressed wracked through him.

Damn it. That was his fault. She deserved to be treated like a princess, not a whore.

Still, the sight of her standing, half-dressed, with another man, made his blood boil. Without thinking about what he planned to do when he got there, Eric marched across the grass toward Anya. The person she argued with was a stocky man in his early twenties. He had the punch-drunk look of someone who liked to play sports and get in fights, completely the

opposite of the type of person Eric had been at college. As he got closer he could tell the man was saying something to Anya, his mouth curled in a sneer of disgust. Anya's nose was wrinkled in her own display of loathing, and she glanced away and shook her head, obviously disagreeing with whatever was being said. The man reached out and tried to tug at the hand Anya was holding her shirt together with. She slapped his hand away with her other hand, but he didn't take any notice. Instead, he laughed and moved closer. Anya stepped back and stumbled, falling over her own feet, to land on her backside on the ground. Automatically, she put down both hands to break her fall, and her shirt fell open, exposing her bra.

The young man laughed.

Fury burst inside of Eric, a red haze descending over his vision. Before he could control himself, he'd broken into a run, pushing past other students, some of whom had noticed what was going on and stood, staring, talking behind their hands and giggling. Eric didn't have a moment to take in the yells of annoyance as he shoved past them to get to Anya.

He stormed in front of the man and swung his fist, catching him on the jaw.

His punch knocked the guy's head back.

The stocky man clutched his jaw in surprise, staring at Eric. "What the hell?"

"Don't you ever lay a finger on her again, do you hear me?"

"Fuck you, man! Who the fuck are you?"

"I mean it, don't you ever even look in her direction again."

He turned to help Anya from the ground. She was staring at him as though seeing a figment of her imagination. He held his hand out to her, but before she had the chance to take it, something collided with his back. Anya only just managed to roll out of the way before Eric hit the ground, his chest slamming against the concrete, the breath exploding from his lungs. He forced himself to move, twisting around moments



before the young man straddled his chest, taking swings at him.

A fist smacked Eric in the mouth. Pain exploded in his lip, and he tasted the iron tang of blood. Before he could retaliate, the guy swung again and this time connected with Eric's nose. Fresh pain bloomed behind his eyes, spreading out to encompass his whole face. Eric roared in anger and placed two hands against the other man's barrel chest, shoving with every ounce of strength he had, pushing him off. Anya's attacker fell to one side, and in an instant, Eric was on top of him, repaying the blows. His fist connected with his cheekbone, pain bursting up through his knuckles, but he was too furious to care. The other man might have been ten years younger than Eric, but Eric was taller by six inches, and had the advantage of years of regular gym trips.

Hands were pulling on his shoulders, then her voice broke through his anger.

"Eric, stop it! Get off him!"

He felt as though a fog were clearing, and he looked down to see the boy's eyes rolling in his head. Blood dribbled from his nose and the corner of his mouth. Small hands tugged on his shoulders again.

"Eric, please." Anya's voice, full of pleading and desperation.

Eric lifted a hand and wiped his face. More blood—his own this time—smears across his palm. Slowly, in a daze and shaking from the adrenaline, he climbed off Anya's attacker.

A small group of students had surrounded the fight, all watching with a mixture of dismay and morbid delight. Someone stepped from the crowd, another male student.

He lifted a hand and pointed at Eric. "Hey, man. Don't I know you?"

Eric suddenly remembered himself. He'd lectured here. People would recognize him. Quickly, he turned to Anya, ducking his head. She seemed to understand his reaction, and she grabbed his elbow, ushering him away from the group, and

from where the young man was groaning and starting to push himself to sitting.

“He’ll be fine,” Anya said, hustling him back across the grass toward the parking lot. “You need to get out of here.”

“I have a car.” He pointed to where he was parked. “The black Lexus over there. Who was that guy?”

“Gavin Hollis. He thinks he’s some big deal around here.”

“Does he make a habit of hassling you?”

Anya shrugged. “Now and then. He doesn’t like that I don’t date any college guys. He takes it as a personal insult and ... I don’t know ... some sort of challenge.”

“Asshole.”

“You got that right.”

He realized she’d managed to maneuver him back to his car. The collective eyes of the students were following their every movement. Gavin Hollis was on his feet now, his friends gathered around him, one nodding seriously at something he’d said, another pointing in Eric’s direction.

Anya gave him a little push on the shoulder. “Go on. Get out of here before someone calls the cops on you.”

Eric frowned. “But he was practically assaulting you!”

“No, he wasn’t. He was just being a jackass—something I’m perfectly capable of handling by myself.” It was her turn to frown. “What the hell are you playing at anyway, Eric? You are a grown man. You can’t go around beating up college kids.”

“I saw how he was grabbing at you,” Eric growled.

“But what are you even doing here?” Something dawned on her, a realization in her face. “Are you following me?”

“No! Not following you. I just needed to know you would be okay. You’re too precious to me to ...”

“To what? To have a life outside of you and your studio?”

He hung his head in shame. "I was going to say, to have you getting hurt."

"He wasn't the one who hurt me," she said, and he tried not to recoil at her words. Anya gave a sigh. "Plus, I deal with assholes like Gavin every day. I don't need you defending me. Now get in the car and drive away before the cops arrive and you find yourself being prosecuted."

She started to open the driver's door for him, but he slammed it shut. "I'm not going anywhere without you."

"Don't be an idiot. I need to go back to my dorm and change before someone accuses me of soliciting."

"Get in the car with me, and we'll go straight to the store, and I will buy you more clothes."

She rolled her eyes. "I don't need you buying more clothes for me, Eric. I have plenty of decent ones a few hundred yards away in my room."

"I have the money," he growled. "I can afford it."

"I don't care." She sighed. "Look, drive around the block, get out of here. I'll go and get changed and then meet you one block south of here, okay? Then we'll talk."

He didn't want to leave her alone again, especially not with all of Gavin Hollis's friends hanging about and her with her shirt still torn, but it wasn't as if he could bundle her into his car and drive off with her. That would make him no better than idiots like Gavin.

"Okay," he relented. "But we do need to talk."

She gave him a grim nod before turning and walking at a brisk pace back across campus. He sat and watched her go, noting how people glanced her way as she walked, but no one stopped her to ask if she was all right. He waited until he'd seen her disappear into a building, before he started the car and pulled away from the curb.

As Anya had instructed, he found a parking space a block south and pulled up, waiting for her. His face throbbed, as did the knuckles of his right hand, which were already swollen and

flowering in purple and green bruises. He reached out and twisted the rear view mirror to get a better look at his face. Another bruise was blooming across his jaw, and the bridge of his nose was swollen, dark marks of a couple of shiners below both eyes. Blood had crusted and darkened beneath his nostril and in the corner of his mouth.

He hoped no one who had witnessed the fight placed him as the art lecturer who sometimes came in to teach. That would be the end of that job—not that he needed the money, but he enjoyed teaching. He hated the idea his name would be blighted with the news he had beaten up a student. What if the media got hold of it? He cringed at himself. What had come over him?

The passenger door opening startled him from his thoughts. Anya slipped into the seat, wearing a fresh pair of jeans and a sweater, her blonde hair tied up and away from her face.

She opened her mouth to speak, but he interrupted her. “I don’t want to talk about the fight, Anya. I shouldn’t have hit a student, but I won’t apologize for defending you. If the same thing happened again, I would still step in. And it wasn’t as if I followed you in a stalker way, either. I was worried that you hadn’t gotten home safely, and as far as I’m concerned, witnessing what I did meant my instincts were right.”

She looked down at her hands in her lap. “I guess that’s another thing we’ll have to agree to disagree about.”

“We still need to figure out what we’re going to do about the exhibition.”

She lifted her eyes to his, liquid blue he could fall into and drown. “I’ve said everything I mean to about that matter.”

“Wait one minute. Will you come and meet Logan Blanc? I want you to hear from someone else about how perfect your pictures are, how they’re nothing to be ashamed of, and how the ones with your face in them are so much more intense than the others.”

“You’re trying to change my mind?”

He shrugged. “You can’t blame me, Anya. This is important to me.”

“I don’t want my mind changing.”

“You said you would do anything for art.”

“Don’t try to manipulate me.”

“I’m not. I’m just repeating what you said.”

She sighed, deep and filled with pain. “I guess I should have thought this through.”

“Okay, so you admit that much. If you care about my art, if you care about me, please give me this one thing and come with me to meet Logan.”

“What if Logan can’t change my mind?”

“Then I guess I will have to do the exhibition with none of the photographs of your face. But you realize doing so may ruin my career. People—critics—may not understand what I am trying to achieve in our photographs, because they won’t be shown the full collection.”

Anya bit her lower lip, and he realized she was trying not to cry. She gave a sniff. “I’m sorry, Eric. I never meant to put you in this position.”

He leaned into her, reached out to slip his hand around the back of her neck, his fingers lacing in her hair at the nape. He tightened his grip slightly, forcing her to lift her face up to him. “Just come with me to meet Logan.”

“Okay,” she relented. “Okay.”

His whole body sagged with relief. He’d not won the war yet, but felt he’d at least won the battle. But his relief came with a deep sense of remorse. He couldn’t stand to see her so sad, especially knowing he was at the root of the cause. He released her hair, his hand dropping into his lap.

“I don’t want to lose you, Anya. We work too well together to let this come between us. We need to figure this out.”

She looked at him, her eyes glistening. “That’s what worries me, Eric. That you only want me because of my photographs.”

Unable to stop himself from touching her, he reached out and brushed her cheek, her skin soft and smooth against his knuckles. “We are art, Anya. We can’t escape that. And we shouldn’t try to stop it either.”

She looked at him, almost pleading. “I want to be more than just your model.”

“You are. You’re everything to me.”

He just hoped Logan could convince her.

## Chapter Fourteen

### Anya

**Nerves roiled in her stomach** as she smoothed down the skirt of her dress. Anya straightened in front of the full length mirror and quickly checked how her figure looked in the silky, red material. She turned around and twisted her neck, making sure the clingy fabric didn't make her backside appear to be the size of a bus. No, she'd get away with it. Her round behind would never be mistaken for being on the small size, but the dress cut in nicely at her waist, making her a perfect hourglass.

She turned to face the mirror again and took a deep breath, letting the air back out slowly through her nose. She was due to meet Eric and his friend, Logan Blanc, at a bar downtown in less than half an hour. She was nervous, not only because of the tension that still existed between her and Eric, but also because she was meeting Logan for the first time.

Logan Blanc was infamous in the city. With his surfer-dude, blond good looks, and coming from old money, as well as running a successful gallery himself, he was regularly photographed with some tall, skinny model on his arm, featured as one of New York's eligible bachelors. Anya knew she wasn't his type—not that it mattered, of course. While she and Eric might not officially be a couple and had some problems of their own, she only had eyes for him. The problem was that Logan had seen her photographs—explicit pictures of her breasts, pussy, and asshole, sometimes penetrated by plugs, her own fingers, or bound by rope or cuffs. She'd never exposed herself to a man in that way before, and certainly never allowed someone to take photographs. The idea that a man she'd never met had also seen them, and she

was about to meet him for a drink and have him try to convince her to use them publically, made her lightheaded and nauseated.

Despite this, she tried to control her nerves. She was doing this for Eric.

The door of her dorm room swung open, and the dark-haired head of her roommate popped through.

Anya paused in checking herself out. “What are you doing?” she said to what appeared to be a floating head.

Nadine grinned. “Just checking you weren’t hiding any mysterious strangers in here.”

“Well, if I am, I’m doing a damn good job of hiding them.”

Nadine stepped fully into the room and looked around. “Looks like all’s clear.” Then she caught sight of Anya’s dress and let out a low wolf-whistle. “There might not be any guys in here, but I’m going to assume someone is getting lucky tonight. Hot date?”

“Kinda. More like a business meeting, actually.”

“Anya, sweetie. You’re not turning tricks, are you?”

“Nadine! I can’t believe you’d even say that!” Her stomach dropped at the thought that Gavin might have started to spread that rumor, despite Eric’s threat.

She burst out laughing. “I’m kidding! But seriously, what’s going on with you? Is it the same guy, the one who punched Jackass Gavin?”

She shrugged. “Yeah, him and a friend. But it’s to do with my career, I promise.” It was only a partial lie.

“*Two* hot guys? Can I come?”

Anya laughed and threw a tube of mascara at her friend. Nadine dodged easily out of the way. “I told you, this is work.”

“Well, you look stunning, Anya. You’ll blow them away.”

Anya smiled. “Thanks, doll.”



She gave her blonde hair a final fluff to create body, and leaned forward to check her makeup one last time. Satisfied she was looking her best, she picked up her purse from the dresser. “Okay, I’m off.” She headed toward the door.

“Have fun!” her roommate called after her. “Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do!”

Knowing Nadine, she did pretty much anything, so that would be a hard challenge to match.

*Has she ever had a guy photograph her wearing a butt-plug and then want to put it on public display? She didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. She didn’t think even Nadine could top that one.*

She headed off campus, thankful for the lightweight trench coat she had belted at the waist. She didn’t want to attract any more attention to herself from the wrong people. It was strange how she was trying to hide away on campus, while she might be so exposed to the rest of the city in a little over a week.

*If I agree to the exhibition, of course.*

She could still refuse to have her face in the portraits, at least.

*But then Eric’s career may suffer. Could you really be that selfish?*

*And it could ruin your relationship with your family, she told herself, feeling like an angel and a devil were sitting on each shoulder, speaking in her ear. Is Eric selfish enough to allow you to do that?*

His work meant everything to him, he’d said so a number of times. Would he sacrifice her relationship with her parents for it? She guessed so. But the real question was, would he sacrifice *their* relationship for his work? If he went ahead and exposed the portraits of her face without her permission, surely their relationship would be over?

*But he has your permission, she told herself. You gave it to him when you signed the contract.*

She sighed and headed onto the main road and flagged down a cab. She climbed in the back and gave the driver the address of the bar where she was meeting the men. Eric had offered to come and pick her up, but she hadn't wanted him or his car anywhere near the university. If someone recognized him after the incident with Gavin Hollis and reported him, he could end up with battery charges. She thought only Gavin's male pride had prevented him reporting the fight in the first place. She'd caught sight of Gavin from afar that morning, noting the boy's swollen, bruised face. She ducked away, quickly, desperate not to be seen. The whole day she'd been trying not to be seen.

Lost in thought, she'd barely noticed the drive through the city. Only the driver leaning back to ask for his fare made her realize he'd pulled up alongside the curb outside the bar. She paid him and climbed from the cab, the nerves returning. Through the big glass windows, she could see people standing in groups or sitting at tables, nursing expensive bottles of beer or large glasses of wine. It was past seven now, so most of the office workers had finished for the day and were rounding the working day off with a cold beverage or two. She wished she'd asked Eric to pick her up now. At least she wouldn't have to walk into the bar alone.

She pushed open the door, making way for a young couple, their arms around each other, as they were on their way out. Feeling awkward, she glanced around the bar, trying to spot Eric. For a moment, she thought he'd not arrived yet, but then her eyes locked with his dark stare. Her heart faltered, but a smile broke across his face. He was sitting at a small round table in the corner, already with a beer on the surface in front of him, and he started to get to his feet. Sitting opposite, and still with his back to her, was a blond head of jaw length waves, surfer messy, as if he'd just spent the day on the beach. His shoulders were broad beneath a white t-shirt. He noticed Eric getting to his feet and twisted in his chair. Aqua-green eyes met with hers, his mouth breaking into a smile to reveal a set of perfect white teeth. He had a slight cleft in his clean shaven chin, which gave him a boyish charm.

Anya's heart immediately stepped up a notch, her breath catching in her chest. There was no mistaking Logan Blanc.

She flashed back a small smile as she approached and then turned her attention back to Eric. He'd made his way around the table to greet her.

"Hey." He slipped his arm around her waist and kissed her full on the mouth. Was that some kind of claim he'd made on her, perhaps knowing the effect seeing Logan had had on her? Not that she minded, of course. She was pleased Eric had kissed her in public. "I'm so glad you're here. I was worried you'd change your mind."

She flushed. "No, of course not. I told you I'd come."

"I got you a drink. Pinot Grigio, I hope that's okay."

"Perfect, thank you."

Logan stood and held out his hand to her.

Suddenly shy, she reached out and shook it. His palm was large, dwarfing hers, his grip warm and strong. A tingle went through her whole body as their skin made contact. She tried not to show her reaction.

"Logan Blanc," he introduced himself.

"Anya Rhinne."

He smiled. "I know who you are."

She smiled back, her confidence returning. "And I know who you are."

"Well, since we all know who each other is," said Eric, laughter behind his voice, "how about we sit down and enjoy our drinks?"

There was a shuffle as they took their seats, Anya positioned between Eric and Logan. She was so aware of the presence of both men, and the position of their thighs beneath the table, where their forearms rested in proximity to hers.

*Both these men have seen my pussy.*

She picked up her wine and took a sip, trying to distract herself from the illicit thoughts running through her head.

Logan sat back in his chair. “So, Eric filled me in on the ... problem the two of you are having about the exhibition.”

She was embarrassed. She didn’t want to appear like a little girl, worried about what her parents might think, but she couldn’t help that was exactly how she felt. The heat in her already pink cheeks deepened. She hoped the men would assume the flush had been caused by the wine.

“It’s a difficult situation,” she said. “I understand that. And I’m to blame for hiding who my parents are.”

“The critics, Trent and Saara Bergman, right?” Logan asked, looking between her and Eric for confirmation.

“That’s right.”

“Your parents are art critics, though. Surely they’re able to view art objectively?”

“Normally, I would say yes. But I’m their only daughter, and they’ve always been overprotective of me, and my father in particular is a strict Catholic. As I told Eric, they don’t even think I would have sex before marriage, never mind let someone photograph me—” She almost said, ‘with a plug in my ass,’ but then remembered where she was and switched to, “like that.”

“But Anya,” said Eric, “you’re not having sex in those photographs. I’m not saying I wouldn’t like to photograph you being penetrated by a cock—”

Her pussy tightened, sending a pleasurable coiling at her core at his words.

“But for the moment, we haven’t. And I wouldn’t do so without you first agreeing to it, of course.”

She hated the possibility that he might find someone else if she didn’t agree to what he wanted. But she had to stay true to herself. Yes, she would regret losing him, would possibly regret it for the rest of her life, but she would regret doing something she was ashamed of even more.

Logan sat forward, leaning across the table and closing the distance between them. “Anya, I’ve seen your photographs, and they’re art. They’re not pornographic, if that’s what you’re worried about.”

She shook her head. “No, I know they’re not. I know Eric would only ever produce tasteful work.”

“So what *are* you so worried about?”

She sighed. “I don’t know. Letting my parents down. Making them embarrassed of me.”

“Isn’t it better that you’re upfront with them? Even if Eric decides to only use the photographs that don’t show your face—which, by the way, I think would be a huge mistake, as the images with your face really captured what the whole series is about—they might still recognize you.”

Anya barked a laugh. “Seriously? You have seen the photographs, right?”

He shrugged and leaned back again, crossing one leg, so his ankle rested on his thigh. He picked up his beer and took a swig, before placing it back on the table. “No one knows a child better than their parent. It could be a particular mole they recognize, or a birthmark, or something as simple as your hands.”

*Damn it. He was right.*

She took a sip of her own drink, buying herself time, and assessed both men.

Eric was all serious and intense dark good looks, Logan was the opposite. Charm and self-assurance radiated from him, as though he had a halo surrounding him that you could feel but not see. The pictures in the magazines had not done him justice. While they had captured his appearance, they hadn’t caught his easy smile and confident manner. He was the sort of man people naturally wanted to be around.

She caught Eric watching her, one eyebrow raised. Her cheeks heated, and she quickly looked away. She didn’t want Eric to think she was checking out another man. It wasn’t like that. But Eric gave a knowing smile. She guessed he was used

to Logan having this effect on women—and probably men, too—and he didn't seem jealous. She hoped Eric understood that it was possible to be physically attracted to someone without actually wanting to do anything about it.

“And what about your own career?” Logan continued, assessing her with those aqua blue eyes. “Eric tells me you're studying fine art.”

“Yes, that's right.”

“It's fairly common for models to become professional photographers themselves. If they've got a natural instinct about how to move in front of a camera, what's going to translate well to the image, then they're often able to create the same instinct on the other end of the camera as well.”

“And you do have that instinct, Anya,” Eric added softly.

“I'm hardly a traditional model!”

“That doesn't matter. It's as much about who you are—your talent—as your height or waist measurement.”

“The point I'm trying to make,” said Logan, “is that if you're not honest with your parents now, how long are you planning on censoring yourself for them? What if you decide this is a path you want to follow in the long term? How long would you lie to them before they accidentally find out, or else you decide to tell them the truth anyway?”

She glanced down at her glass, staring into the pale liquid. She didn't want to admit it, but he was right about this, too. She'd never imagined herself working with erotic art before, but she couldn't deny that she loved it. Naturally, having Eric involved was an added incentive, but the idea of being on the other side of the camera gave her a thrill, too. What better way to spend your life than photographing beautiful men and women in erotic situations? Just the thought got her squirming in her seat, her pulse picking up a notch, her breath quickening. Since she'd been involved with Eric's project, she'd felt herself grow as a person. She'd always been so self-conscious before. Her confidence had skyrocketed. Yes, Eric certainly had something to do with that. After all, the incentive

to act more confidently had been to get the job as his model. As people said, 'fake it till you make it.' And while she didn't think she was anywhere near making it yet, she definitely felt more like a grown, confident, sexual woman than she had a week ago. Just imagine what a couple of years creating this kind of art could do.

Aware of both men's eyes on her, she inhaled through her nose, centering herself, and then looked up. "Do I have to make my decision now?"

Eric and Logan exchanged a glance.

Eric shook his head. "Not right now, but we do need your decision soon."

"We've only got a matter of days until the exhibition," said Logan, "and every day counts as far as getting the word out."

She nodded. "I understand."

Eric leaned forward, his dark eyes earnest. "I don't want this to stop our sessions, Anya. I've missed photographing you."

She gave a sad smile. "I've missed it, too. I don't want to stop either, and I have to admit that Logan has made some valid points about my future career. I have a lot to think about."

"We could always do some shots just for fun," he suggested.

"Well, if you're ever looking for that male counterpart," said Logan, "you can count me in."

Her eyes darted to him, and then back to Eric. Was he serious?

But the smug smirk she'd expected to see on Logan's face didn't exist. He was as nonchalant as if he'd just suggested they get take out together. How was Eric taking his suggestion? She'd expect any other man to leap across the table and slug Logan in the face for suggesting he be the erection in erotic photographs with her, but Eric just gave a slight nod.

“Thanks, Logan. Obviously Anya would need to agree to that, too, but it would make a fantastic shoot.”

She gulped and resisted the urge to fan herself. Was it getting hot in here? To hide her embarrassment and the fact she was more than slightly turned on, she picked up her glass and took a large gulp. The wine caught in her throat, and she coughed, spraying some of it out before she managed to get a hand over her mouth. She ended up half choking as she stood from the table, and pointed randomly at what she hoped was the ladies’ room. She tried to ignore the matching expressions of bemusement from both men as she staggered from the table.

Anya managed to cough and choke her way into the bathroom where she stopped in front of the bank of sinks and tried to compose herself. She dropped her head, staring at the bowl of the sink. Had Logan seriously just offered to be her male model while Eric took photographs?

She couldn’t stop the thrill of excitement racing through her. To have Logan Blanc’s naked body pressed against hers while Eric watched, to perhaps feel his fingers against her clit, maybe even his cock pressed against her back, his lips on her skin. She wanted to do it more than anything anyone had offered her before.

But what about Eric? Was he really not jealous in any way about the introduction of another man into their shoots? She couldn’t even imagine how she’d feel if he asked her to photograph him with another woman ... actually, yes, she could. She’d be screaming and smashing up things, while sobbing her heart out, and possibly clawing the other woman’s face. Psycho, perhaps? But wasn’t that the sort of reaction most people would have? She couldn’t help but worry if Eric’s lack of reaction was simply because he didn’t care about her. The thing that had always worried her plagued her once again.

Did Eric see her only as his model? Was she no more than a prop to him?

She bit down on her emotions.

After all, didn’t the idea of Logan’s hands and mouth against her body make her hot? Surely that gave her no right to



judge Eric, then?

Her teeth dug into her lower lip. God, why did this have to be so damn complicated?

Anya washed her hands and patted a little cold water on her cheeks and forehead, careful not to ruin her makeup. She forced a calm smile onto her face, and practiced appearing cool and serene for a moment. Her heart had regained its normal pace, though being away from the company of Eric and Logan had helped that. As long as they didn't start discussing erotic positions, she would be fine.

She left the bathroom and walked back out into the bar. Logan and Eric were finishing up their drinks, chatting together and laughing easily, as if the last conversation had never happened.

Eric turned to her as she approached. "Are you ready to go home yet, Anya?"

Did he mean her home, or his? "Umm, I guess so."

His eyes were focused on her intently. "I'm not talking about your dorm."

She couldn't help the grin that flashed on her face. "Oh, right. Then yes, I am."

Perhaps she shouldn't be going home with him. After all, she had a lot of thinking to do about what she was going to tell her parents—if she was going to tell them at all—and she knew being with Eric would only cloud her judgment.

*You've already decided, haven't you?*

Had she? Was she really going to tell her parents she'd been modeling for Eric Rutherford?

Anya reached out and lifted her glass from the table, taking a final sip before leaving the rest. Eric placed a protective hand at the base of her spine as they walked from the bar, Logan leading the way. She was more than aware of all the curious and jealous glances she received as they made their way through the crowded bar. A few people whispered behind their hands and nodded in their direction. She doubted many

would recognize Eric—he was more of a recluse—but plenty of people, especially women, knew exactly who Logan Blanc was.

They walked out into the cool evening air. Anya pulled her coat tighter around her body.

Logan stepped toward her and leaned in, placing a kiss against her cheek. The waft of his aftershave filled her senses, and the smoothness of his skin pressed, cheek to cheek. A fire raced though her at his contact, making every nerve ending zing. Did he linger a moment longer than necessary? She thought so, but perhaps she was imagining things.

“It was lovely to meet you, Anya. You are everything Eric described and more.”

She blushed, the heat that had been coursing through her seeming to settle in her cheeks and between her thighs. “You, too, Logan.”

“I hope you’ll make the right decision. Even if things are hard with your parents initially, I’m sure things will calm down. And Eric and I are here to support you.”

*You are?*

“Thanks,” she said, unsure what else she could say.

He turned to Eric and stuck out a hand. “Let me know as soon as you can. We’ve got plenty of things to organize, assuming this all goes ahead.”

Anya tried not to feel pressured by his words, and failed.

Eric shook the offered hand. “And I’ll keep in mind your modeling offer,” he said. And Anya did her best not to melt into a puddle and drain through the cracks of the sidewalk.

Eric slipped his hand into hers, and they stood together as Logan gave them a final half-wave and sauntered off down the street.

When he was out of view, Eric turned to her, pulled her against him, and kissed her full on the mouth. His arms wrapped around her lower back, his hands fitting into the cleft above her buttocks, to press her hips against him. The

sensation caused the already building heat in her loins to pulsate through her, and she had to stifle a moan, remembering where she was. His tongue danced around her mouth, claiming her attention. Her hands found their way around his back, tracing the muscles running along either side of his spine beneath the soft cotton of his shirt.

Eric broke this kiss, but kept his proximity to her, so their mouths were only a whisper apart. “I’ve wanted to do that all evening,” he growled, his breath hot against her lips.

She smiled and gave him a squeeze. “And I’ve wanted you to do it. Now you’d better get me back to your place before I drag you down an alley again.”

He lowered his mouth even farther and kissed her neck, sending goose bumps shivering down her skin. “It’s crazy how just being near you makes me want you.”

“Then stop talking and get me out of here.”

She could sense his reluctance as he released his hands from her ass and stepped back, allowing space between them. He turned to face the road and quickly waved down a cab. She smiled. In New York, he was able to hail a cab within a minute. How often did that happen? Like Logan, Eric had an aura people couldn’t ignore.

They slipped into the back, Anya going first, quickly followed by Eric’s lean body. He gave the driver the address and then settled in, his arm slung around the back of the seat, behind Anya’s head.

The cab driver pulled into the traffic.

Eric edged closer and nuzzled her neck, making her squirm. His mouth pressed against the lobe of her ear, and he spoke so gently she wondered if she’d misheard him. “I can’t wait until we get to my place.”

She turned to him. “Wh—” she started to say, but he silenced her with another kiss, his teeth gently finding her lower lip and grazing the sensitive flesh. He lifted his mouth from hers and pressed it back against her ear. “Open your legs.”

A spark fired through her.

“I’ll be discrete. I promise.”

He might be able to be discrete, but she wasn’t sure she’d be able to.

“You trust me, don’t you?” he said. “Now do as I say.”

She couldn’t resist him.

Anya parted her thighs a little, feeling the cool air hit her skin. She wore a pair of panties, but they were a flimsy scrap of material and wouldn’t hinder his progress.

Eric reached across her body and pulled the other side of her coat across her lap. He looked into her eyes, amusement and lust dancing in their chocolate depths in equal measures. The coat provided a barrier from any peeping eyes in the rearview mirror. He slid his hand beneath the jacket, his fingertips walking up the inside of her thigh. As she’d predicted, the panties were simply pulled to one side, and before she knew it, the warm probe of his fingers pressed against her pussy.

She stifled a moan and edged down in the seat, allowing her thighs to spread farther, making access for Eric easier. She was already wet from the time she’d spent with both Eric and Logan, and also from the wicked public display of affection in front of the bar. He slipped his fingers along her slit, opening her up.

He pushed one digit inside her. Her inner muscles clenched around the intrusion, and she found herself moving against him, needing more. She wanted to lie back and open her legs for him fully, grab his hand and force two, three, even four fingers inside her and make him pump her hard. But she was acutely aware of the driver sitting only a matter of feet from her, and so she held herself back.

He made no attempt to kiss her again, just watched her intently, studying her every reaction as he fingered her in the back of the cab.

“Keep still, Anya,” he said, speaking against her ear once more. “He’ll notice.”

She wanted to whimper in frustration.

Eric pushed another finger inside her, increasing the stretch, creating the feeling of fullness she so desperately craved. Her hands reached for him, wanting to touch him, too, but he pushed her hand away with the one that wasn't in her panties. She could see the bulge in his pants, knowing he was as turned on as she was, if that was even possible, but he wouldn't let her touch him.

Instead, she grabbed the material of his pants leg in one fist, bunching it up as he continued to push inside her with a slow, rhythmic pace. Her stomach tightened, the muscles in her thighs straining. Pleasure coiled and swam in her lower abdomen as he fingered her, converging to a peak in her clit. She arched her hips, wanting him to put pressure on the sensitive swollen nub. Her cream was slick on her thighs, and she imagined his hand must be soaked with her desire. She was too turned on to care.

As if he'd read her body and known exactly what she needed, he shifted the position of his hand slightly and used his thumb to put pressure on her clit. She turned her face, burying it against his shoulder as her pleasure stepped up a notch.

“Oh, God,” she gasped.

He increased the pace, almost hard enough to hurt. Her building orgasm tilted her over the edge, and she plummeted down, freefall, held in the grip of the waves that powered through her. Her pussy clenched against his fingers, her hips involuntary rocking to pump his hand. To stop herself crying out, she bit into his shoulder.

“Everything okay back there?” The cab driver's voice.

Anya managed to sit back up, Eric slipping his fingers from her body.

“Fine, thank you,” he said, his voice completely composed. He lifted his hand to his mouth and sucked her cream from his fingers.

Anya giggled, hiding her face against his shoulder once again.

# Chapter Fifteen

## Anya

**By the time they'd reached** Eric's apartment, Anya had managed to compose herself, hoping the flush had died from her cheeks and chest. She couldn't help but notice how the inside of the cab stank of her arousal as they'd climbed from the car. *Will the scent alone turn the driver on?* Would he end up with a hard on due to her pheromones but have no idea what caused it?

Eric wasted no time getting her up to the apartment, throwing some cash at the cab driver—probably way above what the fare actually was—and whisking her up to his place. They were kissing before they even hit the elevator, and as soon as the door slid open, Eric pushed her inside, keeping her moving until her ass hit the mirrored wall behind. The kiss was hard and passionate, his hands lacing in her hair, framing her face. She reached down and cupped the hard length in his pants, loving the moan he emitted as she squeezed his cock.

The elevator doors slid open, and they staggered out, Eric reaching into his pocket for his keys to unlock the front door.

They fell into his apartment, her tugging at his pants, yanking down the zipper, and freeing him. She sighed in pleasure as her fingers wrapped around the silken, hard heat of him, and dropped to her knees.

“Oh, Anya.”

It was his turn to be pleased.

She opened her mouth, first inhaling his musky male scent, and darted out her tongue to lick at the salty pre-cum. She lifted her eyes to him as she did so, knowing how much eye

contact turned him on. He was staring down at her, his full lower lip slack with lust, his breath ragged.

Her heart swelled at the sight of him, knowing that all she wanted was to make him happy, to make him feel as though he couldn't live without her.

*God, I love this man.*

The thought appeared in her mind, surprising her. And that was that. Her mind was made up. She would do anything to make Eric happy, even if it meant her parents never spoke to her again.

She opened her mouth and leaned in, closing her lips around his shaft. Pushing down, the glans of his cock hit the back of her throat, and she groaned herself, knowing how it would make the back of her throat vibrate. His hands caught in her hair, knotting roughly, but she liked the pain.

“Oh, fuck, Anya. That feels so good.”

She swirled her tongue around his length, bobbing her head back and forth. She fisted the lower part of him, masturbating him as she sucked. He was so hard. She wanted him inside her badly. But first she wanted to tell him something.

Pulling her mouth from him, but still using her fingers to stroke up and down his shaft, she looked up at him and said, “I'll do it. I'll tell my parents what we've been doing. You can have the exhibition.”

It took a moment for what she'd said to sink in, and then he smiled and reached down to pull her to her feet. She let go of his cock, and he crushed her to him, his erection pressing hard against her stomach. He kissed her, long and hard, his fingers still in her hair.

He broke the kiss. He gazed down at her and stroked her cheek. “You are fucking amazing, Anya. I hope you know that.”

*I love you,* she wanted to say, but couldn't. It was too soon.



“Now you need to show me how amazing I am,” she teased him. “I want you inside of me.”

“Your wish is my command.” He reached down to hook his arms beneath her thighs and picked her up. Her thighs wrapped around his waist, his erection pushed flat against his stomach and her pussy. She writhed on him, using her hips to get herself off on the hard length. Her arms wound around his neck, and they kissed even as Eric carried her across the floor of the apartment to lower her onto the couch.

“These panties have gotten in my way once too often this evening,” he growled, dragging them down her thighs and throwing them to the floor. At some point he’d kicked off his pants, so his erection stuck out in front of him, curving upward slightly toward his stomach. He knelt between her thighs, and she sat up a little, pulling at his shirt. He helped her undo the buttons and then stripped off the material.

She saw the mirror crescents of teeth marks in his shoulder, and her heart jolted. “Oh, no, I hurt you.”

“No, you didn’t. I enjoyed it. You can bite me whenever you want.”

He unzipped the back of her dress and pulled it over her head, leaving her in only her black lacy bra. Without bothering to undo the back, he pulled the material of the cups down so they exposed her breasts, but still cupped beneath them, giving the effect of the kind of push up bra she certainly didn’t need.

“Fuck, that’s so sexy.”

He fell to her nipples, and reached between her legs at the same time, pushing his fingers inside her once again, while he sucked and licked her nipples. She groaned and arched her back, pushing her full breasts even farther into his face.

Eric removed his fingers and used her cream to slick down his cock. Then he held himself over her and thrust his hips, the head of his erection pushing against her wet opening, stretching her inner labia as he pushed inside her.

She gasped, “Oh, Eric,” and wrapped her legs around his hips, so her heels pressed into the solid muscles of his ass. She

rocked her hips up to meet his, wanting him deeper and deeper. He lowered his face, kissing her throat, his teeth lightly biting. His hands found her hips, and he sat back on his heels, pulling her down the couch to bring her with him. Her legs straightened, her heels now around the back of his neck. She sat up, propped on her elbows so she could see. His cock drove in and out of her, the length of his erection coated in her cream.

Anya squeezed her eyes shut as her second orgasm of the hour began to build.

“Look at me,” Eric commanded. “Look at me.”

She didn’t dare refuse. She opened her eyes and locked her gaze with his, intense, dark, smoldering. His jaw was locked, an almost angry expression on his face as he focused only on her.

“Ah, fuck.” And he exploded inside her, keeping that eye contact. She came as well, crying out this time, not caring how loud she was.

Spent, he slid down onto the couch beside her, pulling her into his arms, so she lay with her head on his chest, one leg slung over his. His mouth pressed against the top of her head, his breath heating her scalp.

Her body relaxed in a way it hadn’t for the whole of that day. There was no place she’d rather be than held in his arms, their bodies sated. They were enclosed within a bubble of intimacy she didn’t want to break out of.

Eric was the first to speak. “Did you mean what you said about going ahead with the exhibition?”

She nodded against him. “Yes. I wouldn’t have said it if I didn’t mean it.”

“I just thought because of the moment—”

“Perhaps it wasn’t the best time to tell you, but it just came out. Everything both you and Logan said, about me needing to consider my future and about my parents finding out eventually anyway. I’m an adult, I can do what I want. I don’t

think they'll be happy about it by any stretch of the imagination, but I need to be true to myself."

"Thank you. I know that decision was really hard for you."

"The decision was the easy part. It's facing my parents that's going to be the difficult part." She fell silent for a moment, wanting to ask him something, and trying to build up the nerve. She had to ask. If she was going to tell her parents she'd been modeling for erotic shoots, and they were going to be put on display for all of New York's artistic community to see, then she could sure as hell ask Eric this one small thing.

She took a breath and sat up a little so she could look him in the eyes.

"Will you come with me when I go to tell them?"

He nodded. "Of course I will, Anya. I'd love to meet your parents."

Her heart did a little leap in her chest. The way he'd said it was as if they were a real couple, and he was meeting them as a suitor. She'd only really expected him to think he was coming along as the photographer of the artwork, not that she was going to introduce him as her boyfriend. She loved that he wanted to meet them, but the circumstances were far from perfect. Would they be in awe that they were in Eric's presence? She doubted it. It wouldn't surprise her if her father grabbed her by the wrist and dragged her away from him.

Sudden paranoia filled her. Perhaps he hadn't been meaning that at all, and she'd misunderstood him. What if he expected to go purely as the photographer, and she introduced him as her boyfriend? She would just about die if he corrected her.

She hadn't wanted to discuss their relationship, but she felt she had no other choice. Whichever way she went, she could get it wrong and either embarrass or insult one or the other of them.

"Eric," she said, tentatively. "When you meet my parents, do you want me to tell them that we're ...?" She didn't want to use the word 'boyfriend,' feeling like the term was more for

young, student couples than a professional man of his stature. “Lovers,” she finished.

“I hope we’re more than that, Anya,” he said, his tone soft. “There’s no one else for me. Of course, I don’t know about you—”

“No, no,” she interrupted. “Of course there isn’t.” She smiled; she couldn’t help herself. He’d told her she was the only one. “Anyway, I spend all my time with you. I don’t have time to meet anyone else.”

He became rough, playful, grabbing her, dragging her back down to the couch so his body was hovered above hers. “And that’s just the way I plan on keeping things.”

Even as he kissed her, she couldn’t stop smiling.

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**She opened her eyes to** soft, morning light and the shape of a man standing, his broad back to her, in the corner of the room. He bent to tug on a pair of sneakers, and she smiled, taking the moment to admire the taut curves of his ass beneath the running shorts.

“I hope you’re not leaving me.”

He turned at the sound of her voice, a smile on his chiseled face. Just the sight made her heart flutter, her stomach doing a not-unpleasant flip-flop.

“It’s six thirty,” he told her, striding across the room to pause at the edge of the bed. “I need to get to the gym.”

She returned the smile and tugged back the covers, exposing the now cooling side of the bed he’d only just vacated. “I can give you a workout.”

He bent, his hand raking through her blonde hair, tightening in the base, at the nape of her neck, to force her face to his as he kissed her on the mouth. He released her and straightened.

“It’s Friday,” he said. “I have to go to the gym on Friday.”

She sighed and rolled to her back. “And Saturday, and Monday, and Wednesday, I know.” Anya couldn’t hide the combination of disappointment and annoyance in her voice. She knew it was important to Eric to keep to his much regimented schedule, but after last night, with the important decision she’d made for him, and the admission that they were exclusive to each other, she thought he might have broken his routine to spend more time with her.

“My world revolves around you, Anya—work and play. It’s important for me to keep some other focus in my life.”

He’d only hinted so far about what he referred to as his ‘dark time,’ but when Anya had tried to dig deeper, he’d simply brushed her off, saying it wasn’t something he liked to talk about. But she saw it in his eyes, that lingering darkness, a strange melancholy mixed with fear. She wished she could reach inside him and take it away, but she couldn’t. In the meantime all she could do was be there for him and hope one day he would open up to her.

Eric bent and kissed her again. “Make yourself at home. I’ll be back in a couple of hours.”

Anya wrinkled her nose. “I have to go to class.”

“Really? You can’t miss it just this once?”

She wriggled up to sitting. “No, I can’t. My work is important to me, too, Eric. I may not be successful like you, but I hope to be one day. If I don’t even bother turning up to class, I can hardly consider myself to be serious about art.”

He straightened and stepped away from her, his hands held up in a position of surrender. Her heart sank, the atmosphere between them changing as she realized her sharp words had been too much. She didn’t want to mess this up between them.

He’d turned away from her, and she panicked, worried she was losing him. She threw back the bedcovers and swung her legs from the bed. The cool air of the room kissed her skin, causing her nipples to crinkle and harden. She stood, naked, feeling the ache between her thighs, the stickiness left by the mixture of her juices and his cum. A couple of steps across the

thick carpet brought her to stand behind him. He paused in combing his wet hair, sensing her there. She was so small compared to him, the top of her head barely reaching between his shoulder blades. She leaned against him, pressing her cheek against his back, and reached around to cup his cock above the soft material of his workout pants. Instantly, she felt him harden, his dick jerking against her touch. He exhaled, a slow, measured breath, and his whole body relaxed.

“I’ll come back as soon as class is over,” she said. “Then we can continue where we left off.”

She went to pull away, but he reached down and placed his hand over hers, stilling her. The pressure of his fingers made her increase her grip around his erection. He began to move her hand with his, running up and down the length of him. He was so hard, the head almost poking above the waistband of his pants. He let out a groan. “What are you doing to me, Anya?”

She smiled against his shirt. “You’re not far off doing something to yourself.”

He firmly removed her hand from his groin, and she felt herself wilt in disappointment, but it didn’t last long. Before she had the chance to register what was happening, he’d grabbed her by the hips and spun her around, the mirror image of the position they’d just been in. He propelled her forward into the bed, his erection grinding into the small of her back, just where her spine met the top of her buttocks. She let out an ‘oh’ of surprise and moved with him until the front of her legs hit the side of the bed she’d just vacated. His flat palm pressed against the middle of her back, forcing her to bend at the waist. To keep her balance, she placed her own palms on the bed, so she was bent over. Excitement and arousal raced through her in equal measures, making her whole body tremble in anticipation. Her pussy tightened, and she felt her cream lubricate her folds, slipping from her. She was naked, and the shape of his cock pressed against her, wetting the front of his pants with her arousal.

He moved back, cool air hitting her wet, heated flesh. She sensed, rather than saw, his adjustment to free his erection.

And then he was back again, the smooth head of his cock pushing between her labia and sinking in deep.

Anya groaned, her hands fisting in the already rumpled sheets on the bed, bracing herself as he thrust. Her pussy was still swollen and a little sore from the sex they'd had the night before, but Eric wasn't gentle with her. His hard length pounded her engorged flesh, their hips smacking together with the satisfying slap of flesh against flesh. His fingers dug into her hips, helping to increase her momentum as he fucked her fast and hard.

“Oh, God, Eric.”

Her orgasm hit, her inner muscles pulsating hard against his cock as the waves of pleasure powered through her body. He gave another couple of thrusts and then held himself deep within her, groaning as he did so. She could feel his cock jerking inside her as he came.

Eric exhaled a breath and then bent over her body from behind and planted a kiss on her shoulder. His softening dick slipped from her body, warm semen dribbling down the inside of her thighs.

Eric vanished into the bathroom and then reemerged, after, she assumed, cleaning himself up. “Shut the door on your way out,” he told her. “I'll see you later.”

Anya climbed back onto the bed, pulling the bedcovers up around her naked, sticky, slightly sore body. Mixed emotions filled her. While she'd enjoyed her orgasm, now that she was left alone she couldn't help but feel a little bereft and used.

Would he ever put her first?

# Chapter Sixteen

## Anya

**Anya sat through her classes** with little enthusiasm. Her thoughts were occupied by everything Eric Rutherford, from the exhibition that would happen in a week's time, to telling her parents about the photo shoots, to the way they fucked. When her classes were finished, she resisted the urge to head straight back over to Eric's apartment. She didn't want to appear to be the kind of over-eager woman who had no life of her own. Letting him wonder where she was for a few hours wouldn't do him any harm.

Instead, she went back to her room. She had a mountain of laundry she needed to do anyway, and an essay she needed to catch up on.

Anya's phone rang. She checked her cell before she answered, and her heart sank. It was her mother's number.

"Hi, Mom."

"Hey, sweetie. How are you? Just checking you're still good to see your father and me next weekend."

"Yeah, I am, Mom. I'm looking forward to seeing you."

"We're looking forward to seeing you, too. We miss our baby-girl when she's so far away."

Anya took a breath. "Listen, Mom, there's something I need to talk to you about."

Her mother fell silent for a moment. "What's wrong? Has something happened?"

"Nothing's wrong. I just need to speak to you about something."



“Can’t you tell me on the phone?”

“Not really. I’d rather tell you face to face. And there’s someone I want you and Dad to meet.”

Her tone changed. “Well that sounds intriguing. We can always come to the city earlier than the weekend if you really need us. There are a couple of smaller artists’ exhibitions happening over the week that your father and I were considering coming to see.” Anya inwardly cringed at the idea of them coming to exhibitions, though she knew the ones her mother was talking about were too soon to be Eric’s. “The only reason we didn’t was because we didn’t want you to feel like we were trying to smother you, or keep an eye on you. We know you’re a good girl, Anya. It’s not like you need us hovering over your shoulder twenty-four-seven.”

Anya put her forehead in her palm, rubbing at her temples. “You know I wouldn’t feel like you were watching over me. It would be lovely to spend an extra few days with you.”

*They might be the last you’ll want to spend with me.*

“Okay, that’s what we’ll do, then, and we’ll book a restaurant for tomorrow night, shall we? You can introduce us to this new person you want us to meet.”

“You don’t have to book a restaurant, Mom. We can come meet you at the hotel.”

“Don’t be silly. It’ll be our treat.” She paused. “But you’re sure there’s nothing wrong? You’re healthy?”

“I’m fine, Mom. I promise.”

“Good. I’ll call you when we get into the city.”

“Okay. Love you.”

“Love you, too, sweetie.”

Anya hung up and let out a sigh which originated from the bottom of her lungs. She felt sick at the idea of the conversation which loomed in her immediate future. The idea of it occurring in a public place was even worse. Perhaps she could put off telling them until the meal was over and they’d walked back to the hotel? But she didn’t think she’d be able to

eat a mouthful knowing what she was about to tell them. Plus, her mother was like a dog with a bone. She'd want to know what Anya wanted to talk to them about. Maybe she could pretend it was her relationship with Eric she'd wanted to talk to them about? She sighed again and lowered her head to join her other hand. Pressure weighed heavily on her shoulders, crushing her. This might be the last time her mom spoke to her without a cold tone to her voice.

Sudden tears filled her eyes, and she blinked them away.

The door opened, and Nadine walked in. She pulled up short as soon as she saw her roommate's tears, and then hurried over to her. "Anya, honey. What's wrong? Has that new guy of yours done something?"

Nadine sat down beside her on the bed and put an arm around Anya's shoulders.

Anya shook her head and sniffed. "It's not him, not really. It's something I chose to do."

"What are you talking about? You're being cryptic."

"Sorry." She wiped her eyes. "I guess you might find out soon anyway."

Nadine shook her head in bemusement. "Find out what?"

"The guy I've been seeing is Eric Rutherford." She waited for a reaction, but Nadine was majoring in English and had no connection to the art world. Her expression remained blank.

"He's a photographer—a very successful photographer—and I've been doing some modeling for him."

"Anya!" She received an elbow in the ribs. "That's awesome. You go, girl!" Then she must have realized her reaction was inappropriate to Anya's tears. "So what's the problem?"

Her cheeks heated. "The photographs are a little on the sexy side."

Her friend's dark, perfectly plucked eyebrows shot up her forehead. "You've been doing topless shoots?"

“Not exactly. It’s erotic photography.”

She frowned. “Erotic? But not topless?”

Anya sighed. How was she going to explain this to someone who clearly had no experience with the genre? “The photographs are intimate. He likes to use props to create a scene, like with ropes or handcuffs, or toys.”

She gasped. “Anya!”

“Stop saying that!”

“I just never expected it of you.” A twinkle appeared in her eye. “It sounds like fun.” Then her face grew serious again. “So why the tears? He didn’t hurt you, did he?”

“No, of course not. He’s not like that. He’s completely respectful.” Just the thought of Eric made her heart sing. “The problem is that he’s having an exhibition of the photographs at the Blanc Art Space in a week, and my parents are going to be around.”

“Oh, shit. But aren’t your folks really strict?”

“Yeah, that’s the reason I’m upset. They’ll probably disown me when they find out.”

“Why would they find out? Can’t you just distract them with something else? Buy them tickets to a show they haven’t seen, and make sure they’re nowhere near the exhibition.”

She gave a weak smile. “It’s a great idea, but even if they don’t make it to the exhibition, they’ll find out about it. My parents are art critics, and run in those circles. The work Eric’s been doing is completely different from anything he’s ever done before, and it’s likely to stir up a shit-storm in the art world. It’ll be everywhere, especially because Eric is refusing to sell any of the shots. It’ll only make them more desirable.”

Nadine was looking at her in a completely new way. “Holy shit, Anya! How can you have been doing all of this and not tell me?”

She shrugged. “It wasn’t something I could just drop into a conversation.”

“And what about this Eric? Are you sleeping with him as well?”

Anya blushed. “It’s more than that. We have something special. A connection. He wants to meet my parents when I go to tell them about the exhibition.”

“You’re actually going to tell them?”

“I have no choice. I’m seriously considering erotic art as my future, so they’re going to need to know at some point.”

“Wow, Anya. I don’t know what to say.”

Anya gave a half-smile. “Just wish me luck, I guess.”

Her friend enveloped her in a hug and squeezed her tight. “Good luck, sweetie. Sounds like you’re going to need it.”

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**Anya stood on the street** corner right around the block from her college campus, the same spot where she’d gotten into Eric’s car after he’d punched Gavin. Though she still didn’t want him anywhere near campus, this time, when Eric had offered to pick her up to take her for dinner with her parents, she’d said ‘yes.’

She’d dressed in her most sophisticated outfit—a smart, navy blue skirt suit. It was the same suit she’d worn to her interview for her college course. She wanted her parents to see her on Eric’s arm, and view her as the adult she was, rather than the little girl she was sure they still thought of her as. The smart outfit and the entry with Eric—a mature, sophisticated man—was supposed to make them realize she was a grown-up now, capable of making her own decisions.

But none of these preparations changed how she felt. She was sick with nerves. Her stomach was twisted into a knot, her throat almost closed over. Shifting from foot to foot, she fiddled with the strap on her purse and chewed her lower lip until she tasted blood. She couldn’t believe she was about to have this conversation with her folks. She dreaded their reaction, certain she already knew what it would be.

*Perhaps their reaction won't be as bad as you're imagining? Perhaps ...* But she doubted it.

A car slowed and began to pull over. With relief, she saw Eric's big Lexus. He pulled over, and she hopped in the passenger side, enjoying sliding into the soft leather seat.

"Hey," he said, leaning over to kiss her on the mouth. "How are you doing?"

"Terribly," she said. "But better now I'm with you." And it was true. Being in Eric's solid presence made her feel like she could breathe for the first time that day. All day, she'd been running over the imminent conversation with her parents in her head, and she started to worry that the photographs were trivial, just two people playing at sexy art. But now Eric was here, knowing how seriously he took his work, it didn't seem that way anymore. He gave the project an authenticity that would be missing if he weren't involved. She just hoped her folks would see it in the same way.

Eric pulled the car back out into the traffic.

"You're nervous, huh?" he asked her, throwing a glance in her direction.

"That obvious?"

"Your knee is jumping up and down, and you haven't stopped chewing your lip."

She realized she still was and pressed her now sore lips together, forcing herself to stop.

"I feel sick at the thought of telling them. I don't know how I'm even going to get my mouth to work when I'm actually sitting in front of them."

He reached out and placed a hand over hers. "Would it be easier if I tell them?"

She shook her head. "I appreciate the offer, but this really has to come from me."

"Okay, but if you change your mind, the offer still stands."

She smiled, but it felt weak. "Thank you."

The closer they got to the restaurant her parents had booked, the more her nerves ratcheted up. She felt like a tightly strung bow that was close to snapping. Her palms were soaked, and she was sure dark spots probably marked the underarms of her jacket. She hated feeling this way, especially next to Eric when she'd worked so hard to portray herself as a sophisticated woman. She felt like she was about to undo all her good work in one evening.

*And what about all the years of good work you've done with your parents? Aren't you about to undo twenty-two years of love and respect with them?*

She didn't want to listen. She had to believe she had no choice in the matter. If she wanted to be able to decide her own future, her parents would need to know.

Eric pulled the car up outside the restaurant and handed the keys to the valet. Anya stepped out of her side of the car and walked around to join Eric. He took hold of her hand and gave it a reassuring squeeze.

"And you look beautiful, by the way." He reached out and twisted a lock of hair that she'd deliberately left free from her chignon. The back of his finger brushed her cheek as he did so, and shivers coursed down her body. "Absolutely stunning."

She only just noticed how smartly dressed he was himself, wearing a dark gray suit which complimented her own outfit. That he'd made an effort to meet her parents pleased her. "You don't look so bad yourself."

He smiled. "Why, is that a compliment, Miss Rhinne?"

She couldn't help herself. Even under the circumstances, he still managed to make her smile. "Why, yes, it is, Mr. Rutherford."

They grinned at each other, and then Anya glanced back toward the restaurant door, once again remembering the reason they were there. Eric leaned down and gave her a quick kiss on the cheek.

"It will be fine. Try not to worry."

She wished she could share some of his optimism.

She took a deep breath, and hand in hand, they entered the restaurant. The hostess met them, a young woman wearing too much makeup and a fake smile. “Good evening. Do you have a reservation?”

“We’re joining another couple,” said Eric. “The name’s Bergman.”

She glanced over to the restaurant. “Ah, yes. They’re already here. Follow me, please.”

With her heart in her throat, Anya followed the hostess’s line of sight. Sure enough, her parents sat at a round table which was covered in a starched white cloth and expensive silverware and glasses. Her mother had already noticed her and was rising slightly from the table as she waved with one hand and nudged her father, who was immersed in the menu, with the other.

Her father’s blond hair had lightened to white, and while it was receding from the temples, he still had a mostly full head of hair. His strong jaw, light blue eyes, and six feet two build meant Trent Bergman was still a handsome man, even in his fifties. Her mother was more like her, small and curvy. Unlike her father, she dyed her hair, but the blonde appeared natural, and was pulled into a style similar to the one Anya wore now. Her eyes lit up at the sight of her daughter, and the twisting in Anya’s gut returned. She hated that she was about to make the light in her eyes go out.

Inquisitive, her mother’s gaze flicked to the man at Anya’s side. She smiled charmingly and rose fully from the table. Her father had finally torn himself from the menu and also began to get to his feet.

“Anya, honey,” Saara Bergman said, pushing her chair back to move from the table, enveloping Anya in her arms. She hugged her hard, and Anya had to blink to prevent sudden tears springing to her eyes.

“Hi, Mom.”

“It’s so lovely to see you. You’re looking fabulous.” Her gaze went to Eric. “And who is this equally fabulous man

you've brought with you?"

Her father was staring at Eric. He lifted a finger and wagged it in Eric's direction. "I know you, don't I?"

Her mother frowned. "Now you say that, you do look familiar."

Anya took a deep breath and plunged in. "This is Eric Rutherford, the photographer."

A wide smile beamed from her mother's face. "Of course, Mr. Rutherford! We're both big fans. I'm so sorry we didn't recognize you right away."

"It's Eric, please."

"I'm Saara, and this is Trent."

He gave an equally charming smile. "Yes, I know. Anya has already told me. It's lovely to meet you both."

She could see her parents trying to figure out the significance of Eric Rutherford accompanying her to this meal. Her mother glanced down at their joined hands and blinked in surprise. Perhaps she'd thought he was there as a kind of mentor.

*Strangely, I suppose he is.*

Her father reached across the table and shook Eric's hand. "Good to have you here, Eric. Unexpected, but good nevertheless." He turned his attention to Anya. "And how are you getting on, Anya?"

That was her father, short on the affection. He always had been, though she didn't doubt he loved her. Her mother had always done her best to compensate for the way her father was, but that hadn't changed the fact Anya never really knew what it was like to have her dad hug her and tell her how much he cared.

"Good," she said. "Great, in fact."

"That's wonderful. I guess this calls for some champagne."

He raised his hand to get the attention of the waiter and ordered an expensive bottle. Eric offered to pay, but her father



waved him down. “It’s our treat.”

“So, Anya,” her mother said, after the champagne had arrived and been poured into flute glasses for them all, “is Eric the thing you wanted to talk to us about?”

Her cheeks flushed. “Yes, it is. I wanted you to meet him. Eric and I are together now.”

“How long has that been going on?” her father said, his tone short.

“Nothing’s going on, Dad,” she said, irritated that her father couldn’t be happy for her for once. She hadn’t even told him the bad news yet. “We’re both adults, who have the same interests, and who enjoy each other’s company.” She picked up her glass, as if to make her point, and took an angry swig of the cold bubbles.

“So how did you two meet?” asked Saara, trying to keep the conversation bright, while completely unaware she was leading the questions that would most likely break up the party.

“We met at work,” Anya said, trying to put things in the best light.

“You’re doing photography now, Anya?” her father asked, his blue eyes focused on her with his intense, bright gaze.

“It’s certainly something I’m interested in,” she said, not really answering the question.

The waiter arrived back, hovering to take their orders. Still feeling as though she’d struggle to stomach anything at all, Anya ordered the lightest thing she could find on the menu—a salad of chorizo, spinach, red onion, and new potatoes. Eric ordered the steak. She wondered if they’d get a chance to eat their meals.

“Actually,” Eric spoke up, surprising her. She’d told him to leave this to her. “Anya has been working for me on the other side of the camera.”

She wanted to hit him. She’d wanted to do this in her own time, and he was forcing the conversation his way.

Saara brightened once again. “Really? You’ve been modeling for some of Eric’s portrait work? How wonderful. You know, Anya, I always told you how beautiful you were, even though you would never believe me.” She turned to Eric. “Can you believe she’d never accept how beautiful she is?”

Eric smiled and looked over to make eye contact with Anya. “I’ve told her every day since we met.”

Her cheeks heated, and even her mother was beginning to look flustered. Her father, however, went completely unmoved.

All eyes were focused on her. She felt herself shrink beneath their gaze, her face growing hotter and hotter. She couldn’t bring her mouth to open and describe to her parents here in this fancy restaurant exactly what type of portrait photography she’d been posing for.

“Excuse me,” she said, pushing back her chair and getting to her feet. “Bathroom.”

She hurried from the table, doing her best not to break into a run. Without looking back, she scanned the room for the signs for the bathroom and raced toward it, almost knocking a huge silver platter of food from a waiter’s hands.

“Sorry, sorry,” she said, still rushing. She burst into the thankfully empty bathroom and stood at the bank of sinks, her heart racing.

*I can’t do this.*

She’d let them find out on their own, by attending the exhibition, or perhaps reading reports of it afterward. There was no way she could open her mouth and tell her parents she’d been posing for erotic photo shoots.

The bathroom door opened, making Anya jump. Her mother walked in, a concerned expression on her face.

“Anya, honey. What’s the matter? What’s wrong?”

She pressed her lips together, sudden tears threatening once again. She couldn’t stand for her mother to be nice to her

when she was about to let her down so badly. “Nothing,” she said. “Everything is fine.”

“Don’t give me that. I gave birth to you and raised you. Don’t you think I’d know right away when something was wrong with my little girl? I could tell on the phone. That’s why I arranged for us to come into town early. Is it something to do with Eric?” Something in Anya’s expression must have changed at the mention of his name, as she added, “You’re not pregnant, are you?”

“No, Mom!” she burst out. “Of course not!”

“Well, you can’t blame me for asking. It was only because you were drinking the champagne that I didn’t ask sooner.” She paused then said, “So what is it, honey? Please, tell me. I’ll drive myself crazy with worry if you don’t.”

Finally, the tears came. “Oh, Mom. I’m so scared you’re going to hate me.”

“Anya, stop it! You’re scaring me now.”

So much for acting like a woman of the world, an adult who knew her own mind. Here she was blubbering in the bathroom like a child.

“It’s the photographs, Mom. The one’s Eric has been taking.”

Her face hardened. “Has he been making you do something you don’t want to do?”

“No, Mom. Not at all. I *wanted* to be his model. He hired me.”

“What are you telling me, Anya?”

“I’ve been modeling for Eric, but they’re not like his normal work. They’re erotic art.”

“Anya!”

“It’s tasteful, but yes, the images are explicit. The thing is, he’s going to have an exhibition at the Blanc Art Space in a week. I needed to tell you because you’d find out eventually.”

Now it was out, the tears dried up, and she wiped her face.

“Oh, Anya.” Her mother pressed her lips together, shaking her head. She lifted her hand to cover her face in dismay, and then turned away from her daughter.

Anya’s heart sank. This was it, the reaction she was expecting. But to her surprise, her mother dropped her hand, turned back to her, and met her gaze. “How are we going to tell your father?”

She blinked in surprise. “You’re not mad at me?”

“Oh, honey. I was young once, too. And I know Eric’s work. I’m sure whatever photographs he’s taken have been done in the best possible taste.” She smiled. “And he’s a very handsome man. I can understand why you’ve fallen for him.”

She gave a shy smile. “Thanks, Mom.”

“But the question still remains about how we’re going to tell your father. I can’t promise his reaction will be the same as mine.”

“No, I know it won’t. I’ve barely been able to eat these last few days worrying about it.”

“I think we’re just going to have to tell him.”

“Would it be better to tell him in private?”

“He might rein himself in if we tell him in public, give him time to compose himself, perhaps even come to terms with the idea of his daughter modeling for erotic photography.”

She arched an eyebrow. “Do you think?”

“Well, maybe not. But whether we tell him here or back at the hotel, he’s still going to need to find out.”

She took a deep, shuddery breath. “Okay, let’s do it now. Get it over with.” It was like having a Band-Aid removed, better to get it over with than drag things out any longer. Besides, her mother had reacted far better than she’d ever hoped for. Perhaps her father would be the same and surprise her?

Anya quickly repaired her makeup in the mirror, and then she and her mother exited the bathroom together.

Eric and her father were deep in conversation, but they fell silent as the two women approached. Eric looked up at her, his eyes saying more than his mouth. “Everything okay?”

“Sure, I’m fine.”

Her mother placed a hand on her father’s arm. “Anya’s got something she wants to tell you, Trent.”

The nerves reappeared in Anya’s stomach. She had to do this, get it out there, and deal with the fallout afterward.

“The photographs Eric has been taking are going to be part of an exhibition of his work in a little over a week,” said Anya.

Her father smiled. “That sounds interesting.”

“It is. But I just wanted to prepare you that some of the photographs are of a ... Err ...” She could barely bring herself to say the word. Even as she stalled, she could see the expression in her father’s face begin to change. “They’re of an erotic nature.”

A cloud filled his features, his blue eyes seeming to turn gray. “What are you telling me, Anya? That you’ve been posing for explicit photographs?”

“Well, yes, but they’re tasteful!”

He wasn’t listening. He turned to Eric. “And you’ve been taking them? You manipulated my little girl into taking her clothes off?”

Her stomach lurched. “Dad! It wasn’t like that! I’m an adult. I do what I want.”

“That’s bullshit, Anya. You’re only twenty-two. You barely know your own mind.”

“Trent, no,” her mother interjected. “She’s an adult. She’s capable of making her own decisions.”

He wasn’t listening. He shoved back his chair with a clatter and rose to his feet, pointing a finger at Eric. “And you, taking a young girl and using her in such a way. She’s a good girl, and you’ve made a whore out of her!”

“Dad!” Even she was shocked at his choice of words. People were starting to look, glancing over to stare at the performance.

Eric got to his feet, his face stone. “Mr. Bergman, please don’t ever refer to your daughter as a whore again.”

“Don’t you tell me what I can and can’t call my own child. Who the hell do you think you are? Perverting an innocent girl. And you’re going to display these photographs to the public? Over my dead body!”

“Trent,” said Saara, getting to her feet to try to pull him back down. “Calm down.”

“I’ll do no such thing!”

“Please, Dad.” Anya was too shocked to cry.

“Mr. Bergman,” said Eric, keeping his voice calm. “If you’d like to come and view the photographs at my studio, you’re more than welcome.”

Trent’s face was puce with anger, the red making his white hair appear even whiter. “I’m not going into some kind of den for pornography! You’ve turned my daughter into a little whore. I’ll set no foot in that place.”

A muscle in Eric’s jaw twitched. “I told you not to call her that again.”

“Don’t even speak to me!” And her father swung his fist, connecting with Eric’s jaw. His head snapped back, and he staggered from the table.

“Dad!” Anya screamed, jumping from her seat to run to Eric. His nose was bloodied, but he didn’t attempt to retaliate. She was terrified they’d have another episode like with Gavin, but Eric restrained himself.

Her father opened his wallet and threw money on the table. “Pay for the meal with this,” he spat at Anya. “And then keep the change like the little whore you are. I don’t ever want to see you again.”

He stormed from the restaurant. Her mother looked between Anya and the direction Trent had gone, before

picking up her jacket and purse. "I'll call you," she said, before hurrying after him.

Anya burst into tears.

Eric's arms found their way around her, but she pushed him away. "Leave me alone. I did this for you. If I'd never met you, I wouldn't have just lost my father. I can't be around you right now. Just leave me alone." And with tears streaming down her face, she ran from the restaurant, all eyes on her, leaving Eric alone.

# Chapter Seventeen

## Eric

**Eric stood in the middle** of the restaurant, frozen in the fallout of the fight between Anya and her father. He gaped after them. Even though she'd told him her father was a strict Christian, he'd never imagined it would be so bad. His nose still hurt. How many times would he get punched in the face over Anya?

A waiter arrived with a silver tray with all of their meals balanced on the shiny surface. Everyone in the room had restarted their conversations, trying to pretend they hadn't all enjoyed the drama over dinner.

"I think you'd better take those back to the kitchen," he told the waiter.

The young man hesitated, but a stare from Eric sent him spinning on his heels, taking the meals with him.

Eric picked up his glass of champagne and drank it in one, the bubbles burning the back of his nose. He placed the empty glass down on the table, hard enough to risk it breaking.

He needed to go after Anya.

Briefly, he considered switching Anya's father's money for his own credit card, and returning the cash to the older man later, but anyone who upset Anya that much deserved to waste a few hundred dollars.

Leaving her father's money on the table, he picked up his jacket and walked from the restaurant, trying to ignore all the prying eyes. He hoped no paparazzi had been present for the



fight, or at least none who recognized him, or he'd find the argument displayed all over the local papers the next day.

Eric stepped out into the evening air and ignored the valet. He'd have to come back for his car later. Anya would be on foot. Her petite stature compared to his long legs meant he shouldn't struggle to catch her.

He headed in the direction of her college campus, assuming she'd go back to her room. Farther down the street ahead, he spotted her slight figure, her shoulders stooped, her head hung down. His heart clenched at the sight of her, so forlorn, and then sparked with anger at her father. How could a man cause such sorrow in his own daughter?

"Anya!" he called. "Wait."

But she didn't stop, only hurried her pace.

Eric broke into a run, his long stride carrying him swiftly along the street, quickly closing the gap between them.

He reached her, caught her by the shoulder, and pulled her back around. "Anya, please wait."

Her eyes were rimmed red, her skin blotchy. But no fresh tears ran from her eyes. "Please, Eric. Just give me some space, okay? I've got a lot to think about."

"Can't you think about it at my place?" He didn't like the pleading tone to his voice.

She shook her head. "You're too involved in all of this. You're a huge distraction." She gave a little smile. "A great distraction, but one nonetheless. This isn't against you, Eric. I don't blame you for my father. I knew how he was going to react. I just kidded myself for a while that things might go differently." She stood on her tiptoes and kissed him on the cheek. "I'm sorry he hit you."

Eric shook his head. "It doesn't matter."

"I seem to be getting you into trouble more than you deserve."

He didn't tell her that he'd thought the same thing only a few minutes ago. "You're worth it."

She looked at him. “Am I, Eric? Am I really?”

“Yes, of course you are. At least come back to the restaurant and let me drive you home.”

A shiver ran through her; he noted her shoulders trembling. “I don’t want to go back to that restaurant. Ever.”

“Okay. I understand.” He spotted the familiar yellow light in the distance, and he stepped out into the road with his arm held out. “I’m paying for your cab, then.”

“Eric, I can get my own cab.”

“Please, Anya. Just do as I ask this once.”

Her shoulders slumped. The cab pulled up alongside the curb and Eric opened the back door for her. Without further argument, she climbed into the back seat. Eric handed the driver a couple of twenties and gave him the address.

She slid down her window. “Thank you.”

“Call me, okay?” he said, suddenly panicked. What if this was the last time he saw her? What if she decided enough was enough, and never wanted to see him again?

She gave a sad smile. “Sure, Eric.” And slid her window back up.

He stood on the sidewalk and watched the cab pull away and grow smaller as it merged with the evening’s traffic. Eric sighed and pulled his jacket closer to his body for comfort. The cab vanished from sight and he turned around and made his way back to the restaurant.

The valet stood, looking awkward and unsure until he spotted Eric returning. He obviously wasn’t used to having vehicles abandoned not long after arriving.

Eric collected his car and drove home, his head a jumble of thoughts. What was going to happen now? After her father’s reaction, he struggled to imagine Anya still wanting to go through with the exhibition. They were back to square one. Perhaps he should never have persuaded her to tell her parents about what she’d been doing. If she’d kept it secret for as long

as possible, they'd at least have had the gift of a few more days doing what they loved.

His apartment felt cold and empty without Anya in it. It was strange to notice that now. He'd never had a problem with his place before—in fact, he'd always enjoyed spending time here alone, appreciated what his hard work and talent had bought him—yet now his surroundings felt sterile.

He removed a bag of peas from the freezer and wrapped a tea-towel around them before pressing them to the socket where the start of a black eye was blooming. His nose also throbbed, but he didn't think it was broken. He hoped the bruising would fade before the exhibition. But then he realized he probably shouldn't waste his time worrying. Anya was sure to want to cancel now.

His stomach twisted with anxiety. Logan had already started sending out personal invitations to everyone influential and important in the New York art scene. What the hell was he supposed to do if he had to turn around and tell everyone the exhibition had been canceled? He'd be a laughing-stock, and no one would ever take his exhibitions seriously again. Logan was an old friend, but he was also a professional. Eric hated that he might have wasted his friend's time.

The first flames of anger started in his stomach. If only Anya had been honest with him from the start, none of this would be happening now. But even as the flames emerged, his common sense extinguished them. If Anya had told him right from the start and he'd sent her away, he'd never have experienced this last week. He'd never have sunk his cock into her tight, soft heat. He'd never have felt her slim fingers touch his cheek with such intimacy. He'd never have witnessed her expression of delight when a huge dish of tiramisu had been placed in front of her. He was torn. Though his work meant everything to him, his feelings for Anya were starting to overshadow them.

Once again, he hadn't eaten, and he couldn't bring himself to stomach anything. Instead, he went to his computer and began to run through his favorite images of Anya. He scrolled through them, pausing on each one to study the composition,

the use of lighting, but most of all, to study Anya. Having her image imprinted upon his brain was the closest thing he could get to being with her. He didn't want anyone else, he realized. He didn't want to photograph anyone else, or have anyone else in his bed. She'd become his whole world.

Fresh anger burst through him and he lashed out at the items on his desk—pen holders, paperwork, a glass of water—sending them crashing to the ground.

She was going to ruin him, and he was going to let her.

\*\*\*

**Eric woke the next morning** to the sound of his door intercom buzzing.

He'd fallen asleep at his desk, his head pillowed on his arms. His shirt was creased, and he knew it would have left lines on his cheek where he'd been resting. Pieces of glass and other items from his desk were strewn across the floor from where he'd lost his temper.

The buzzer went again, and Eric got groggily to his feet and made his way over the door. He wasn't expecting anyone.

He pressed the intercom. "Hello?"

"Eric, it's me. Can I come up?"

His heart leapt. *Anya!* "Yes, of course. I'll buzz you in."

He hit the button to let her up and suddenly became aware of the state of his apartment and himself. He was still dressed in last night's clothes, and he reached up to smooth his hair down where it was sticking up on one side. He hesitated. Was he better to tidy himself up, or his apartment? He didn't want her to know he'd lost his temper last night, but he figured meeting her at the door with bad hair and morning breath was worse.

Rushing into his bathroom, Eric ran the tap. He added a swipe of toothpaste to his brush, scrubbed his teeth with one hand, while running water through his dark hair to try to tame it with the other.

A gentle knock came at the door, and he spat and washed away the toothpaste in the sink. He took a deep breath and headed to the door. He didn't know why he was so nervous.

He swung open the door.

Anya stood in front of him wearing a pair of six inch stilettos, and an extremely short black dress that appeared to be made of latex. The material clung to her curves, accentuating the fullness of her breasts and the way her large nipples poked from the globes. He could see the slight roundness of her belly, leading down to the juncture of her thighs. The dress stopped barely an inch below her pussy, revealing her long, naked legs.

She placed a hand on her hip, and pouted lips slicked with a red, tinted gloss. "Aren't you going to invite me in?"

"Um, yes, of course." He stepped back from the doorway and she sauntered in, her hips dipping from side to side as she walked, her heels clicking on the floor. She walked past him, her arm brushing against his shirt, and then away from him so he got a full view of the roundness of her buttocks barely covered by the latex.

Jesus, had she walked through the streets like that? He hoped she'd dumped an overcoat in the lobby downstairs.

"Anya, you look ..."

*Amazing ... Sexy ... Slutty ...*

He didn't say any of the things that went through his head.

She turned to face him and ran her hands down the sides of her body, starting at the sides of her breasts, sliding lower, to the dip of her waist, and then over her hips. Eric's dick stirred in his pants.

"Do you like it? I figured I deserved to buy myself something pretty, considering ... everything."

"Yes, you do. But I would have bought you new clothes if you wanted them."

Her blue eyes blazed. "I can buy my own clothes, Eric. Neither you, nor my father, own me. I do what I want."

His heart caught in his chest. So that was what this was about. She was stamping her own mark in the world. “I would never suggest anything else.”

She spotted the mess he’d made and raised her eyebrows. She walked over to the broken glass and, facing away from him, slowly bent at the waist to pick a shard up between her fingertips. Eric caught his breath. Not only was the dress so short it rode right up, exposing the creases between her bottom and thighs, but it also revealed she wasn’t wearing panties.

“Are you doing that on purpose, Anya?” he said, his voice hoarse.

She didn’t bother to straighten up, but looked back over her shoulder. “What do you think?”

He crossed the apartment, his cock straining against his pants.

“I want you to photograph me,” she said, still bending over. “I want you to fill my pussy with cum and then photograph it dripping out of me.”

Eric gave a low moan in the back of his throat, his hand automatically reaching down to his crotch to apply pressure to his throbbing erection. His camera still sat on his desk, waiting for him. The space had been handily cleared, perfect for him to bend Anya over and fuck.

But first he wanted to explore the body she’d so beautifully put on display for him. Shattered pieces of glass were right beneath her. If he pushed her too far forward, or she dropped to her knees, it would cut her beautiful skin. For some reason, the idea of danger only heightened the eroticism in his mind.

She dropped the piece of glass she held, and it tinkled to the floor.

“Hold onto your shins,” he told her, sliding back into the role of photographer and director as easily as changing clothes. “And don’t move. If you move, you’ll get cut.”

She glanced at him again, and slowly licked her lips. “Yes, Sir.”

A thrill went through him. To think that only last night he'd thought their relationship and his career were at an end. Who was this version of Anya? He'd gotten glimpses of her before, but the sweet, almost demure persona seemed to have vanished. He tried not to think about the connection it had with her meeting with her father last night. He didn't want to worry that she was working out her daddy issues by fucking him.

Anya took hold of her shins. The position kept her bent at the waist, her bottom pushed out toward him. The high heels gave her legs extra length. The dress rode up further, the pale globes of her bottom peeping from beneath.

“Widen your legs,” he told her.

She did as he instructed, shifting her ankles farther apart. The sole of her shoe crunched on a piece of glass. The position made her more wobbly, more likely to fall.

Eric placed a hand on her lower back, steadying her. With his other hand, he reached between her thighs. Her pussy lips, puffy, swollen, and already slick with juices peeped from between her thighs.

As soon as his fingers touched her soft, wet flesh, she took a shuddery intake of breath. He sensed the emotion from her. Her cool aloofness was an act. She was masking how she really felt with this sexy, determined version of herself. He would give her what she wanted and more. He would make her come so hard, so many times, that she broke down the mask and cried into his chest and told him how she really felt.

He slicked a finger between her pussy folds, and used her juice to slip his digit into her hot, tight channel. She moaned, her body shuddering.

“Don't move, Anya,” he warned. “You don't want to topple over.”

He fingered her a couple of times, and then added another digit to her pussy. She squirmed and pushed back on him, asking him for more with her body. Putting his fingers together, he added a third, stretching her pussy around his

digits. Could he add another and get all four fingers inside her? Maybe even his thumb. Could she stretch far enough to get his whole fist inside her? Would she cry with pain as her pussy engulfed his whole hand?

The thought almost made him shoot his load inside his pants. Fuck. What was he thinking? Why was the thought of hurting her turning him on so much? Did he feel resentful for what she was putting him through?

“Oh, fuck, Eric,” she cried, the grip on her shins tightening, her knuckles white. Her palms had begun to slip, her skin slippery with sweat. He removed his hand from her lower back and reached around to support the front of her body with his other hand. He wouldn’t let her fall. The threat of pain might be there, but he wouldn’t let her get hurt.

Eric slipped a finger down to flick her clit, while he fingered her hard, pumping into her so her cream slicked his hand right down to the knuckles. Her body trembled, and her pussy started to clamp around his hand as wave after wave of pulsating orgasm took her in its grip and shuddered its way through her body. When she was done, she went limp in his hands, trusting him enough to hold her up above the glass.

He pulled her upright, held her against the front of his body. His erection was so hard he thought it would leave a bruise as he pressed it against her lower back. He leaned forward and spoke into her ear, “You’re not done yet.”

He wanted to take the photographs she had suggested. The moment she put the idea into his head, it was all he wanted. Of course, he’d need to supply the cum.

Eric half carried her over to his desk. She leaned over the top of the smooth surface, her elbows and lower arms rested on the wood.

Roughly, he pushed the latex up over her bottom, the material squeaking against her sweaty flesh. He ran both hands down over the round curves of her ass, cupping each cheek and squeezing hard, leaving the red imprints of his fingers against her pale skin. He ran his thumb down between the crease of her ass, the tip of his thumb trailing over the star of



her anus, making her gasp. The swollen pink puff of her labia swelled just beneath, and he kept his thumb tracing downward, dipping into her wet heat once again. The wetness of her cream moistened her inner thighs, slipping from her pussy. Fuck, she was hot. He couldn't wait to see his cum mixing with her juices, photographing it dripping from her sopping slit.

Quickly, Eric tugged at the button of his pants, yanking down the zipper. His cock sprang free, thick and solid, the veins protruding down its length. The bulbous head was purple with desire, his balls heavy and throbbing. It wouldn't take him long to come. How strange to think this was the desired result. Coming wasn't something he would normally rush.

Anya looked back over her shoulder, her blonde hair sticking to her face, making her appear even more wanton, if such a thing were even possible. "Give it to me, Eric. Fuck me hard."

He didn't need her to ask again, but he made her. "Beg for it," he commanded.

"Please, Eric. Please fuck me. I want you so badly."

He sensed her stifle a sob. "How badly?" He could barely hold himself back now. He wanted desperately to plunge his cock deep inside her.

"So badly, Eric. Please don't tease me. I want your cock in my cunt."

Hearing that word come from her sweet mouth made him groan with desire. He could hold back no longer. Grabbing each of her ass cheeks in his palms, he positioned his cock at her engorged slit. He used the head to slick her swollen lips apart, nudging against her hot, wet entrance, and then he shoved, hard, taking no prisoners.

Anya cried out as his brute force pushed her hard against his desk. Her tight channel engulfed his erection, soft, heated pillows holding him like a glove. He was already so deep, his balls met with her skin, but he shoved again, wanting every inch of him inside her.

Slowly, he withdrew, watching how his cock slid from her body, inch by inch. Anya's hands were balled fists against the solid surface of the desk, her head twisted to one side so her cheek pressed against the wood. Her eyes were squeezed tight shut.

He couldn't resist her ass, wanting to penetrate her in every way. He lifted his thumb to his mouth and slicked his saliva down the digit. The taste of Anya's pussy coated his tongue, and with a grunt he pumped into her again, starting a slow rhythm, his cock pushing in and out of her. He reached down and rubbed his saliva-slicked thumb over the star of her anus. Anya groaned and pushed back on him. The tight ring stretched around the intrusion and he pushed past it, pushing his thumb into her ass. He marveled at the difference between the two channels, the smoothness of her ass passage compared to the soft, wet walls of her pussy. Her back passage clamped tight around his thumb. A sudden desire to fuck her in the ass filled him, but then he remembered the reason he was fucking her now. This wasn't just to get off. They were setting up a photography shoot together. Perhaps she'd let him come up her sweet little bottom next time, and photograph his semen dripping from her asshole.

Eric increased his pace, his eyes flicking between the latex still rolled half way up Anya's back, the way her face was screwed up in concentration of pleasure, the sight of his thumb embedded in her ass.

His movements grew faster, his buttocks clenched, every muscle in his thighs taut. Every time he pounded into her, Anya bounced across the surface of his desk. It was primal, brutal, no affection or emotion. This was fucking for fucking's sake.

Anya's pussy contracted around his cock, her ass tightening on his thumb, trying to pull him deeper. She cried out, a cry that was almost a scream, her fists pressed down hard against the surface of his desk. The change in motion tipped Eric over the edge and he squeezed his eyes shut as his balls lifted high in his body and hot streams of semen spurted from his cock. He gave a roar of relief and pleasure, his eyes

feeling like they were rolling back in his head. The orgasm rode the wave again, a thrust and spurt, another thrust and spurt, until he had emptied himself completely inside her. He leaned over her body and pressed his forehead to her shoulder, panting, their bodies rising and falling together.

Gradually, he felt himself go soft inside her. Soon both his cock and his cum would slip from her body.

“Don’t move,” he told her.

He reached across her body and lifted his camera from where it sat beside his computer. He was careful not to pull from her just yet, wanting to capture the exact moment his cum began to slide from her pussy.

Eric switched on the camera and selected the settings he wanted. He was sliding from her, his wilting dick touching the air of the outside world.

“When I pull out of you, step your legs even farther apart, but otherwise don’t move unless I tell you to, got it?”

Anya nodded.

He stepped away, finally pulling from her pussy. He yanked his pants back up, fumbling one handed with the button, not caring that he would be getting cum and cream all over the inside of them. He’d slept in the pants anyway. He dropped onto one knee and pointed the lens at Anya’s beautiful, shaved, cum-filled pussy.

He shot image after image, her swollen cunt, the white semen and her cream slowly slipping out from between her lips. She angled her hips just right so the cum slid down the inside of her smooth, creamy thighs. Just as erotic was the sight of her perfect bottom pushed out toward him. He gave her only the briefest of instructions. “Arch your back a little more. Spread your legs.” That was all he needed. As always, Anya instinctively knew how to move in order to create the best angles for his camera to work with.

After about fifteen minutes and possibly one hundred shots of Anya’s slit, ass, and thighs, she peered over her shoulder at him and wiggled her behind in that teasing way she liked to

do. She fluttered her eyelashes. “Is it wrong that this is seriously turning me on?”

Enough time had passed for Eric to start getting hard again. He smiled. “How many orgasms would you like in one day?”

“Enough to stop me thinking.”

“I want to take you in the ass.”

She smiled sweetly, and he was reminded of how angelic she could appear while simultaneously looking like a slut. “I love your cock in my ass.”

“Oh, fuck.”

Quickly, he put down his camera and yanked at his pants, pulling them open once again and freeing his rapidly hardening erection. His mind was a blur. It was as if he hadn't come for weeks, never mind minutes. All he could think of was penetrating Anya again, of having her young, tight body clamped around his cock.

Roughly, he pulled her from the desk and pushed her to the floor. Her dress was still rucked up around her waist, and he reached across her body to yank the strap from one shoulder, pulling the front down to expose her breasts. She wasn't wearing a bra and her tits hung freely. The dress was like a rolled up black tire around her middle now, the straps hanging midway down her arms.

Eric pushed her legs apart with his knees and positioned himself behind her. His cock nudged up against her sopping pussy, coating in the cum and cream that remained trapped in her swollen slit. Her asshole was still stretched from him having embedded his thumb in it not so long ago. That was good. He didn't want to think about preparing her for too long. He reached beneath her body and grabbed her breast in one hand, his thumb and finger gripping her nipple and pinching—just hard enough to hurt. Anya hissed air between her teeth, but her nipple grew ever harder between his fingers and she did nothing to make him think she wasn't enjoying the

sensation. His hand moved sides and he pinched her other nipple, the nub like a little rubber bullet beneath his fingertips.

“Does it hurt?” he asked her, his voice gravelly.

“Yes, but it’s a good kind of hurt.”

He viewed her bottom again, the sweet, pale flesh, and his palms tingled. “I want to spank you, Anya. Can I do that?”

“Yes,” she gasped. “Please, do.”

“Remember the safe word, okay? If it’s too much, just shout it.”

She nodded, and then hung her head again. “I remember.” Her voice barely a whisper.

Though he’d longed to plunge his cock inside Anya’s ass, the desire to spank her was even greater. Was he punishing her again? Was that what this was about? He didn’t want to over think things now. Just act.

He sat back on his heels, his erection protruding almost comically from his lap. He reached out and ran his hands over Anya’s buttocks, the skin smooth and warm. With his heart beating hard, and his breath held, he lifted his right hand and brought it down hard on Anya’s butt cheek.

The slap cracked around the apartment, masked only by Anya’s small cry—which could have been made in pain or pleasure, he couldn’t quite tell.

His cock jerked at the contact his palm had made on Anya’s skin. He didn’t give her time to recover, but instead lifted his left hand and brought it down sharply on her other cheek.

Anya groaned, but she didn’t shy away from him. Her back arched like a cat, pushing her bottom up higher for his administrations. Color bloomed in her skin, the distinct lines of his fingerprints appearing on her flesh. He had branded her and something about that gave him an extra thrill. He longed to pick up his camera, but he wouldn’t last long enough to take the photos. Every smack on her backside made his cock jerk and grow harder.

He lifted his hand and smacked her again, three short strikes, one after the other, all on the same cheek. Anya's clenched teeth caused her jaw to tighten and she gave a little 'ugh' of pain every time his palm made contact. The fingerprints began to blur into one, her white bottom now flaming red. The surrounding area was still white, such a contrast his artistic eye wanted to capture, but he could hold himself back no more.

"I'm going to fuck you in the ass now, Anya."

He dipped his fingers in her pussy, wetting his digits with the leftover cum and the fresh juices she'd spilled from being spanked. She couldn't have gotten any wetter. He smeared the lubrication against the rosette of her anus, pushing a finger in, and then adding another, creating a scissoring motion to stretch her gently again. The glow of her bottom excited him. He wouldn't last long for sure, even though he'd already come not long ago.

He slipped his fingers from her body and positioned his erection at her anus. His fingers were on her hips, his eyes glued to the redness he'd created. His palms still smarted from the spanking, so he could only imagine how her bottom felt.

With a gentle push, the bell-end of his cock breached her ring. Her ass was stretched around him, hugging him tight. Eric gave a groan and placed one hand on her lower back, sliding in deeper.

"Oh, God," Anya moaned.

Eric pulled back a little and then thrust again, plunging deeper. He was almost halfway in now. He gave a couple more thrusts, and the whole length of his erection vanished inside Anya's back passage.

His hips jerked, starting to build up momentum, and then he lifted his hand from her lower back and brought it down hard on her bottom. Anya gave a squeal that sent a thrill of excitement through him, his pleasure mounting. He lifted his hand and hit her again, harder this time. The cry she let out was more of a yelp.

His balls clenched, heat swelling and flowing, and he cried out as he came hard and fast into her ass, emptying himself thrust after thrust, his orgasm shuddering its way through his body. Anya's ass clamped down on his cock and he felt the ripples of orgasm in her pussy through the thin walls.

She panted, her head hung.

He quickly grew soft and slipped from her body. Wrapping his arms around her waist, he pulled her up to spoon her, and held her tight.

Instead of becoming shallower, Anya's breathing became more frantic, her shoulders shaking. It dawned on him that she was crying.

A sense of dread filled him. "Anya? What's wrong?"

She shook her head.

"Hey." He moved around so he was beside her, his arm around her naked shoulders. "Did I hurt you? It was too much, wasn't it?"

But she couldn't speak. She just shook her head again, tears streaming down her beautiful face.

Eric got to his feet and pulled up his pants again. He bent back down and lifted Anya from the floor. Prickles of red dotted her knees.

*Oh fuck, the glass.*

"Anya, you're bleeding. We weren't careful of the glass. I'm so sorry."

Guilt swept over him. Hadn't he been thinking about cutting her? Was he really that sick? He needed to watch himself. The dark thoughts were creeping in, and he didn't want to go back to that same place. He loved Anya; he didn't want to hurt her. Yet he'd enjoyed spanking her, enjoyed it more than he would want to admit.

Subconsciously, had he made her kneel down in the glass? Was he a danger to her?

But Anya shook her head. She sniffed a couple of times and then said, “I hadn’t even noticed my knees, Eric. That’s nothing.”

“What is it, then?” he asked, standing with one foot in relief and the other in frustration. “Was it the spanking, did I take it too far? Or did I hurt you when I took you ... up there?”

“No, I loved all of that. It’s not you. I love you.”

“Oh, baby, I love you, too.”

They smiled at each other, even through her tears.

“So what’s wrong?” he asked. “It’s your god-damned father, isn’t it?” Fury swelled within him. “I thought you were going to put his opinions behind you.”

She sniffed again and nodded. “I want to. And I’m trying, I really am. But he’s my father, you know? I hate that he’s disappointed in me.”

He was furious on her behalf. “He should never be disappointed in you. You’re amazing and beautiful and talented.”

“My father doesn’t think so. He thinks I’m a slut.” She gave a cold laugh. “After what we just did, I guess he’s right.”

“Hey!” His voice was harder than he’d intended. “Don’t ever call yourself that. We love each other, don’t we? We enjoy each other’s bodies. We make love and we create art. There is nothing you should be feeling bad about, or ashamed about. Got it?”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to be like this. When I came here, I wanted to prove to my father, and to you as well, I guess, that I could be one of those strong, independent women who does exactly what she wants without caring about anyone else’s opinions.”

“It’s only natural to care about your father’s opinions, Anya. And don’t worry about mine. I’m a self-centered bastard at times, but I want you to be happy. You’re the most important thing in the world to me.”



He kissed her, her mouth first, and then her cheeks and her eyes, kissing away her tears. “Come on. I know what will make you feel better.” He scooped her up into his arms like a child and carried her into the bathroom. He set her down and then proceeded to fill the tub with hot water and bubbles.

He stripped off what remained of his clothes and then rid Anya of hers, too. He climbed in first and lay back, and held out his arms for her to climb into. She stepped her delicate foot into the tub, between his legs, and then settled her backside down between his thighs. With a sigh of pleasure, she leaned back, her head against his chest. He wrapped his arms around her waist and kissed the top of her head.

They settled into a foggy haze of heat and scent, the glow of post-sex high surrounding them. Even with all of the drama surrounding their relationship, Eric didn’t think there was anywhere else in the world he would want to be.

He could easily fall asleep, he realized. He hadn’t exactly slept well, face-down on his desk, and he needed another few hours. Anya stifled a yawn and snuggled down into him.

“Come on,” he said. “Let’s move to the bed.”

Gently, he rinsed off her body. Her skin was now pink from the heat of the bath, though he suspected the redness of her bottom wouldn’t fade completely for a day or two. He ignored the stab of guilt. Despite what she’d said, he hoped he’d not been too hard with her.

They both stood from the bath, water coursing from their bodies and slopping over the sides.

Eric stepped out first, grabbing a fluffy white towel from the heated rail and holding it out for Anya. She stepped into it and he wrapped it around her, wanting to hold her safe, protect her.

He grabbed his own towel and they went into his bedroom. With their bodies still damp, they climbed beneath the covers. Automatically, they sought each other, their limbs tangling, their breathing slowing to match one another.

Within minutes, they both slept.

# Chapter Eighteen

## Eric

**Eric woke with a hollow** pit in his stomach that for once had nothing to do with emotion. After missing dinner the previous night, and skipping breakfast in favor of a fuck-fest with Anya, they'd now slept way past lunch.

He was ravenous.

Glancing over at Anya, the sight of her still sound asleep made his stomach tighten in a knot. Her blonde hair spread across the pillow, her rose-bud mouth parted slightly as she slept. A flush resided high in her cheeks, but the rest of her skin was creamy. Her long, dark blonde eyelashes lay lightly against her cheek. His heart swelled with joy and he resisted the urge to reach over and crush her in his embrace.

How could something so perfect be his?

Carefully, he slipped out of bed and pulled on a pair of low-slung workout pants that had been lying on the floor. Ruffling his hand through his hair, he padded barefoot, and bare-chested, out of the bedroom and into the kitchen area of his apartment.

His computer and camera sat waiting for him, catching his attention. He hesitated. He desperately wanted to sit down and look back through the photographs he'd taken of Anya that morning. His cock stirred in his pants at the thought, but it wasn't just a sexual thing. He wanted to check out what his photographs had turned out like for a professional reason.

No, he had to eat. If he sat down at the computer, he would plug the camera in and before long would be scrolling thorough the pictures, studying them, making editing changes.

And when he looked up again, hours would have passed and he still wouldn't have eaten. He was already feeling weak from all the strenuous exercise and the lack of food.

Even though he told himself this in his head, it was still a battle not to walk over and start working.

He closed his eyes on his equipment. During times like this he wished his apartment wasn't open plan. It would be easier to ignore his work if it wasn't constantly on display.

Using all of his will, he turned away from the computer and camera, and forced himself into the kitchen. *Anya, think of Anya.* She would be hungry as well when she woke. She wouldn't want to see him, weak and wasting away at his computer. The last thing he wanted was to scare her off.

Eric pulled open the refrigerator door, hoping something edible would reside within. His gaze scanned the shelves—eggs, ham, cheese, milk. Yes, he had enough to make an omelet. Perhaps not the most exciting thing in the world, but it was food.

Movement made him look over his shoulder. Anya stood at the kitchen island. She rubbed a hand through her mussed-up hair and yawned. She wore one of his t-shirts which hung mid-thigh. Something stuttered in his chest. She was unbearably cute.

“Morning,” he said with a smile.

She smiled back. “Isn't it more like afternoon?”

“Yeah, I guess so. Does that mean making you breakfast would be weird?”

She hopped up onto one of the stools. “You're cooking for me?” Delight was clear in her voice.

“Don't get too excited,” he warned. “I'm not a great cook, and I'm seriously lacking in anything decent to work with. I'm in desperate need of a trip to the store.”

She shrugged one shoulder, coyly. “The famous Eric Rutherford is cooking me breakfast. Even if you managed to burn me some toast, I would be thrilled.”

He laughed. "I'm sure I can do better than burned toast, but I'm happy you're keeping your expectations low. Coffee?"

"Now that's a word I wanted to hear."

Eric set about filling the percolator and whisking some eggs.

"Anything I can do?" she called.

"Nope. Just sit there and look pretty."

He glanced over his shoulder as she lifted a handful of her hair and dropped it again. She motioned to his t-shirt which covered her body. "I think I might have my work cut out for me there."

"Don't be crazy. You look gorgeous."

Color flushed in her cheeks.

Eric resisted the urge to storm across the room to her and ravage her on the breakfast island. He didn't want her to think this was all about sex, or his photography, for that matter. He just wanted to be with her. Being in her company was enough.

He set to work grating cheese and chopping ham, heated oil in a frying pan, and started to cook.

Smoke alarms went off, the oil too hot. He danced around, flapping a tea-towel around the incessantly beeping thing, while she put her hand to her mouth and laughed.

Finally, it stopped.

Anya grinned. "I take it breakfast is ready?"

They ate sitting across from one another, self-consciously eating while snatching glances of each other.

He couldn't put aside the thoughts of Anya crying, or the way she'd wanted to fuck to stop her from thinking. Though she smiled, he still sensed the sadness she held inside of her. He hadn't even dared ask what she was thinking about the exhibition that was due to open in only a few days.

"Anya," he started, nerves roiling in his stomach, "I think I should go and try to talk with your father again."

Her eyes widened. “Why?”

“Because this thing needs to be smoothed out. I love you and I want to see you happy, and right now I know you’re not.”

She glanced down at her now almost empty plate. “It won’t do any good. You’ll only stir up more trouble.”

“You don’t know that for sure.”

“I knew what his reaction was going to be the first time, but I didn’t trust my instincts. I let myself and everyone else convince me it was going to be okay, and that he might surprise me. But deep down, I knew that wasn’t going to be the case. I think the same thing now.”

“The thing is, Anya, this isn’t just about you. He’s going to try to ruin the exhibition, assuming it goes ahead at all.”

Anya nodded. “I know he will. He won’t take this lying down.”

“So I have to go talk to him,” he insisted. “What hotel are your parents staying at?”

She named a five star hotel not far from where they’d attempted their meal the previous night.

“Okay, I’ll go and talk to him today.”

For once Anya didn’t argue with him.

He set about clearing away the dishes. Anya sat silently, but she was sad and worried, not sulking. He wanted so badly to make her feel better, and the only way he could do so was by making her father see sense.

He kissed her on the head. “I’m going to get dressed. You hang out here until I get back, okay? Make yourself at home.”

“Shouldn’t I come with you?”

“Maybe it would be best for us to be able to talk man to man. It’ll be harder for him to be objective if you’re with me.”

She pressed her lips together and nodded. “Okay, Eric.”

He reached out and touched beneath her chin, lifting her eyes to his. “I know this is hard for you right now, but it will work out in the end. I promise.”

He hoped it was a promise he’d be able to keep.

# Chapter Nineteen

## Eric

**Eric couldn't be bothered to** drive, so he took a cab downtown. He fought against his nerves as he watched the city go by from the back seat. He would talk to Anya's father, Trent Bergman, man to man. He was Eric Rutherford, a successful artist in his own right, and even if he'd grown to fear art critics to a certain degree, he refused to let himself be afraid of this particular one.

The ringing of his cell from his pocket startled him from his thoughts. Though he'd just left her, his thoughts immediately jumped to Anya, but when he checked his caller display, the name 'Logan Blanc' glared out at him.

His heart sank. Logan. What the hell was he going to tell him? That the exhibition might be off? No, Anya hadn't said anything about canceling, and he didn't intend on putting words in her mouth. For the moment, he would simply have to stall and hope that his conversation with her father ended better than the last one had.

He pressed the green button to answer. "Logan, hey."

"Hey, man. I hadn't heard anything from you, so figured I'd better touch base. Everything okay on your end?"

He hesitated. Part of him wanted to have someone to offload onto, but he forced himself to keep Anya's life private. "Yeah, everything's fine here. How are the arrangements for the exhibition?"

"All good. I've sent out the private invitations already. I sent you one. Did you get it?"

Eric confirmed he had.

“So ninety percent of the invitations I sent out have already confirmed, and I suspect the few I haven’t heard from will be confirming in the next few days. And the phone has been ringing off the hook with people I haven’t invited hearing about the great Eric Rutherford smashing back onto the scene with an edgy project in a brand new direction,”

Eric interrupted. “Those sound like words you’ve put into their heads.”

Logan laughed. “Yeah, I might have been dropping a few press releases around mentioning those things.”

“Why doesn’t that surprise me?” Logan was known for his ability to get people talking as much as he was for selling art. The idea of the exhibition popping up in the local papers made his heart sink, though. While he knew the papers wouldn’t have any of his photographs, he could just imagine Anya’s father reading about it and blowing a fuse.

“Hey, I know my business,” Logan continued. “So when do you think you’ll have the pieces ready? I’d like them in the studio the night before the exhibition.”

Eric sighed. He was cutting things fine, but then he’d known that when he agreed to Logan’s date. He’d have to spend much of the next week working, even though he’d been trying to wean himself away from his work. “I’ll get it done, Logan. You know I will.”

“Yeah, just don’t go falling down the rabbit hole again.”

“I won’t.” Logan had been there to witness firsthand the mess Eric had been in the last time he’d allowed the obsessive dark thoughts to take over. He couldn’t explain it, how the fog descended on him, blocking off the outside world. He always felt that when he was speaking with Logan, the other man was cautious and careful, trying to assess him for any signs that Eric might be losing it again.

Logan paused, but he could sense he wanted to say something else. “So ... how’s that lovely model of yours?”

“Anya?”



“Yeah, of course, Anya.”

“She’s great.”

“No problems with the concerns she’d had then?”

Eric didn’t want to let Logan in on Anya’s problems with her father. He’d let Logan know only when a time came when he had no other choice than to tell him.

“Anya’s fine.”

“Did she speak to her parents?”

Eric hesitated, not wanting to lie directly to Logan, while unable to tell him the full truth. “She told her mom, and Saara Bergman was surprisingly okay about the whole thing.”

“That’s great. And if you ever want to set up that photo shoot we discussed, you know where I am.”

“Thanks, Logan. I appreciate that. The idea has played on my mind. It would be an amazing shoot. But I would need to discuss it properly with Anya first. It’s something she would need to be fully into.”

“Yeah, of course. I wouldn’t expect anything else.” Logan hesitated and then said, “Well, stay in touch, buddy.”

And he hung up.

Eric lowered his cell. The driver had already pulled up outside the hotel where Mr. and Mrs. Bergman were staying. He fought down his nerves. He had every right to be here, to challenge her father. The man had hit him, for God’s sake. He should be the one wanting to apologize to Eric.

But deep down Eric knew there was no chance of such a thing happening. Anya’s father might even refuse to see him.

He smoothed down his shirt and squared back his shoulders, lifting his chin. If he went in there cowed, he’d as good as already lost the argument.

Eric approached the desk. A pretty young woman saw him coming and flashed him her brightest smile. “Good afternoon, sir. How may I help you?”

“I need you to call up to Mr. and Mrs. Bergman’s room, and let them know Eric Rutherford is in the lobby waiting for Mr. Bergman.”

“Are they expecting you?”

“No, but he’ll want to know I’m here.”

She placed the internal call, and gave him an awkward smile while they both waited. The time stretched on too long. “I’m sorry, sir,” she said eventually. “He doesn’t appear to be in.”

Eric kicked himself mentally. Of course there was a good possibility he wasn’t even in the hotel room. New York was a big city. Eric should have gotten Anya to call ahead to check where her parents were, but he’d not wanted to put her through any more altercations with her father. Never mind. If he wasn’t in, Eric would simply wait until he returned. And he would return. Trent Bergman wouldn’t leave this city, not until he’d torn Eric and Anya’s work to pieces.

“No problem,” he said to the receptionist. “I’ll wait in the lobby.”

“Of course. The bar is right across there if you’d like any refreshments.”

He didn’t trust himself with alcohol, so he ordered a coffee, keeping his eye on the lobby at all times. He sat, sipping his drink, watching and waiting for the Bergmans’ return to the hotel.

Finally, a tall figure with white blond hair, and a smaller blonde at his side, strolled through the lobby.

Eric leaped to his feet and rushed out. “Mr. Bergman?”

Trent turned at his name, caught sight of Eric standing there, and scowled. “What the hell are you doing here?”

“I came to talk about your daughter.”

Anya’s mother nodded at her husband, pushing him encouragingly toward Eric. At least they had her on their side.

“Can I buy you a coffee?” Eric offered, trying to be civil.

“I don’t want anything from you.”

“Very well. Let me ask for something from you. Just five minutes of your time. Surely your daughter is worth that much to you?”

Trent’s face began to turn puce, but Saara stepped in. “If you won’t talk to him for Anya, do it for me,” she told her husband. “Unless you want to lose a wife as well as a daughter?”

Trent scowled at her, but said, “Fine.”

He stalked into the bar where Eric had been sitting, and flagged the waiter before ordering a scotch. He didn’t make any effort to ask Eric if he wanted anything—not that Eric cared.

Trent flung himself into a chair and sat forward, his elbows rested on his knees, his fingers laced together. “Let’s get this over with.”

“I’m here for Anya,” Eric said. “I love your daughter, Mr. Bergman, and I wouldn’t do anything to cause her harm.” He experienced a momentary stab of guilt as he remembered fucking her above shards of broken glass. “Once more, I want to offer you the chance to come and view the photographs before they go on display, so you are at least prepared for the exhibition and the reports that will follow.” Eric risked half a smile. “You never know, you might even be surprised.”

“Surprised is the last thing I want to be. I don’t even want to think about what you’ve made my little girl do, never mind see them! The only reason Anya is doing this is because she is in love with you. If she didn’t care for you, she would never show off her body in such a way.”

“You’re wrong. Anya is an artist. She knows exactly what she is doing.”

His eyes narrowed. “Are you saying you know my daughter better than I do? How long have you known her for, exactly? A couple of weeks?”

“I’m saying there might be parts of your daughter you don’t know as well as you think you do.”

He snorted. “I think you want to make sure the entire city knows my daughter’s parts.”

“It’s art,” Eric snapped, starting to feel like a broken record.

“If you continue with this exhibition, I will make sure you never work again. I’ll let everyone know that you pressured my daughter into taking these explicit photos. I’ll go to every paper, every art magazine and online review site. I won’t let this rest, *Mr. Rutherford*.”

Eric shook his head in dismay. “You’re supposed to be an art critic. Is there no way you can look at this objectively? Come and support Anya and see the pictures and how beautiful she is. Appreciate the art she’s been a part of creating.”

“I’ll die before that happens.” He pointed a finger at Eric. “And let me remind you that Anya is my daughter. I have raised her for twenty-two years, and if you think you can strut in here as if you’re something important in her life, you’re going to get a hell of a shock when she comes to her senses, turns around, and tells you you’re no longer able to exploit her body.”

Eric clenched his fists and spoke in a low, measured tone. “Anya is in love with me, Mr. Bergman. Do you remember what that is like, to be so utterly in love with someone you will literally do anything if it means being with that person? You will lose her if you continue to treat her this way. You can emotionally blackmail her as much as you want, but she wants to do the exhibition.”

“No. You’ve made her think she does, that’s all. She’ll realize what a huge mistake she’s making and come back to her family.”

Eric shook his head. “If you make her choose between you and me, you will lose.”

Trent Bergman picked up the shot of whisky he’d ordered and drained the glass. “We’ll see about that, Mr. Rutherford.”

When you're alone and your career is lying in tatters at your feet, we'll see who ends up as the loser.”

He slammed the glass back onto the table, got to his feet, and stormed from the bar.

Eric let out a sigh and ran his hand through his hair, sinking back into his seat.

Anya had been right about him not speaking to her father. He had a feeling he had just made things one hundred times worse.

# Chapter Twenty

## Anya

**Anya wandered from one part** of Eric's apartment to the other, unable to figure out what to do with herself. She tried to watch Eric's tastefully small flat screen, but everything on television felt fake and irritating.

She lay back down on his bed, but couldn't get back to sleep, despite not having slept almost the whole previous night. Her mind kept turning over the argument with her father and what she was going to do.

In the end, she found herself sitting on his couch, chewing at her thumbnail while she stared out of Eric's beautiful floor to ceiling windows which looked out onto the skyline of New York. As each moment passed, she imagined where Eric was and if he'd approached her father yet. She wanted to feel confident in Eric's proposal to set her father straight, but he barely knew her father, whereas she'd known him her whole life. She should have trusted her own instincts before telling her father the truth, but she'd allowed herself to be persuaded. She couldn't help feeling like she was also allowing history to repeat itself by letting Eric try to talk to him 'man to man.'

The door buzzed and she sat up straight, turning toward the sound. No one could get up here without her buzzing the person in, unless someone else let them into the building. This was a possibility—it was something she'd done herself.

The door buzzed again. Could it be Eric? Had he taken a key? She couldn't say for sure.

Her stomach churning, she got to her feet and headed over to the door. She reached out and pressed the button for the

intercom. “Hello?”

A male voice came back. “Oh, hi. My name’s Jonathan Turner. I’m here from the arts department of the New York Journal. I have an appointment with Mr. Rutherford.”

*Oh, damn. Eric must have forgotten.*

“I’m sorry, Mr. Turner. Eric—I mean Mr. Rutherford—isn’t here right now. You may have to call him to reschedule.”

She heard the man tut and huff a sigh of annoyance. “You know, this really won’t do, Miss ...”

“Anya,” she said.

“Anya. Can I come up and wait for him?”

She chewed her lower lip. “Umm, well, I don’t know how long he’ll be. I think he has his cell on him. Could you try calling him direct?”

“I don’t have his cell number.”

“Hang on. I’ll try for you.”

Quickly, she ran to where she’d left her purse on the counter and found her phone. She dialed Eric’s number, hoping she wasn’t interrupting some opinion altering conversation with her father. But the cell simply rang until the voicemail picked it up.

“Hi, you’ve reached Eric Rutherford, leave me a message.”

“Hi, Eric. It’s me. You had an appointment with a guy from the New York Journal. Can you call me back and let me know what you want me to do with him? Hope everything is going well. I miss you.”

She hung up and went back to the door. “I’m sorry, but he’s not answering.”

“He might be on his way back then.” His tone grew hard. “I really don’t appreciate a wasted journey, Anya.”

*Shit.* She didn’t want the guy to write bad things in his newspaper just because she had handled things badly. She

imagined Eric arriving home at any minute, staring at her in confusion, asking why the hell she'd sent the reporter away.

“Okay,” she relented. “I’ll buzz you up.”

She felt awkward, wearing only Eric’s t-shirt and a pair of his Jockey shorts. She’d have liked to have been more presentable, but she wasn’t showing any unnecessary flesh. She peered out of the spy hole, waiting for the elevator doors to open. As soon as they did, she opened the front door.

Jonathan Turner was in his early forties, with glasses and receding, graying hair. His suit appeared too big for him, hanging off his narrow shoulders. Anya wondered if he’d lost a lot of weight recently and hadn’t bothered to replace his clothes. She juggled her cell in her hand, praying Eric would call, and fixed a smile on her face.

“Mr. Turner. So sorry to keep you waiting. I’m sure Mr. Rutherford won’t be long.” He swept past her into the apartment and dumped his bag on the coffee table. “Can I make you some coffee?” she offered.

“Yes, please. Black, one sugar.”

She nodded and headed to the kitchen area, filling the coffee machine with fresh water and switching it on.

“So are you his P.A. or something?” Turner asked.

“Umm, no. Not quite.” She was surprised he’d think such a thing considering her outfit.

“But you work for him?”

“Yes, sometimes.”

He shifted in his seat. “I’m sorry. I don’t understand.”

Her cheeks heated. “I do some modeling work for Eric.”

“Oh, I see.”

They sat in uncomfortable silence while the coffee finished brewing, and then she got back to her feet and brought his cup over and placed it on the table in front of him. Anxiously, she glanced at the clock on the kitchen wall.



“What time did you say your appointment was?”

“Oh ...” She caught his eyes flicking to the clock as well.  
“About two-thirty.”

*Wouldn't he know an exact time?*

“So what kind of modeling do you do for him, exactly?”

She frowned. “That depends on what Eric’s working on.”

“I hear he’s been working on a new line of photographs, heading in a new, riskier direction.”

Something turned uneasily inside her stomach. “I think I’ll just try Eric’s cell again.”

She got up and turned away. As she dialed his number again, she caught sight of the reporter lifting his own phone, and a flash went off.

Her heart lurched. “What are you doing?”

Eric’s voice came through the phone. “Anya?” Her focus moved back to Eric. “Oh, Eric, thank God. You had an appointment with a reporter today. You must have forgotten about it.”

He hesitated. “Umm, no, I didn’t. I don’t have any appointments.”

She glanced over at the man sipping coffee. “Well, there’s a man here waiting for you.”

“What? Waiting where? Not in the apartment?”

She lowered her voice. “Yeah, I let him in. Was that wrong?”

“Just hang tight, Anya. I’m almost with you.”

She turned back to find the reporter getting to his feet. She frowned, her body tensing.

“I should really get going,” he said.

“That was Mr. Rutherford. He’s almost here. Don’t you want to keep your appointment?” Her tone was ice cold.

“I’ve wasted enough time already. I can’t afford any more.”

He started to head toward the door, but she slipped in front of him, blocking the way. “Seriously, Mr. Turner. He said he was right outside. Why else were you waiting for him unless you wanted to keep your appointment?”

“Please, young lady. I’m asking you nicely to move out of my way.”

She folded her arms across her chest. “You sure you don’t want to take any more photographs while I’m standing here?”

He spluttered. “Photographs? I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Show me your phone, then. I saw you take my picture.”

“I did not!”

The door burst open behind her and Eric flew into the room, his face flushed, breathing hard. He didn’t even acknowledge Anya, but instead focused on the other man in the apartment. “Jonny Turner! What the hell do you think you’re doing in my home?”

“I want to talk to the lovely Anya. I hear she’s the model for this new collection you’re exhibiting.”

“That’s none of your concern. Now get the hell out of my place.”

The reporter lifted his hands in surrender. “Willingly. I was just leaving anyway.”

“He took my photo,” Anya said.

Eric’s eyes blazed. “Is that true?”

He shrugged. “So what if it is?”

Eric held out a hand. “Give me your cell.”

He scoffed. “No chance.”

Eric stepped forward, his shoulders squared. “Give me the phone or I will take it from you.”

“Are you threatening me? Because I’m going to have a far more interesting story to write if you threaten me and perhaps destroy some of my personal property.”

Anya put a hand on Eric’s arm. “Leave it, Eric. My photographs are going to be everywhere in a few days anyway. We have more important things to worry about than this scumbag.”

He glanced at her and then back at the reporter. “I’m letting you go because of *her*, not you. If you come anywhere near either us again ...” He left the threat open-ended.

Eric opened the door and Jonny Turner skulked out. He gave Anya a snide grin before the elevator doors shut him from view.

Anya shivered. “That guy gave me the creeps.”

Eric rounded on her. “Never let anyone else into the apartment, no matter what they say to you. Understand?”

His voice was hard and she wilted under his stern stare. “Sorry, Eric.”

“I mean it, Anya. Those sons of bitches have no souls. That guy ripped me to pieces when I was having a tough time. He printed every bad moment I had, spoke to everyone I knew, and made it his business to make my dark times everyone else’s business. They will stop at nothing to get a story, and if they can embellish it with some good old fashioned dirt, even better.”

“Sorry, Eric,” she said again.

His expression softened, and he stepped forward and pulled her into a hug. He kissed the top of her head. “No, I’m sorry. There was no way for you to know. I should have warned you that this kind of thing happens.”

“Well, he’s gone now, and I know for the future.”

He kissed her and she let her mind be absorbed by the taste of his mouth and the feel of his skin against hers. She wanted to lose herself in him, but a question nagged at her mind.

She broke the kiss. “How did it go with my father?”

He gave his head a slight shake. “Sorry, Anya. It wasn’t much better. He’s still not happy about the exhibition.” He paused and then said, “Worse than not happy.”

She gave a shrug, though her heart sank to the pit of her stomach. “It’s okay. I knew that would be the case. I just keep letting myself hope, you know?”

He kissed her again. “Maybe I shouldn’t have given you that hope?”

“No, I appreciate that you tried. It means the world that you’re willing to put yourself out like that for me.”

He hesitated and then said, “So, you still want to do the exhibition, despite your father?”

It occurred to her that Eric had another reason to make her father change his mind that wasn’t just about her feelings.

“I meant what I said, Eric. I want to have a future in this business. I want to be an artist—I always have—I’ve just never known what kind. Now I feel like I’ve found my passion, and I don’t want to let that go. Nothing else will live up to it. Even if my father disowns me, which I think he’s already done, I won’t live my life on his terms. Nothing will be the same. Everything else has just faded into gray. I want this more than anything.”

He smiled and wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her hard and tight against the front of his body. She felt his reaction to her proximity and ground against him.

“Even more than me?” he growled.

She stood on tiptoes and smiled against his mouth. “I don’t want anything more than I want you.”

“That’s good to know,” he said, before he used his teeth to lightly tug at her lower lip.

She moaned and wrapped her hands around his neck, lacing her fingers in the soft hair at the nape of his neck. The light bite turned into a kiss, and Eric’s hands cupped her buttocks and lifted her up so her thighs wrapped around his waist. The position opened her pussy to press against the

length of his erection. She knew she was soaking the inside of the Jockey shorts she wore. The pressure sent a surge of desire pulsing through her and she kissed him harder, hungry for his mouth, for all of him. She suddenly hated the items of clothing separating their bodies. She wanted him inside her, their skin melding at every point, joining them like one person.

Eric carried her over to the couch and carefully, as if she were a delicate silk dress, laid her out on the cushions. He stared down at her, his eyes dark and hooded with lust, his chest rising and falling with his heavy breath.

Perhaps she was wrong to want Eric as much as she did, but she didn't care about anything else. She felt she could handle whatever the universe threw at her as long as Eric loved her. This wasn't just a physical thing. He understood her, he inspired her. And he was fucking amazing in bed.

She wanted to give something back to him.

He slowly undressed her, pulling off the t-shirt she wore and throwing it to the floor. Then he pulled off her shorts, leaving her naked. He moved to climb between her thighs, but she stopped him by placing her hand on his well-muscle bicep.

“No, I want you naked, too.”

Eric grinned at her and straightened to pull off his own clothes.

He bent back down to feather kisses across her stomach, but she wanted to get his attention. “I want to try something.”

He lifted his face to her. “Oh, yes? That sounds interesting.”

She quelled her nerves, remembering how open-minded Eric was. “How do you feel about being penetrated?”

His eyebrows shot up his forehead. “By another man?”

“No, by me.”

He moved up her body, his mouth beside her ear, his hot breath against her skin. He grazed her earlobe with his teeth. “Keep talking.”

His erection pressed hard against her stomach, and taking his words as encouragement, she reached between them and wrapped her fingers around his silken hard length and squeezed. Eric groaned in response.

“Well,” she said, keeping her voice low and seductive, her other hand stroking down the smooth, taut muscles of his back, lower and lower, to the dip at the bottom of his spine and then over the firm curve of his buttocks. “I’d like to put my finger in your ass first, see how that feels. And then maybe we could progress to more. Try the plug on you, perhaps, or even something bigger.”

His cock jerked in her hand and his hips thrust forward. “Fuck, Anya. You’re turning me on so badly. I don’t know if I’ll last long enough to do all of that.”

She removed her hand from his ass, and locked her eyes on his as she parted her lips and placed her middle finger and forefinger into her mouth. Creating as much saliva as she could manage, she coated her digits, and then reached back down. “Why don’t we find out?” She found the crease between his cheeks and she ran her finger down between them, separating them, until her fingertips reached the tight star of his anus. Before penetrating him, she let go of his cock with her other hand, spread her thighs and pushed his erection down between them. She lifted her hips and accepted his cock into her pussy, letting out a long moan as he slowly pushed inside her waiting heat. All the talk had made her wet.

They held still together, allowing Anya to take her time. She applied pressure to his asshole, rubbing her saliva in, trying to loosen him up. The idea that he might be an anal virgin thrilled her and, though she’d been trying to keep still, she couldn’t stop her pussy muscles from clamping around his cock, her hips from pushing up toward his.

He buried his face in her neck. “Oh, fuck, Anya.”

Her finger slipped inside his ass, the soft, tight pillows of his back passage instantly clamping around her digit. Her saliva allowed for a little lubrication, but she would have liked

more. If she was going to add another finger to really get him going, they would need a good application of lube first.

Gently, she pushed her finger back and forth, loosening him up, making sure he was relaxed. His hips moved with her, and she tried to concentrate on what she was doing, and not lose herself in the sensation of cock sliding slowly and sensually in and out of her. Then she cocked her finger in a come-hither manner and reached the soft mound of his male G-spot. The moment she made contact, Eric's cock jerked inside her, his back arching, his hips bucking.

“Ah, fuck,” he gasped.

“Shh, relax. Let me massage you there. It'll be good, I promise.”

She could feel him holding back. He probably wanted to fuck her hard and fast now, and would come within seconds, but she wanted him to hold off. This would be so much better for him if he waited, and all she wanted to do was give him pleasure.

Gently, she rubbed the spot. She kissed him, slow and sensual, and they began to move together again, Eric deep inside her.

“I'm close,” he said against her mouth. “I can't hold on much longer.”

Her own climax was beginning to build, a slow burn deep in her belly, all of the muscles down there tight with anticipation. The pleasure grew stronger and she squeezed her eyes shut, not wanting to break her concentration of the sublime feeling of Eric's cock embedded deep inside her, while she penetrated him. They were joined, connected, both physically and mentally, and for Anya, that was as much of a turn-on as anything.

Eric gave a groan, his movements suddenly increasing in pace. She applied more pressure to his prostate and his groan turned into a yell. He thrust hard, deep inside her, and her own orgasm broke over her in waves. Fireworks exploded behind her eyelids, sparks of pleasure igniting every nerve ending in

her body. Her pussy pulsed and clenched. Their hips bucked and met, and Eric spurted hot streams of cum inside her. He thrust again, and again, and then held himself deep before slumping on top of her.

Anya panted as her orgasm released her from its throes. She slipped her finger from Eric's body and allowed him to twist around on the couch, pulling her into his embrace. Their legs wound together, and she slung her arm over his naked, damp torso, and rested her head on his chest.

"That was fucking amazing," he said, his breathing returning to normal. "*You* are fucking amazing."

She lifted her head to look at him with a smile. "You're not so bad yourself."

He kissed her, and then she rested her head back down.

"I love how you're so open about everything. You make me feel as if I could suggest anything and you'd never judge me for it."

She laughed. "You mean you love that I'm as perverted as you are."

He joined her laughter. "Perverted? Me?" He fell silent and then said, "Actually, I had Logan call me today."

Her heart beat a little faster at the mention of the other guy's name. "Oh, yeah? Was he checking I hadn't backed out?"

"Partly that, but he also mentioned the photo shoot again. The one involving the two of you. I told him I would talk to you about it."

Even though she'd just come, she felt the blood rush to her already engorged pussy, her clit tingling. She was in love with Eric, there was no doubt about it in her mind—but that didn't mean the idea of having Logan so physically close didn't turn her on. In her mind, Logan would be like having another toy, only a male, living, breathing version. But the last thing she would want to do was cause any kind of jealousy between her and Eric. She would never do anything to jeopardize what they had.



She lifted her head. “I wouldn’t want anything to come between us, Eric. That’s the most important thing to me.”

He frowned. “Why would it come between us? It’s art, Anya. It’s photography.”

“Could you really watch another guy have sex with me?” Sometimes, she wished he would be just a little more jealous. But even so, the thought sent a thrill of excitement through her.

“You wouldn’t be having sex with him, Anya. It’s simply simulating the sex act for the photographs.”

“But we’d be naked,” she said. “And he’d put his cock inside me.”

“Not at first. We can see how it goes, and take it from there. You’re both beautiful people, and your images would be stunning.”

“But ...” She didn’t know how to say it, without fear of upsetting him. But she needed to. If this were to happen, they needed to be completely open with each other. “But what if I enjoyed it?”

He laughed. “I wouldn’t expect you to not enjoy it! I’d never ask you to do something you didn’t get pleasure from.”

Well, Eric didn’t seem to have a problem with her being naked with Logan. Was she really going to turn this opportunity down?

She lifted her head and smiled. “Okay, tell him we’ll do it.”

He kissed her. “Did I tell you that you’re amazing?”

She shrugged. “Well, yeah, but I don’t mind if you repeat yourself.”

# Chapter Twenty-one

## Anya

**Eventually, they managed to untangle** from each other and climb from the couch. Eric announced he was going to take her out to dinner, but when she pointed out the only clothes she had with her were the extremely short latex dress, or her other outfit of Eric's t-shirt and shorts, he agreed to order take-out instead.

He kissed her head. "I'm buying you more clothes before you step outside my apartment door again, though," he told her. "There's no way I'm letting you step outside wearing that dress. We can keep it here instead." He gave her a salacious look and waggled his eyebrows. "In the bedroom."

She laughed and smacked him playfully on the arm. "You do realize how weird it is that you don't want me to go outside in a slutty dress, but you're happy to have my naked photographs hanging in a gallery for all of New York to see."

He shrugged. "That's different. When you're in photographs, it's not the real you. It's an image, a beautiful image, but an image nonetheless." He slipped his arm around her waist and kissed her on the mouth. "The Anya who walks by my side is the real Anya, and I don't want any other man eyeing you up as we walk down the street."

She couldn't help but think about Logan. He didn't want another guy looking at her, but he was happy for her to pose naked with another man, right in front of him?

"You're a little crazy, you know that, right?"

He gave a rueful smile. "Yeah, I know."

They ordered Chinese food, and after it arrived and they'd gorged themselves on noodles, rice, and crackers, Eric headed into his office area to catch up on some work and make a call to Logan.

Anya thought she should probably make her excuses and go back to her room in the dorm. The last thing she wanted was to go back to the comparatively tiny space—compared to Eric's apartment—and share a room with her roommate rather than snuggle up to a gorgeous, talented man, but Nadine would be wondering what had happened to her. Of course, there was a very real possibility that Nadine wouldn't have made it home either in the last twenty-four hours. The girl knew how to party.

She checked her cell phone, but didn't have any missed calls. Deep down she'd hoped to see a missed call, if not from her father, then from her mother, at least. But the screen didn't say anyone had tried to reach her. She obviously wasn't being missed too badly.

Sadness swelled up inside her. Tears filled her eyes, and she blinked them back and swallowed hard against the lump in her throat. She wished her parents could be happy for her. For the first time in her life, she felt like she'd found her place in the world. She just wished they could accept her for who she was.

Movement in the kitchen caught her attention. Eric had opened the refrigerator and was bent, peering inside.

"You can't still be hungry?" she said with a laugh. She felt like her stomach bulged, she'd eaten so much.

But Eric straightened, pulling a bottle of white wine out with him. "Nope. I figured we deserved a drink."

She looked longingly at the bottle. She couldn't think of anything nicer than curling up on the couch with Eric and a bottle of wine. But she couldn't stay here all the time. It would be as if she'd moved in without even being asked. The idea of something so permanent felt both amazing and terrifying all at the same time.

She slipped her feet off the couch and planted them on the floor. “I can’t, Eric. I really need to get back to my dorm.”

His face fell. “I’d assumed you weren’t going back tonight.”

“I can’t stay here all the time.”

“Why not?”

“Eric! I can’t! We just met. We’ll get sick of each other within a week.”

He brought the bottle and a couple of glasses over and set them on the coffee table. He leaned over her to nuzzle her neck. “I could never get bored of you.”

She laughed, but pushed him away. “Seriously, Eric. I have to go. I need clean clothes and I have my own work to do.”

“So let’s go and get all of your things. We’ll bring them back here, then it won’t be a problem.”

She stopped and stared at him. “What are you saying?”

“I thought that was obvious. Just move in with me.”

“You’re serious? You want me to move in here?”

“Why not? I love you. I want to be with you all of the time. As long as you feel the same way, I can’t see any reason not to. This place is too big for me on my own. And it feels so empty now when you’re not here. Before I met you, I never noticed, but now all I think about when you’re not around is how much I miss you.”

“But I still need to get to campus for class.”

“So, you can take a cab. You know I’ll pay. Hell, I’ll buy you a damned car if that’s all it takes to get you to come live with me.”

She gaped at him. “You’re actually serious.”

“Of course I am. I never say anything I don’t mean.”

“You’re crazy,” she repeated.

He gave her an impossibly sexy smile. “What’s the point in being alive if you can’t be a little reckless now and then?”

He was right. She didn't want to go back to her dorm when she could be here, with Eric. She loved him, and hated to spend even a minute without him.

"We'll try it," she said eventually. "I won't give up my dorm room, though, just in case we discover we hate each other after a week."

His eyebrows lifted. "I had no idea you were such a romantic."

"Yeah, well, one of us has to keep our heads screwed on. If this all goes wrong, you won't be the one left with nowhere to live."

He lifted his hands in surrender. "Okay, okay. But just so you know, I'd live on the streets myself before I saw you homeless."

Anya smiled and slid onto his lap, wrapping her arms around his neck. "You're my hero."

His face grew serious. "You're my everything. I love you so much, it's crazy. You know that, don't you?"

Her heart swelled with happiness. "I love you, too."

They kissed and grinned at each other, neither one quite daring to believe how lucky they were the other person had come into their life.

She remembered something. "Hey, how did the call with Logan go?"

"Oh, yeah, I'd almost forgotten about that. It went well. He's free tomorrow afternoon, if you are?"

Nerves flipped in her stomach. "That soon?"

Eric shrugged. "Sure, why wait?"

She couldn't think of one reason. "I'm nervous," she admitted.

"Don't be. Logan will make you feel at ease, I promise."

"Just as long as it isn't ..." She trailed off.

"Weird?" he filled in.

“And awkward.”

“It won’t be. We’ll get a bottle of champagne and have some fun. If at any point you want to stop, or do something differently, just say.”

“Same with you, too,” she insisted. “If it’s making you feel strange, you have to speak up.”

“Strange? The only thing it’s going to do to me is get me crazy hot so I’ll end up having to screw the hell out of you as soon as Logan has gone.”

She smiled. “Now you’re talking.”

“So we’ll go back to your dorm and get your stuff in the morning, and then in the afternoon we’ll do the shoot with Logan.”

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**Eric was setting up his** studio in preparation for Logan’s arrival, while Anya stood in the bathroom, anxiously applying and reapplying her make-up. She’d already shaved her skin smooth, and then coated every inch of herself in moisturizing cream. Now she stood naked in front of the mirror, examining herself. Would Logan find her sexy? What if he didn’t and it was obvious that he didn’t think she was attractive? She’d be mortified.

She palmed her naked breasts and gave her nipples a pinch between her thumb and forefinger, making the pink nubs stand erect and sending a frisson of pleasure down to her groin. It was strange how much more nervous she felt at the idea of exposing herself in front of Logan like this, when she hadn’t experienced anything like such nerves at getting naked in front of Eric. Perhaps she’d always felt more predatory with Eric, knowing exactly what she wanted, where Logan was something different altogether.

She tried to push all thoughts of her parents—her father, in particular—to the back of her mind. Yet, despite her best efforts, she couldn’t help wondering if she was doing all of this to spite him. Though she told herself she was the one in control of her life now, and she would do what she wanted

without being emotionally blackmailed by her father, the thought of him never wanting to see her again saddened her. But there was nothing more she could do. She had two choices—censor herself to please her parents, or live her life to its full potential.

Anya couldn't imagine living a single day with the first option.

She applied a final slick of gloss to her lips, gave her hair another fluff, and then wrapped herself in her robe. She'd decided wearing a robe and being naked underneath would be less intimate than if she actually needed to undress herself in front of Logan. At least this way she could just whip off the robe and be done.

The buzzer for the front door rang, and her heart leapt into her throat. Shit. He was here.

"You okay in there, baby?" Eric called out. "I think Logan's here."

She forced her voice to be bright. "Coming."

By the time she made it out of the bathroom, Eric was already opening the door to Logan.

He stepped into the apartment, a wide smile on his tanned, handsome face, showing off those straight white teeth. He pushed his blond waves back with one hand while his blue gaze met with hers.

"Hey, Anya."

"Hey," she said, smiling back. Butterflies danced around her stomach.

Logan lifted the other hand which held a paper bag wrapped around a bottle. "I figured we could do with some fizz."

Eric took the bottle from him. "We'd already come to that same conclusion. I just opened a bottle of Dom Perignon."

Anya noticed the three glasses sitting on the kitchen island. Golden bubbles rose and popped to the surface. Eric placed the

new bottle in the refrigerator, and then handed each of them one of the glasses he'd already poured.

Logan's gaze flicked to the pile of boxes and bags still unpacked by the front door. "Are you moving out?" he asked Eric.

Eric smiled and slipped his arm around Anya's waist. "Nah, Anya is moving in here. It seemed crazy to have all her stuff somewhere else when she's spending all her time here."

"Wow, that's fast."

Eric handed him a glass. "Yeah, but it feels right, you know? Life is for living. There's no point in hanging around."

"Well, congrats," he said, lifting his glass in a toast. "And here's to a great shoot."

Eric clinked his glass to each of theirs. "Hear, hear."

Anya took a sip, the bubbles bursting in the back of her nose. She took another, larger gulp, wanting the alcohol to take off the edge.

Logan turned his attention to her. He really was crazily good looking, not in the classic, sophisticated way Eric was, but in more of an easy going way.

"So I hope you're not feeling too put out by Eric wanting to do this shoot," he said.

She blinked. "What do you mean?"

"Well, I'm sure you could think of better things to do than have my hands all over you all afternoon."

She risked a smile. "It's okay. It's not such a bad way to spend my time."

He turned to Eric. "So, what's the plan?"

"I suggest some artistic nude shots, initially. I want you both to feel at ease with each other's bodies before we move on to anything more erotic. How does that sound?"

Logan seemed completely unfazed. "Sure, sounds good."



Anya realized she'd already finished her glass of champagne. The nerves had made her drink too quickly.

Eric walked over to the floor to ceiling windows and closed the blinds, secluding them in their own, private space. "Most of these images will be in black and white," he explained, "so getting the correct lighting is vital."

She felt he was explaining this to her, as a student, rather than Logan who probably already knew everything there was to know about art.

Eric positioned a couple of objects around the studio area—a large, cushioned stool, a velvet blanket on the floor. "Ready when you are."

Logan began to strip, pulling his t-shirt over his head, revealing perfect abdominal muscles, a narrow waist, and broad shoulders. His chest was completely smooth, and she wondered if it was naturally like that or if he waxed. His skin was a light tan, and as he toed off his shoes and socks, and started to unbuckle the belt on his jeans, she found she had to glance away.

*You're being stupid, she told herself. If you can't even look at him, how the hell are you going to model with him?*

She forced herself to look. Logan stood, completely naked. Well-muscled thighs were covered in a down of soft golden hair. Another line of blond hair ran down from his navel to the thick thatch of curls above his cock. She never thought Logan would be anything but well-hung, but even when it wasn't erect, his cock was still a sight to behold. She couldn't imagine what it would be like fully erect—chances were she wouldn't *need* to imagine.

"Right," said Eric, moving to stand behind his camera. "Let's get started."

This was her moment. Taking a deep breath to steady her nerves, but fired a little now on the champagne and the sight of Logan's naked body, she slipped the silky robe from her shoulders and let it fall to the floor.

Both men's eyes were on her, and she sucked in her stomach an extra inch and pushed out her tits. Just being naked in a room with two men was enough to turn her on. Her nipples were rock hard and her clit throbbed with a pleasurable pulse. Strangely, she felt better now she was naked, as if the hard part had been done. She walked over to the space Eric had prepared, joining Logan.

He smiled at her and she noted the cleft in his chin and the way his hair fell slightly over his face. Though he was gorgeous, he didn't seem intimidating. Logan held out his hand to her, and she took it.

"That's it," said Eric, snapping off some shots. "Just face each other for the moment. Logan, reach out and touch Anya's cheek."

He did so, his warm fingers touching her right above her jaw line.

"No, with the other hand," Eric called out. "You're blocking the shot like that."

Logan laughed and switched hands, and Anya couldn't help but laugh with him. Instantly, she felt more relaxed.

"That's great. You both look stunning. Now, Anya, can you turn around and put your back against Logan's chest? Logan, reach around and cup Anya's breasts."

Her heart picked up its pace, her breathing growing faster. But she did as Eric had instructed, glancing over at him to make sure it was all right. He nodded encouragingly. Logan stepped in, his hands wrapping around her body. The heat of his chest and stomach pressed against her back, and she knew the exact spot his cock was positioned by the firmness pressing into the base of her spine. His hands cupped her breasts, his thumbs brushing over her sensitized nipples, and her breath stuttered in her chest.

"It's okay," Logan whispered in her ear. "This is supposed to be hot."

His erection grew bigger, digging into her lower back. What would Eric say? But he must have known this would

happen.

And it was hot. She was crazily turned on, and could barely believe they'd only just gotten started. She'd be whimpering, fingering herself, and begging someone to fuck her before the shoot was finished.

“Anya, move your arm up so your hand is wrapped around the back of Logan’s head, as if you’re pulling him down to get him to kiss your neck. Logan, reach down, toward Anya’s pussy.”

The fact Eric was telling them to do these things somehow made her even hotter. Logan reached down, his big hands sliding tantalizingly down her flat stomach to create a V, his fingers stopping to rest on the small mound of pubic hair she left unshaved. She longed for him to go lower, to push his fingers inside her while Eric photographed them. She thought she might lose her mind she was so horny.

She started to get a feel for the shoot, bending her knee and placing the sole of her foot against Logan’s leg. They moved their hand positions, growing more comfortable with each other’s bodies.

“Okay, you guys ready for something a bit more intimate?” said Eric.

That they could do something more intimate made her head spin.

“Logan, can you take a seat on the stool?” asked Eric. “Anya, I want you to straddle him.” Anya noticed his voice had grown gravelly, the same way it did when he was aroused. Automatically, she glanced down at his crotch. Though partially hidden by the angle he held the camera while he gave them directions, she could spot the tell-tale bulge in his pants.

But for once, it wasn’t Eric’s erection that held her attention.

Logan took a seat on the large, cushioned stool. He sat with his legs spread, leaning back with his palms flat on the stool’s surface behind him. The position displayed his body perfectly, the tension in his arms making the muscles in his

forearms pop, his biceps bulge. His abdominals were lightly tensed, his thighs thick. Protruding from the thatch of blond hair was one of the biggest cocks she'd ever seen. It stood proud, curling gently inward toward his stomach. Logan appeared completely confident to having a full boner in front of his friend and his friend's girlfriend, and he just sat there, grinning at Eric and Anya.

*What the hell does Eric expect me to do with that?*

She glanced back over at Eric, but he only smiled at her. "It's okay, Anya," he said softly. "We all want this."

And she did. Her palms tingled with her desire to wrap her fingers around Logan's thick, hard length. She wanted to feel the wonder of his girth in her palm. Bend her face to him, inhale his scent and take his cock in her mouth. But for the moment, she needed to do what Eric told her to. This was about his photographs, not just her insatiable pleasure.

"Straddle Logan, Anya," Eric said again, this time with force to his tone. He wasn't asking her to do this anymore, he was telling her, and she didn't intend on disobeying.

She approached the blond god, and he reached out a hand to help her get into position. She climbed onto the stool, with her knees either side of Logan, then sat back on her haunches, so her naked bottom pressed against Logan's muscular thighs. His long, erect cock was now only inches from her, and the position had spread both her legs and her pussy lips. She wondered if he could see how turned on she was, if she had left her cream glistening on the inside of her thighs. Could he see how swollen her clit and vulva were? Could he smell her, even? Yes, she thought he must be able to, as she caught the musk of her arousal on the air between them. Her breasts were only inches from Logan's chest now, her nipples pointed nubs.

Eric snapped off a couple of shots. "Move closer, Anya. Don't be afraid of him."

"I won't bite," Logan said with a wicked smile. "Unless you ask me to."

She couldn't help but smile back. She wriggled closer and her pussy made contact with the stem of Logan's cock. The contact instantly sent fire racing through her body and she inhaled, trying to stop a groan of pleasure issuing from her lips. He was so hard and thick, the perfect antidote to her soft, wet pussy.

Logan's hands slipped around to cup her bottom and he pulled her even closer. Unable to help herself, she lifted herself up slightly, rocking her hips to grind her slit against his length. Logan's lips parted, his breath ragged, his blue eyes growing hooded with lust, though they never left her face.

"That's awesome, guys," came Eric's voice. "You have no idea how hot you both look right now." She glanced back to see Eric's hand pressing on the front of his pants, applying pressure to his now full-blown erection. Taking faith that Eric was as turned on as she was, she allowed herself to grind even harder, moving faster now as she creamed against Logan's shaft. His hands on her ass lifted her higher, until her pussy almost hovered above his dick. All it would take was a slight adjustment of her hips and she would slide his length right inside her.

"Lean back, Anya," Eric said. "Logan, touch Anya's tits again."

She did as she was told, arching her back, her hair almost tickling Logan's shins while his hands cupped her breasts again, his fingers pinching her nipples.

"I want to get some close ups now, guys," Eric said. "Here's what I want. I want close ups of Eric's teeth biting your nipples. I want his cock positioned right at your slit, and then some shots as he pushes inside you, if that's okay with both of you."

She glanced almost shyly at Logan, but he just gave her a smile and a slight nod. It was okay with him.

"Anya, put your feet on the stool behind Logan and spread your legs as much as you can. Eric, can you lift her slightly, and hold her so your cock is right at her entrance."

They complied as Eric requested, and Anya found herself in the position she'd been fantasizing about only moments before.

Eric moved closer and took a number of close-up shots from different positions. "Okay," he said, his voice hoarse. "You can enter her now."

Anya couldn't help herself. As Logan lifted her slightly and she moved her hips, Logan's bulbous head pushed between her pussy lips and breached her entrance. He pushed deeper, his fingers digging hard into the flesh of her ass.

"Not too far," Eric warned. "I still want the shots."

With almost painful slowness, Logan paused, allowing Eric to take more photographs. As soon as Eric said 'okay,' Logan gave a groan and sank deeper. She put her arms around his neck, forgetting Eric watching them for the briefest of moments while the sensation of having Logan deep inside her took over. She wanted to come, desperately wanted to come, but then she remembered they were fucking for Eric, not for themselves. But her orgasm was building, a tightening between her thighs, coiling low in her belly.

Eric's hand on her naked shoulder made her pause.

"Wait, guys. We have more to do."

"Fuck, Eric, no," Logan spat between gritted teeth. "I don't know if I can stop." He continued to thrust into her, even as Eric spoke.

"Not yet, Logan. Trust me. It'll be good for all of us. I promise."

"Ah, shit."

Logan stopped, his teeth clenched. He held Anya still on his lap, his fingers digging into her hips, his cock jerking inside her. She wondered if he'd come already. She knew she'd been close, but then Logan lifted her up, pulling his still fully hard erection from her body, and she knew he hadn't. Her cream slicked his cock in a milky fluid, the head purple and swollen, the slit open.

She wanted to taste herself on him.

Without waiting for Eric's instruction, she crawled backward off the stool. Her cunt throbbed, but the proximity of her orgasm began to retreat. She leaned forward and parted her lips. Logan looked down at her, his blond hair falling into his face. But she didn't look at Logan. Instead, she cast her eyes to Eric, waiting for his nod of approval. She got it, but she didn't take her eyes off his face. It was his expression she watched as she took Logan's cock in her mouth and ran her tongue around the smooth, hot bell-end. The combination of her own musky cream and his salty pre-cum coated her tongue and she dropped lower, taking him deeper and applying a swirl of her tongue and a little more suction. She watched Eric the whole time. He'd forgotten to take any more photographs.

"You're gonna make me come, Anya," Logan warned.

She let his dick pop from between her lips and smiled. "Sorry, couldn't help myself."

"Anya, get onto all fours," Eric demanded. "Logan, get behind her."

They both did as Eric instructed, Anya dropping to her hands and knees to crawl onto the velvety throw Eric had already placed on the floor. Logan was right behind her and his knees nudged her legs farther apart and, a moment later, his cock nudged her entrance again.

Logan pushed his hips forward, inching his length into her body, stretching her around him. Anya hung her head as he entered her, her fingers grasping the throw beneath them.

She was barely aware of Eric moving around them, snapping his photographs. The world around her had vanished, and the only thing she could focus on was the feeling of this huge cock inside her. Her breathing grew shallow as the sensations in her body took over. Everything felt so intense, and she wanted to cling to her pleasure, not wanting to orgasm yet. But having two men's eyes on her was almost too much to handle.

Logan started to pull out and then drove back in, gently at first, but then his movements grew faster and harder until he was ramming her hard.

Anya's head swam with pleasure. She reached beneath her body and flicked her clit. The sweet, pleasurable pain of Logan's cock driving deep meant her orgasm was so close. She wouldn't be able to hold off much longer.

"Oh, God," she cried. "I'm coming." Her orgasm powered over her, wiping all rational thought from her mind. Her vision blacked out at the edges, and she let out a cry that was somewhere close to a scream.

"Ah, fuck," Logan groaned. He quickly pulled out of her body, and hot cum splattered down across her lower back and buttocks.

Eric was quick with the camera, taking the shots of their comedown, bodies heaving, cum cooling on her skin.

Eric threw down the camera and went to Anya. Logan shuffled back, pushing his hair out of his face, the strands damp with sweat, his body glistening. With a couple of swift moves, Eric unbuttoned his pants, and revealed his huge erection.

He reached down and flipped Anya over, onto her back. "Now it's my turn," he told her.

She reached for him. She understood the reason he needed to take her now, and it wasn't just that he was probably so horny he thought he might explode. No, Eric was claiming her, erasing Logan from her body, as much as he could even while his cum still dried on her skin, and her pussy throbbing from the invasion.

"You're mine," he breathed against her ear, as he pushed hard into her, his hips smashing against her pubic bone.

She gasped. "I'm yours."

Logan sat back on his haunches, getting his breath back and watching.



Eric reached down and grabbed both of her wrists, pinning them above her head while he thrust inside her. His beautiful body eclipsed her view of the ceiling, and he stared down at her, locking her into his eye contact. She felt so utterly loved and accepted. Where her father's love only counted if she acted in such a way that it met with his approval, Eric would allow her to do and be whatever she wanted to be, and would still want her afterward.

A couple more strokes and Eric came inside her while she clutched him. Her body was too ravaged to allow her to have another orgasm, but she loved how he filled her. She wrapped her legs around the back of his thighs, her arms around his back. She kissed his shoulder and held him tight, allowing his breathing to grow slower in her arms.

They pulled apart and both became aware of Logan still watching them, and laughed, suddenly shy.

Logan threw them a grin and a wink. "I'll go get cleaned up and get out of your hair."

"You don't need to run off," said Eric.

"Nah, I know, but I figured you guys could use some privacy."

He disappeared into the bathroom, picking up his clothes as he went.

Eric helped Anya to the couch and passed her the robe she'd discarded at the start of the session. "How are you feeling?"

"A bit sore, but good. Happy. Content."

He smiled, and touched her hair. "Yeah, me, too."

Logan reappeared fully dressed. "I'll leave you guys in peace. Anya, I hope you enjoyed that as much as I did." She blushed in response. "Eric, I hope you got everything you wanted."

"Sure did," he replied.

"Awesome. Well, I'll see you both in a couple of days at the opening."

Anya tried to ignore the nervous flip in her stomach at the mention of the exhibition.

“Definitely,” said Eric, and made a move to stand up, but Logan waved him down.

“Stay there. You both look comfortable. I can see myself out.”

Logan left, and they settled back on the couch.

Eric kissed the top of her head. “You know, that was one of the most incredible, sexiest things I’ve ever been part of.”

She snuggled into his arms. “Yeah, me, too. Thank you, Eric.”

He blinked in surprise. “What for? It should be me thanking you.”

“Thank you for opening my eyes to how fucking amazing, and beautiful, and intense life can be. I think I was just plodding through life before, doing what my family expected of me. This is the first time I’ve ever done something where I no longer cared about what my father would think.”

Except that wasn’t totally true, was it? Despite everything she told herself, deep down a part of her still worried about what her father would say when he found out just how deep she’d gotten involved with Eric Rutherford.

## Chapter Twenty-two

### Anya

**She woke to the ringing** of a phone.

Anya blinked open her eyes and reached across the bed to nudge Eric, only to discover his side of the bed empty. They'd spent the evening with her nursing a glass of wine on the couch, while he'd made some edits to the photographs. He'd called her over every now and then to show her a particularly beautiful shot, explaining exactly how the light and lines in the photograph worked so well. She'd appreciated how he'd taken the time to teach her. With Eric as her personal tutor, her own skills were sure to grow exponentially over the next few years. The idea of being behind the camera herself excited her even more than the modeling did.

Exhausted, they'd both agreed on an early night and had fallen asleep in each other's arms without there being even a hint of sex. Perhaps she should have been concerned they'd not made love again, but instead she simply felt comfortable with him, as though they'd reached that stage in their relationship where they could fall asleep together without sex preceding it.

Only now he wasn't there.

"Eric?" she called out.

He appeared from the direction of his office area, his dark hair mussed, his eyes slightly wild. He must have been working. "What's going on?"

"Phone?" she said, but then realized something. "Oh, shit. It's my cell. Sorry."

Her purse was somewhere beside the bed, so she reached down and swiped around for it. The ringing stopped as her voicemail cut in, but then almost immediately started to ring again.

She frowned, and dragged herself to sitting. Her body ached from the previous day's antics with Eric and Logan, but she couldn't think about that right now. Someone really wanted to get hold of her.

Pushing her hair out of her eyes with one hand, her hand found her purse and she dragged it back up onto the bed with her. She scrabbled around inside, wishing she didn't carry quite so much crap around with her all the time. Finally, her fingers wrapped around the smooth metal and she picked the phone out of her bag.

It was still ringing.

Anya glanced at the screen. *Nadine*. Why was her ex-roommate so desperate to get hold of her?

She hit the button to answer. "Hey, what's up?"

Nadine didn't even bother to say hi. "Have you seen the New York Journal today?"

"What? No. I haven't even woken up properly, never mind read the newspaper."

Eric was staring at her, his dark eyebrows drawn down in a frown. He shook his head at her slightly, silently asking what was going on, but she lifted her hand to tell him she didn't know yet.

"You might want to get yourself a copy," Nadine said. "Actually, then again, you might not."

"Why? What's happened?"

She heard the sigh come down the line.

"Some reporter has run a story on that photographer guy of yours, saying he's turned to photographing porn, and they've used a photograph of you in the piece."

"Jonathan Turner! That bastard!"

“What’s going on?” Eric hissed.

She shook her head at him.

“You know him?” asked Nadine.

“Yeah, I’ve had the unfortunate pleasure of meeting him, which is when he took the photograph.” She couldn’t imagine what her father would be making of this newest turn. He’d be humiliated. Her gut twisted. She’d never meant to do that to him. “I’ve got to go, Nadine. Thanks for letting me know.”

“Umm, I’m really sorry, Anya, but that’s not all.”

Her stomach plummeted. How could it be any worse? “Go on ...” Her voice was a whisper.

“Someone at the college must have come across the story. They’ve photocopied the article and plastered it all over campus.”

“What?” Her world fell away, her mind spinning. She’d be the talk of campus.

“I’m so sorry, Anya.”

“No, it’s fine,” she said, though her voice sounded distant, and she felt detached. Eric was staring at her, wide-eyed, and clearly desperate to know what was happening. There was only one person she knew vindictive enough to pull a stunt like that.

Gavin Hollis.

## Chapter Twenty-three

### Eric

**Anya repeated what her friend** had told her over the phone, her eyes wide and filled with tears.

“God damn it!”

Eric paced the floor. To see such sadness in her eyes put murder on his mind. Adrenaline fizzed through his veins, making his brain race and filling him with tension. He’d not been able to sleep the previous night, leaving Anya sound asleep in bed so he could work. The itchy anxiety he’d been experiencing about his work recently boiled over to a new level. He was filled with the sudden urge to allow the tension to explode out of him, to find this Gavin Hollis again and beat him so badly he wouldn’t get up from it this time.

“Eric, please,” said Anya, getting to her feet as well. “You need to calm down.”

The sadness he’d seen in her eyes had turned to alarm, and though he knew he was the cause of it this time, he didn’t seem to be able to rein himself in.

“I want to kill those sons of bitches, especially that Gavin guy. Jonathan Turner is an asshole, but he’s still doing his job. Gavin has done this purely to be vindictive.”

“I know, but there’s nothing you can do. You can’t go and attack him again, Eric. You just can’t. Gavin is a college student, and you could get in serious trouble if you hit him again. I bet Jonathan Turner would just love for you to go raging at him with all guns blazing. It would only give him more ammunition to throw at us.”

He knew she was right, but a part of him didn’t even want to calm down. He wanted to use the energy firing inside him to

make Gavin Hollis pay for hurting her. He wanted to throw and break things, but only the look in Anya's eyes stopped him from doing so.

Though he still couldn't bring himself to sit down, he at least stood still and forced himself to take a breath.

He needed to think. If they couldn't win this with brawn, he needed to use his brain.

Anya stared at him, her face taut with emotional pain. "What are we going to do?"

"We need to own this, Anya. We need to be proud. If we try to act as though we're ashamed or trying to hide anything, they'll have won."

She shook her head at him. "How do we do that?"

"By making the exhibition a huge fucking success. By making *you* a huge fucking success."

"I'm not sure I understand..."

Without realizing it, he started to pace again, his fist clenched in his hair. "I know I've always said that I didn't plan on selling your photographs, but what if someone offered a disgusting amount of money?"

"I ... I don't know ..."

He continued. "And what if I made sure every cent was paid directly to you."

Her eyes widened. "Eric! I couldn't have you do that!"

"Why not? It's your body. Wouldn't it shut all those assholes up if they had to report that one of your photographs sold for thousands?"

She shook her head. "Eric, no one is going to pay thousands for my picture."

His brain whirred, excitement pulsing through him. He was warming to his ideas, and could feel them taking hold. "Really? People are coming into this thinking that none of these photographs will be sold. What if we sell just one to the highest bidder? Erotic art is extremely fashionable at the

moment. The collectors will be climbing over each other and throwing their money at us to get that one, solitary piece.”

“I couldn’t take that kind of money from you, Eric.”

“Why not? You earned it.”

“So did you.”

He nodded, almost frantic, desperately wanting her to understand what an amazing idea this was. “Okay, so we split it—fifty-fifty. If I get my way, everything that’s mine will be yours, too, at some point in the future anyway, so it’s no big deal for me to share the profits with you.”

Her cheeks flushed pink at the implication of what he’d just said. He didn’t care if he was coming on strong. He wanted her to be in his future for the rest of his life. He couldn’t ever imagine wanting to let her go.

“But what if people hate the photographs? What if it doesn’t work?”

He shrugged. “Then both our names will most likely be dragged through the mud, but in time, people will forget, and we’ll still have each other and the memory of what we created together.”

For the first time, a small smile tugged at the corners of her lips. “Yes, we will.”

“So it’s agreed, then? Let Gavin Hollis and Jonathan Turner think and do whatever they want. We just have to prove them wrong.”

She exhaled a breath and appeared to relax a fraction. “Okay, deal.”

He leaned in and kissed her, and then turned and walked away.

“Where are you going, Eric?” she called after him, confusion in her tone.

“I have work to do,” he called back over his shoulder. “Time is running out and I need everything to be perfect.”



Even though he wasn't dressed yet, and hadn't had so much as a sip of coffee, he headed over to his desk. Before, when he'd been working, he only ever thought about himself as a photographer, and what people would make of his work. Now he worried he would do something wrong, and it would be Anya who would suffer. He couldn't stand the idea that people would hate the photographs and she would be the one to bear the brunt of it. What if she took it personally, and started to hate herself or how she looked, purely because he hadn't photographed her beautiful body perfectly? She didn't deserve that.

He'd thought she would be the one to ruin him, but what if it flipped the other way around? Eric knew he would never be able to forgive himself.

He had to get this right.

The photographs had to be perfect.

## Chapter Twenty-four

### Anya

Eric had been at his desk for hours now, barely hearing her when she'd tried to speak to him, focusing only on his work. He was surrounded in photograph prints and other sheets of paper, some screwed into balls and scattered across the floor. She'd made him coffee first thing and placed the cup on his desk, but it had sat untouched, until she'd replaced it with another hot drink, which had also gone unnoticed. He'd not eaten any breakfast, and she was starting to worry.

Biting down on her nerves, she approached his desk.

“How are you doing, Eric?”

He didn't even look at her as he spoke. “The images need to be perfect. I only have a couple of days. If we're going to prove to everyone—Jonathon Turner, fucking Gavin, and even your father—how wrong they are, I need to make sure I get everything right. I don't want to give them any reason to tear you down, Anya. I won't let it happen.”

Cautiously, she touched his bare shoulder. He'd managed to put on a pair of low slung workout pants, but that was all he wore. “I know that. I believe in you.”

“I know you do, but at the end of the day, it won't be your opinion that matters.”

She tried not to feel stung at his words, biting her lower lip. “It's past lunchtime,” she said, not wanting to start a fight. “Can I make you something to eat?”

He didn't answer her, so she went to the kitchen and made him a sandwich anyway. His behavior was starting to worry

her. She'd never seen him like this.

She suddenly realized what day it was.

Eric had missed his gym session that morning.

She knew he had a lot to think about, but he'd always said how important his workouts were. Was it just that he was busy, or did she have more to worry about?

Anya finished fixing him a sandwich—pastrami on rye—and took it over to him on a plate.

“Hey, I made you something to eat. I don't think the photographic world is going to fall apart if you take ten minutes for lunch.”

He nodded to a tiny space on his desk, between all the stacks of paper. “Just leave it there. I'll get to it in a minute.”

She hesitated. “Please Eric. It's just ten minutes to eat. You need your strength.”

He snapped at her. “Can't you see I'm busy?”

She took a step back. “Yeah, sorry,” she muttered.

Anya stood, staring at the back of his head and chewing her lower lip. She understood that he needed to work, but he also needed to take a break. He needed a distraction, something to release the tension he'd been holding inside since she'd told him about the newspaper article that morning. She wished she hadn't told him now.

There was one thing Eric had never been able to resist, and that was her. Even when she'd tried to distract him from his gym session a few days ago, he'd still fucked her before he'd left.

Taking a breath, she rounded the front of his desk. She wore a loose dress which was buttoned down the front. Standing in front of him, she slowly undid each of the buttons.

Eric's gaze flicked up to her. “What are you doing, Anya?”

She gave a coy shrug. “Nothing. I just suddenly got really, really hot.”

As she said the word 'hot' she slipped the dress from her shoulders and allowed it to fall to the floor, so she stood in only her pink lace bra and matching panties.

His eyes went back to his work, and then darted back to her. Sensing she'd finally captured his attention, she reached behind her back and undid the clip of her bra. She shrugged the bra from her shoulders and allowed it to join the dress on the floor.

Tilting her head to one side and smiling at him shyly, she ran her hands over her breasts, cupping them as she massaged herself, pushing her tits together. She pinched her nipples between her fingers, teasing them into hardened points.

"Anya ..." Eric growled a warning.

She swiped her tongue over her lower lip, wetting the plump flesh, and then bit it gently. She was winning! She finally had his attention.

"I told you I was hot."

One hand left her breast and she slid it down her stomach and beneath the waistband of her panties. Despite the situation, she found she was already swollen and wet, and her finger brushed across the engorged nub of her clit, moving between her pussy lips and into her slippery heat. She took a shuddery breath, her lips parting. Her eyes locked on Eric, wanting to gauge his reaction. All she wanted was for him to throw aside his work and push her over the desk, and fuck her hard. He had suddenly grown distant from her, and she wanted to drag him back again.

Her movement against her clit grew faster, and she felt her legs weaken, the muscles in her stomach tightening. Her breath came harder and faster, her cheeks heating and a flush spreading across her chest.

Eric was watching her, his dark eyes almost angry with lust. She could see his breathing had also deepened and was sure his cock would be erect under his desk. She wanted him so badly.

“Eric,” she gasped. “I need you. I want to feel you inside me.”

To her horror, he jumped to his feet, but didn't round the desk. Instead, he placed both hands on the surface and glared at her.

“This isn't a fucking joke, Anya!”

Tears filled her eyes, and she withdrew her hand from her underwear, trying to ignore the scent of her own arousal on the air. Her impending orgasm drifted away like a lost boat at sea.

“I know this isn't a joke. I've given up everything because I love you, Eric, and I believe in you. But I'm also worried about you. You know it's Wednesday and you haven't been to the gym. You always go to the gym on those days.”

“Yeah, well, like I said, I'm a bit busy to do anything else right now. I have to get this right, Anya, can't you see that? They have to be perfect.”

“They are Eric. They already are.”

“No, not yet. There's always something more that can be done to improve them, and there isn't enough god-damned time!”

“So let's just cancel the exhibition. It isn't worth it. It's too much pressure on you.”

He slammed his hands down on his desk, the bang making her jump. “No. There is no way I'm canceling now. I will not let them all win. I won't let the Jonathan Turners and Gavin Hollises and Trent Bergmans of the world think they were right, and that we're ashamed of what we've created. I won't do it!”

She placed her hand to her mouth and shook her head. “Eric, I'm worried about you.”

“Don't be. Just let me get on with my work in peace.”

She stared at him, but he'd already turned back to the computer.

## Chapter Twenty-five

### Anya

Anya didn't have Logan Blanc's phone number, or know where he lived. All she knew was the address of his art gallery.

When she arrived, she found the place open, with just a few people browsing the latest artist to be featured. The atmosphere was tranquil, reserved, like that of a museum or library. Pushing down her nerves, she looked around for Logan. This was the first time they'd seen each other since the photo shoot, and she felt weird coming here without Eric.

She spotted him, standing beside a massive floor to ceiling painting. He wore a light gray suit, his blond hair pulled back from his face and tied in a short ponytail. He was already talking to someone—a woman, also smartly dressed—but something must have caught his attention because his gaze lifted over the woman's shoulder and locked with hers. Surprise registered in his green eyes and he gave his chin a slight jerk to acknowledge he'd seen her.

He leaned in and said something to the woman. She nodded, they shook hands, and the woman walked away.

Logan approached Anya with a smile, but also concern in his expression. "Anya, hi. Everything okay?"

Unexpected tears filled her eyes. "I'm sorry, Logan. I shouldn't have come to the gallery, but I didn't know where else to find you."

It suddenly occurred to her that she could have just called the gallery, rather than coming down here. She hadn't been thinking straight.

He frowned at her tears. “Is it your parents?”

She shook her head. “No, I haven’t even heard from them.”

“It’s Eric, then.” It wasn’t a question.

She nodded. “I’m worried about him. He’s not eating. He’s sitting working for hours on end. He even missed his gym session.”

“Shit.”

“I know it doesn’t sound like a big deal...”

“No,” he interrupted. “I know what he’s like. It is a big deal.”

She bit her lower lip, but she was thankful to have Logan to confide in, even if a tiny part of her felt like she was betraying Eric by speaking to his friend behind his back.

“He keeps talking about perfection, and how he’s going to show everyone. He got really angry with me when I tried to... distract him.” Her cheeks heated with shame at the memory.

Logan reached out and gently touched her arm. “It’s okay. It’s not about you, not really. He has an illness—a mental one. He’ll need to adjust his meds for a short time.” Logan sighed. “The difficulty will be making him see he’s ill again. When he gets like this, he convinces himself he’s just feeling inspired or working hard, and he doesn’t acknowledge it.”

Anya tried not to feel shocked at the idea of the man she loved having a mental illness. She knew a lot of people suffered, and that it wasn’t Eric’s fault. It might even be a part of what made him brilliant.

“Why didn’t he tell me?” she said.

“I guess he was worried he’d scare you off.”

“It would take more than that to scare me off.”

The faintest hint of a smile tweaked the corners of Logan’s lips. “Good.”

“So,” she started, not wanting to say the wrong thing, “what sort of mental illness does he have? I mean, I know he’s suffered from bouts of depression.”

“It’s bipolar disorder. He has periods of highs and lows—highs where he feels like he can take on the world and he won’t sleep, and he’ll go through these obsessive, creative phases—”

“Like he is right now?”

Logan nodded. “And then when he reaches the end of that phase, when he’s so completely exhausted and he can’t cope mentally or physically, he’ll drop into a pit of depression, and not even be able to speak to anyone.”

She put her hand to her mouth. The idea of Eric like that broke her heart. “Oh, my God. Poor Eric.”

“He’s managed to keep it under control for a while now—the meds help, as does the exercise and making sure he gets enough sleep—but the extra pressure of this exhibition must have put him into another spiral.”

She thought of the times they’d been making love all night and working all day. “It’s my fault. I should have given him more space.”

“No, not at all, Anya. You didn’t know. I’m more to blame for making him think running this exhibition so soon was a good idea. I should have known better, but I thought I’d just keep an eye on him and watch out for any signs. I didn’t expect it to hit him so quickly.”

She thought back to the times he hadn’t eaten or slept. She’d assumed it was all to do with her, and their relationship, and the exhibition, but actually it had been a sign he was going into another manic episode.

“So what do we do?” she asked.

“We’ll go and see him. He just needs to increase his medication. He’s been in this place before, and we can level him out again.”



“Thanks so much, Logan. I don’t know what I’d do without you right now. Eric is very lucky to have you, too.”

“Eric’s my best friend,” he said. “I wouldn’t be without him. I’m glad he’s got you, too.”

“When can you come and see him?”

“We’ll go now.”

“Don’t you have work to do?” she asked.

“I have an assistant. She can handle things for a few hours. This is more important than the gallery. Just give me ten minutes.”

Anya nodded. “Sure.”

He left her for the moment, and she wandered slowly around the gallery, her mind only half admiring the latest collection, the other half focused on Eric. It seemed crazy that, after tonight, all of these paintings would be removed, and photographs of her would be replacing them. Nerves churned inside her. Would there even be an exhibition if Eric was ill? They might have to cancel the whole thing.

Strangely, the thought of canceling filled her with disappointment. After all their hard work, and going through such emotional turmoil, to not see this through to the end felt like failure. For the first time, she truly wanted to experience the night of the exhibition. She wanted to be here, at Eric’s side, as people walked around, admiring their photographs. She wanted to learn what people would make of the images—though she knew it wouldn’t all be good. Perhaps some would be shocked, like her father, but she was also certain some people would see the beauty in the photographs.

Eric was a genius at what he did. Even if it wasn’t to everyone’s taste—and truthfully, what art was?—no one could deny he was good at what he did.

A hand touched her elbow, making her jump.

Anya turned to find Logan smiling at her. “Ready to go?”

She nodded.

They left the cool interior of the art gallery and stepped out onto the New York street. Someone was walking in as they headed out, and the person stopped abruptly.

“Anya?”

She blinked in surprise as she took in the sight of the familiar figure. “Dad! What are you doing here?”

Her father’s gaze moved to Logan. “I came to see Mr. Blanc, actually. I hear this farce of an exhibition is still going ahead.”

Logan lifted his chin. “Of course it is, Mr. Bergman. I’m expecting a full house.”

“Not if I’ve got anything to do with it,” her father snapped. “If this gallery shows photographs of my daughter in a couple of day’s time, I will make sure you go out of business.”

Logan laughed. “I’d like to see you try. You’re simply one art critic—one voice among what will be hundreds on Saturday night. I’ve seen the photographs of your daughter, Mr. Bergman, and they are exquisite. People will be talking about Eric Rutherford’s new collection for months to come, and having you complaining about them will be like a whisper in a storm. It won’t surprise me if the collection ends up on tour, and I expect Anya will be fighting off invitations from magazines to be photographed and interviewed.”

“For every article my daughter does, I’ll make sure there’s another explaining how Eric Rutherford coerced and manipulated her into doing those shoots.”

Anya’s heart lurched, her mind swimming at the idea. “Dad! Please, stop...”

Her cheeks burned, humiliation washing over her that they were having this conversation standing out on the street, random strangers catching snippets as they passed by. Tears pricked the backs of her eyes at the realization her dad still clearly hadn’t come around to her way of thinking.

“I believe that will be slander, Mr. Bergman,” Logan continued. “Anya is an adult and more than capable of making her own decisions.”

They both looked to her. “You know Eric didn’t force me, Dad. We’re in love. He’s as protective of me as you are.”

Trent Bergman snorted. “I highly doubt that. He’s almost ten years older than you, Anya!”

She bristled, her back straightening, shoulders back. “He’s eight years older than me, which, I believe, is about the age difference between you and Mom?”

“That’s completely different!”

Her eyebrows lifted. “Is it? How?”

“It just is.”

Anya frowned slightly. “And how is Mom? I haven’t heard anything from her, and she’s not responded to any of the texts I’ve sent her.”

“I’ve instructed her not to speak to you,” he said, folding his arms across his chest. “She’s softer than I am, and I won’t have her making you think that we’re okay with you doing this.”

“You won’t let her speak to me? Does that mean she wants to?”

“She’s been brainwashed by that man as much as you have. But I won’t have it. I will not allow her to have a relationship with a child who behaves in such a way.”

Tears blurred Anya’s vision. “You can’t stop her.”

“Just watch me. I expect the women in my life to do as they’re told, and it seems you got your impertinence from her.”

Anya didn’t even know what to say, so she just stood, gaping at him. She’d always known he’d been strict, but this was something else. Was he really trying to control her mother, too? She never thought her mom would stand for such a thing.

Logan’s hand touched her waist, making her jump. She’d forgotten he was there.

“Come on, Anya. We’ve got more important things to do than stand on the sidewalk arguing with someone who clearly will never see sense.”

Feeling numb, she allowed Logan to guide her away from her father.

Who was this man? He’d never exactly been warm and loving, but this felt like an extreme. Was she only seeing the real man now, her love for him blinding her all these years?

Or had her own actions created the monster she’d found before her?

## Chapter Twenty-six

### Eric

Eric had no idea how long he'd been working for when he finally looked up and realized Anya was no longer in the apartment.

He jumped to his feet, his hand locked in his hair. "Shit!"

Unable to contain the restless energy coursing through him, he began to pace, reaching one side of his apartment before turning and storming back again.

What had he said to her? He could barely remember. He recalled pushing her away, feeling frustrated and irritated that she wasn't able to see or understand the importance of his work. He'd thought she, of all people, got what it meant for him to work as he did, but then she'd repeatedly interrupted him, and he'd started to lose his concentration, which only made him more angry and frustrated, and ...

He stopped, breathing heavily.

His train of thought had run on and on, never taking a moment's break.

On the floor lay a broken plate, and an uneaten pastrami on rye scattered across the hardwood floor. Had he thrown the plate or dropped it? He couldn't even remember how the crockery had gotten broken.

When was the last time he'd eaten? When was the last time he'd slept?

He had no idea. He wasn't even sure what day it was.

Panic suddenly shot through him, his adrenaline causing his heart to race, his breath coming fast. When was the exhibition? Had he missed it already? Had he lost days to sitting at his work, trying to find perfection for something that had already passed him by?

And what about Anya? Where was she now?

Eric dropped to a crouch, both hands locked in his hair, and let out a roar of anger at himself. When was the last time he'd taken his medication? He was on a low dose now, being able to manage it mostly himself—or so he'd thought—but somewhere along the line he'd started to lose control again, and he hadn't even noticed it happening.

Had he pushed her too far? Had he lost her?

Suddenly, all the work meant nothing if she wasn't in his life. It was empty and soulless.

*He was empty and soulless.*

The front door clicked and he twisted his head in the direction of the sound. The door swung open, and Anya entered, Logan close behind.

Eric slowly got to his feet to face them.

He experienced mixed emotions about seeing the two of them together. He was thankful she'd come back, and that Logan had obviously been looking out for her, but he also worried he'd messed up so badly, he'd sent her into his friend's arms. Logan was probably a much better match for Anya—his best friend didn't have any of his own fucked-upness—but Eric knew it would kill him if Anya left him for Logan.

Not that he would blame her, of course. She'd dealt with more than any woman should have had to since meeting him.

“Eric ...” she said, his name hanging in the air between them.

He pressed his lips together. “You came back.”

“Of course I did.”

His heart stuttered, his gut filling with dread. “Did you come to tell me something?”

She nodded. “Well, yes, I guess so.”

He took a breath and threw it out there. “You and Logan are a far better match than you and I.”

Anya and Logan shared a glance, both with matching expressions, lines between their brows, heads shaking.

Logan spoke first. “Eric, no. You’re wrong. There’s nothing between Anya and me. She came to me because she was worried about you. You’re my best friend. I would never do that to you.”

“And neither would I,” said Anya. “I love you more than anything. I thought you knew that.”

He hung his head in shame. “Then what do you need to tell me?”

Logan stepped forward. “That you’re sick again, Eric. Anya told me about your recent behavior. You know you’re cycling with your moods again. You need to up your meds before you end up hitting the wall, and you find you can’t get out of bed for a month.”

He closed his eyes briefly before answering. “I already know. I realized when I looked around and noticed Anya gone, and saw the mess I’d made. I’m so sorry, Anya.”

“It’s okay,” she said, softly. “I just wish you had told me.”

“I didn’t want you to think badly of me.”

“I would never have thought badly of you. You must think more of me than that.”

He frowned slightly and shook his head. “I didn’t mean it like that. It wasn’t about you, or your reaction. I just didn’t want you to see me as anything less than the photographer you’d looked up to, or the man you’d gotten to know.”

She stepped forward, closing the gap between them, and reached out and took his hands in hers. Her eyes met his. “I wouldn’t have, but if we’re to have a life together, I need to

know about things like that. If you'd told me sooner, I could have spotted what was happening before it got too far. I would have made sure you got your sleep, and not tried to tempt you away from your gym sessions."

"I don't want you to mother me, Anya. That's exactly what I was frightened of."

"It's not mothering. It's taking care of someone I love."

Logan joined in. "Same goes for me. We love you and we want to see you well. Your health is far more important than anything else." He paused and then added, "We can always cancel the exhibition."

But Eric shook his head. "The work is done. I want people to see it." He caught Anya's eye again. "As long as that's okay with both of you."

Anya smiled and his heart lifted. "Of course it's okay with me. But you must promise to get help."

"I'll book an appointment with my doctor for first thing tomorrow."

Her arms wrapped around his waist and he pulled her in, hugging her hard and kissing the top of her head. The adrenaline from his mania still caused his muscles to tense, his blood racing through his veins, but he felt better just by having Anya in his arms.

"I'll leave you guys to it," said Logan. He pointed a finger at Eric. "Take your meds."

Eric nodded. "I will."

Anya peeled herself from him. "Thanks, Logan."

"Anytime."

Logan left the apartment and closed the door behind him.

"Go and take your medication, Eric," she said.

He nodded. "I'm doing it now."

He left her and went to the bathroom and took a double dose of the mood stabilizer which helped to bring down his



manic phases. He knew it would take a few days before he truly felt like himself again, but at least he was on the right track.

He walked back into the apartment to find Anya wearing one of his t-shirts and her panties. She put out her hand to him. “Come on, Eric. Let’s go to bed.”

It wasn’t about sex this time. They just curled up together, holding each other.

“What are you going to do tomorrow?” he asked her. “I have to make an appointment with my doctor, but it’s something I feel like I have to do alone.”

Anya smiled. “No mothering, right?”

“Right.”

She gave a small laugh. “Don’t worry. I have a certain someone I have to deal with.”

He frowned and looked down at her. “Promise me you won’t get into any trouble.”

“I’ll be fine, Eric. But I can’t let him get away with what he did. Gavin Hollis has to realize he can’t go around treating people like shit and getting away with it.”

Eric gave a laugh and pulled her closer. “I don’t know what you’ve got planned, but I’d be scared if I was him.”

She smiled. “So he should be.”

And Eric closed his eyes, and in Anya’s arms, he finally slept.

## Chapter Twenty-seven

### Anya

The following day, Anya stepped back onto campus.

She felt self-conscious, in a way she never had before, as though she no longer truly belonged here, like an imposter everyone was staring at. She knew that was mainly down to the newspaper article Gavin had pasted all over the place, but moving in with Eric probably hadn't helped.

Quickly, she glanced around, trying to see if any of the posters remained, but none stood out. Someone had taken them down—either her friend, Nadine, or else, she guessed, some of the faculty members. It didn't matter anyway. After Saturday, everyone would know what she'd been up to. She just hoped any reporting of the exhibition would have a more positive spin than the article Jonathan Turner had written.

The afternoon was giving way to evening, and there weren't many people around, but she knew Gavin finished practice about now and would be heading across campus to go back to his dorm.

She just had to wait.

Feeling conspicuous, she checked her phone to make sure Eric hadn't called her. He'd been to see his doctor, and had the dosage on his meds adjusted, though it would take a few days for them to kick in. He seemed better, though. More in control. He'd been to the gym that morning, and though he'd had some small things to finish for the exhibition, he was aware of the time he allowed himself to do the work in.

Weirdly, since finding out about the bipolar, Anya felt more relaxed about their relationship. She'd always worried

about his search for perfection, and that he would never have found what he sought in her, but now she knew it wasn't really him that drove his quest for perfection. It was his illness. Neither of them was perfect, and they could be imperfect together. His reaction to seeing her with Logan had also made her more secure. She'd always wanted him to show some jealousy, however crazy that made her. Something to show she meant more to him than just a model or a prop. Eric had done that now.

Movement came across the lawn, a group of young men, laughing and shoving each other on the shoulder as they threw joking insults at each other.

Anya's heart rate stepped up, her breath quickening. She pushed down her emotions, hiding them. She couldn't allow him to see she was nervous.

"Gavin," she called to the group. "Have you got a minute?"

The broad-shouldered quarterback stopped and stared at her. She'd deliberately worn the heels he'd called her a prostitute in the other day, and a short, tight fitting dress.

His teammates whooped and punched him again.

"Yeah, go, Gavin. The man!"

"Someone's getting some tonight!"

Anya did her best not to roll her eyes at their juvenile behavior.

"What do you want, Anya?" Gavin was a little more cautious, suspicious of seeing her there.

She forced herself to smile sweetly. "Don't worry, Gavin. I'm not going to start a fight with you."

"You're not?"

"No, actually, I wanted to thank you."

His mouth dropped. "You want to thank *me*?"

She shrugged. "Sure."

The other guys were still hanging around. "I'll catch up with you later," he told them.

A few more suggestive remarks were called over their shoulders as the young men walked away, but Anya ignored them.

Gavin faced her. "So, you wanted to thank me?" He didn't hide the disbelief in his tone.

She forced herself to smile again. "Yes. Those posters you put up all around school really helped boost the popularity of the exhibition. It's a sell-out and people are desperate for tickets."

"Oh, right," he mumbled, glancing away, guiltily.

"You know," she put on her best sex kitten act, sidling up to him, "modeling for those photographs has done so much for my self-confidence. I know I didn't act it too much, but all those times I rejected you was really just because I was so shy. I was inexperienced, and I knew a guy like you had had plenty of girls. I didn't want to look like an idiot with you."

"Oh, right." His shoulders relaxed slightly, his body angling toward hers. This probably made more sense to him in his over-inflated head than the idea that a girl actually just didn't like him.

"But you know," she continued, "since I've been modeling, I just can't get enough sex. I'm insatiable. I like it every way I can get it, blow jobs, anal ... I've even had a threesome, which was the hottest thing I've ever done in my life."

He swallowed hard. "It was?"

She glanced down at the front of his pants, to where the outline of an erection was starting to show.

"Every fucking way, Gavin. I'm so hot right now, just standing here talking to you." She reached out to hook her finger over the collar of his shirt and pulled him a fraction closer. "My pussy is wet just thinking about your cock in it." She let him go, licked her lips, and then walked away. Then

she turned and glanced back at where he stood with his mouth hanging open. “Are you coming?”

He nodded and hurried after her. She took him down a walkway between two of the faculty buildings and pushed him up against the wall. “So, what do you want first, huh? I bet you’d like my mouth around your cock. All wet and hot, and my tongue all over you.”

Without speaking, he nodded, frantic.

Anya hid a smile and dropped to her knees. She worked his belt and then popped the button on his pants. “Close your eyes, rest your head back against the wall. This will feel so good, I promise.”

Trying not to gag at having Gavin Hollis’s dick so close to her face, she yanked down his pants, freeing him. His cock sprang out, and, working as quickly as she could, she pulled her cell phone from her purse and snapped a picture.

Gavin seemed to realize things weren’t quite going to plan, his eyes opening, looking down.

Anya jumped to her feet and slipped the phone back into her purse. “Gavin, I wouldn’t touch you if you were the last man alive.”

And she turned and walked away, resisting the urge to break into a run.

He shouted after her. “Anya, you bitch! Fucking prick tease!”

She grinned and kept walking. She headed up to the dorm she used to share with Nadine, and knocked on the door. Technically, this was still her room, but she didn’t want to impose.

“It’s open!” Nadine’s voice called back.

Anya pushed open the door to find Nadine lying on her bed. Her old roommate’s eyes widened at the sight of her, and then she jumped up and pulled Anya into a hug.

“Anya! You didn’t need to knock!”

She untangled herself from Nadine's embrace and shrugged. "I know, but I didn't want to interrupt anything." She gave her friend a wink.

Nadine laughed. "Things have been pretty dull on that front. You're the one getting all the action at the moment. How is the famous photographer?"

"He's great. Actually, I wanted to give you something."

"You did?"

Anya nodded. She reached into her purse and pulled out a slip of card, and handed it to Nadine. "It's a ticket for Saturday night's exhibition. I'd love it if you could make it. I need all the support I can get."

Nadine gave a squeal of excitement. "Of course I'll come! I can't wait. Hey, are there going to be any hot single guys there?"

Immediately, Anya's mind jumped to Logan. "Funny you should say that. I don't know that he's definitely not seeing anyone, but I promise there is going to be an extremely hot guy you can ogle over."

"Even better. I can't wait. Plus, I've missed you."

"I've missed you, too, but just because I'm not living here anymore doesn't mean we can't still hang out."

She lifted her eyebrows and widened her eyes. "Even though you're hanging out with your hot photographer?"

"I'll always have time for you. No matter what."

Anya hugged Nadine, squeezing her tight.

"Actually," Anya said, letting her go, "there's another reason I'm here. Do you have access to the school newspaper office at this time of night?"

"Of course. I'm deputy editor now, so I have a key."

"Would it put you in a really difficult position if I asked you to sneak me in there? I have some posters I need to make, and I could do with some help pasting them all over school."

Nadine pressed her lips together, suppressing a smirk. “Now, let me guess. This has something to do with revenge on Gavin Hollis, doesn’t it?”

Anya laughed. “You know me too well. I may just have a photograph I think the rest of school should probably see, and I’d like to accompany it with a small article about the teeny-tiny”—she held up her thumb and forefinger to demonstrate—“size of a certain football player’s penis. Of course, I won’t mention any names, as that simply wouldn’t be right, but people should probably be warned what position this guy plays in. It’s practically a public service to all the other women on campus he decides to hit on, right?”

With a mock serious expression, Nadine nodded. “Oh, absolutely. Sounds like good reporting to me, and definitely a public service.”

Anya looped her arm through her friend’s. “I knew you’d think the same way.”

Nadine laughed. “Let’s do this.”

By morning, there would be a hundred or so of the photographs Anya had taken, together with an article accompanying it, pasted all over school. Yes, it was immature, sure. But it sure as hell made her feel better. She’d walk around with her head held high, no matter what. She wouldn’t let him shame her.

Gavin Hollis would get a taste of his own medicine.

# Chapter Twenty-eight

## Anya

The evening of the exhibition arrived.

The limousine pulled up outside of the Blanc Art Space, Anya sitting with Eric at her side on the back seat.

Eric's hand squeezed Anya's and she looked to him nervously.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"As I'll ever be."

Nerves tumbled inside her stomach, and she tried to push away the feeling so she could enjoy the moment. A red carpet had been laid out on the sidewalk, leading up to the entrance. A number of reporters waited outside, already taking photographs of the car when they hadn't even gotten out yet. She was relieved not to see Jonathan Turner among their number.

"Just smile, keep your head up, and don't say anything," Eric instructed her.

"Sure."

Eric got out first, a volley of camera flashes erupting the moment he did so. He reached in and helped Anya from the car. She placed her heels on the sidewalk and straightened, her other hand smoothing down the skirt of the strapless, floor-length red dress she wore. He squeezed her hand and pulled her closer, his cologne sweeping over her.

"You look beautiful," he said softly against her ear. "You have nothing to be nervous about."



She gave the briefest of nods and turned to face the entrance. Eric put out his arm to her and she took it, doing as he'd instructed and staring straight ahead as they walked toward the Blanc Art Space. The collection was called *Intimate* by Eric Rutherford. Two large posters displaying the name of the collection were in each floor to ceiling window either side of the doorway. The poster itself was one of her photographs—a black and white side shot of her body lying down, which looked like an abstract landscape, with all the dips and curves.

They swept past the reporters and entered the gallery. It was already filled with people, all smartly dressed, most holding flutes of champagne, while staff flitted around refilling glasses and offering canapés.

A number of people recognized Eric, shaking his hand and congratulating him the moment he walked in. He introduced her to each of them, though their names left her head the instant they were mentioned.

Searching for someone she knew, she caught sight of Logan across the room. He noticed her and smiled. She was relieved to have a familiar face there. This whole thing felt incredibly intimidating.

Logan left the people he was talking to and walked over. He kissed her and shook Eric's hand.

“Anya, you look stunning.”

“Thank you.”

“Actually, I have a surprise for you.”

“You do?”

“Yes, come this way.”

He led her to another part of the exhibition, where a woman stood with her back to them. She was looking up at one of the larger pieces—a black and white close up of Anya's face, a gag between her lips, mascara smeared beneath her eyes. The woman turned with a smile and Anya's heart soared.

“Mom!”

Her mother's face lit up. "Anya, sweetheart." She pulled Anya into an embrace.

"Mom, I'm so happy to see you. I can't believe you decided to come."

"I couldn't miss the biggest night in my daughter's life so far, could I?"

"What about Dad?" she asked, looking around.

Saara Bergman's face fell. "I'm sorry, sweetie, but he won't be coming. He didn't even want *me* to be here. In fact, he said he forbade me to come, but I wasn't going to listen to that."

Anya bit her lower lip. "Is he going to be angry?"

She shrugged. "Probably. When is he *not* angry? Everything in the world seems to make him angry these days, and I don't know if I can live like that. There are other things going on as well..." She trailed off.

"What is it, Mom?"

Saara shook her head. "Let's just say your father's so called *values* apparently aren't that important to him."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing. We'll talk about it another time. I'm sorry if I brought you down on your big night."

"You didn't, Mom. Dad tried to, but you're here and that means so much to me." She paused and then dared to ask, "What do you think of the photographs?"

She laughed and leaned in again and gave her a squeeze. "As long as I don't think too hard about it being my daughter, I think they're amazing. You and Eric make a wonderful team. Speaking of Eric, where is he?"

"Oh, he's doing the rounds with some important people who mean nothing to me. I should probably get back to him, though. I know he wants me to meet the right people in the industry."

“Of course, sweetheart. I’ve got some people here I’d like to catch up with, too. I’ll let you get on, and we’ll speak again later.”

“Thanks, Mom.”

The two women hugged once more, and then her mother waved at someone she recognized across the room. Anya didn’t need to worry about her mother not having people to talk to. This was more Saara Bergman’s scene than it was her own. Her mother walked away, leaving Anya feeling alone and awkward once more, Logan having already left to continue to schmooze potential clients.

With relief she spotted someone—her long, silky dark hair falling down her back, wearing a little black dress and heels—looking young and beautiful.

“Nadine!” she squealed, waving. Her friend caught sight of her and hurried over.

“Oh, my God, Anya. I can’t believe how many people are here. Some reporters were taking photographs of me outside.” Her eyes shone with excitement. “This is amazing.”

“I know, crazy, isn’t it? Hey, there’s someone I want you to meet.”

She reached out and caught Logan’s elbow as he walked by, pulling him to a halt.

“Logan, this is my best friend, Nadine. I wanted you both to meet. Nadine, Logan owns the art gallery.”

Nadine’s eyes widened as she caught sight of Logan in his suit, his blond hair pulled into a knot at the back of his head. Logan’s gaze flicked up and down Nadine’s body and alighted on her face with a knowing smile.

He leaned in and kissed her, perhaps just a fraction too long. “Nadine, it’s lovely to meet you. Any friend of Anya’s is a friend of mine.”

Nadine blushed, something Anya had never seen with her. She was normally super confident around men.

“It’s lovely to meet you, too, Logan.”

He reached out to place his hand on her waist. “Let me show you some of my favorite pieces. Excuse us, Anya.”

Anya hid a smile as Logan guided her friend away.

“Hey.” A male voice behind her made her jump, and she turned to find Eric looking gorgeous in his black suit.

“Hey, yourself.”

He leaned in and kissed her cheek. “This is all going well, don’t you think?”

She nodded. “Yes, it’s like a fairytale. I can’t believe it.”

“So how about we auction off one of the photographs?”

“Seriously?”

“Only if you want to.”

She took a breath and shook her head. “No, let’s not. I don’t need the money to justify what we’ve done here. Just being here, seeing all these people admiring your work, it’s enough. I don’t need any more.”

He looked deep into her eyes. “Are you sure?”

She nodded. “As long as you are?”

He pulled her to him and kissed her. “Looks like they’re only for show, then. Shall we take a moment to appreciate our work?”

Together, they circumnavigated the art gallery, pausing in front of each photograph, remembering the exact moment each picture had been taken. All in black and white, the photographs were exquisite. One of a close up of her face, her cheek pressed to the floor, her eyes wide and utterly innocent. Another of the line of her back, and the top of her bottom, while she peeked over her shoulder at the camera. She understood exactly what Eric had meant about needing to be able to show her face. The whole feel of the collection would have been ruined if he hadn’t. Even the more explicit photographs had an elegance to them, as though she were a ballet dancer caught up in chains and photographed that way. Close up shots of her pussy were barely recognizable for what

they were, and instead could have been mistaken for the petals of a strange and exotic orchid.

The images stole her breath.

She should never have doubted him. He was a master at his art.

People began to notice as she walked around, taking in the photographs, and a hushed silence fell over the gathering. She suddenly realized everyone was looking at her, and her heartrate galloped, her cheeks heating.

But then, somewhere at the back of the small crowd, someone began to clap, the sound joined by another and another, until the whole art gallery were applauding both her and Eric. She caught sight of Logan grinning at her, and he gave her a wink. A final set of hands joined the applause and she turned to see Eric clapping as well.

## Chapter Twenty-nine

### Eric

Eric stood, watching Anya as she finished doing dishes from the meal he'd just cooked for them. She was focused on the job at hand, but he couldn't take his eyes off her tiny waist and the way her hips curved out beneath the dress she wore. Even doing such a mundane task, she was still unbelievably sexy.

A month had passed since the exhibition, and there was no doubt it had been a huge success.

Other than a couple of negative articles from writers who were most likely either friendly with Anya's father, or else with Jonathan Turner, everyone embraced Eric's new direction.

In the days that followed, numerous galleries from across the country had begged to show Eric's new collection, and when he'd asked Anya if she minded, she'd simply kissed him and told him it was a great idea. A tour for *Intimate* had now been arranged, with Logan acting as Eric's agent. It started in a couple of weeks, and he and Anya planned to travel with the collection.

Her father still hadn't contacted her, and, the day after the exhibition, Anya's mother had come to their apartment to tell Anya that she'd left him. Turned out he'd been having affairs for years, something her mother had turned a blind eye to, hoping she was mistaken or that he would stop. After he'd attempted to ban her from seeing Anya, she'd checked his email and found a number of messages from another woman. That, combined with his overbearing attitude, had been the final straw for Saara Bergman, and she'd thrown him out.

Anya, understandably, had been heartbroken. She'd cried while Eric held her, and he promised her that would never be

them.

Nadine and Logan had spent the evening of the exhibition together, and stayed up drinking champagne into the early hours. According to Anya, Nadine hadn't even slept with him—something that was apparently unusual for her—and instead had arranged a second date for the following week. They'd seen each other almost every day since, and Eric was thrilled Logan had found someone he cared about.

Unable to keep his hands off Anya, Eric walked up to her and pressed against her from behind. He reached around her body and plunged his hands into the bowl of soapy water, finding Anya's fingers, wet and slippery with soap beneath the surface.

“Hey, you're distracting me,” she protested, but only half-heartedly.

He nuzzled into her neck, inhaling her sweet scent. “I couldn't help it. Seeing you like this, all domesticated, was making me hot.”

She laughed. “Me doing the dishes turns you on?”

“Everything you do turns me on, but yes, seeing you like this, here in our home, doing regular things, is definitely a turn on.”

“You're going to have me barefoot, pregnant, and chained to the sink before I know it.”

He growled in her ear, “Don't tempt me.”

She twisted in his arms and placed her soapy hands around the back of his neck, and kissed him. Not caring his own hands were wet, he grabbed her bottom and pulled her against him.

“You know, Anya, in all seriousness, nothing would make me happier than having you pregnant, with or without shoes. I can't wait to be able to marry you and see you grow our child, to be able to photograph your stomach as it swells, or your breasts as they get larger and your nipples get massive.”

She laughed. “Eric, I'm only twenty-two, and you're just obsessed with my nipples.”

“I know, and I know you still have your studies and your career ahead of you. I would never take any of that away, but as soon as you’re ready, just say the word.”

“Are you sure?” she said. “You’d really want that with me? Marriage and babies?”

“Of course. You’re not just my model and muse. You’re the woman I love. You’re my everything, and I can’t see a future where you’re not in it.” He lowered his head and pressed his forehead to hers. “When I was sick, right before the exhibition, I had a glimpse of that possibility. For this one, horrifying moment, I tried to see a future where you weren’t in my life, and all I could see was a blank. I need you, Anya, more than you’ve ever needed me, and I’m sorry if that sounds sad and pathetic, but it’s the truth.”

She brushed his nose with hers, their lips skirting each other. “Eric, you’re everything to me, too. I don’t want a future without you in it either.”

“But what about the bipolar?” he asked, not wanting to talk about it, but feeling he had to. “If I’m in your life, that will be, too. I hate that I’m making you live with my illness when you could be free. It worries me that I’ll get ill again and your opinion of me will change.”

She smiled up at him, looking him in the eye. “Eric, you’re the bravest person I know. I can’t imagine what it’s like to wake up every day and have to battle with my own head. And the fact you’ve achieved so much while going through your own personal war is nothing short of amazing.”

He kissed her again. “No, you’re amazing. I’m so lucky and thankful to have you in my life.”

She smiled again, only this time she had a wicked glint in her blue eyes. She pressed herself closer, her hips grinding into his body, causing his already semi-erect cock to lengthen and harden. “So, show me how thankful you are.”

His hands slipped up beneath her skirt, cupping her bottom. “You, Miss Rhinne, are a very naughty girl.”

She hid a smile. “And don’t you just love it.”



He ran his hands over her bottom and then slipped one hand beneath the material of her underwear. He traced his finger down the crease of her bottom, past the pucker of her ass, making her inhale a breath, and then on to the wet folds of her pussy. He slipped a finger inside her, causing her to squirm as their mouths locked.

“Oh, Eric,” she murmured, and he grew even harder for her, wanting to tear off their clothes and force himself inside her.

But he had another idea.

Removing his hand from her underwear, he stepped away.

“Hey,” she said in protest.

“Wait one minute.”

Eric pulled his t-shirt over his head and then shucked out of his pants, and finally his shorts, leaving him completely naked.

Anya pressed her lips together, her eyes locked on him.

But instead of turning to her, he went to his desk and picked up his camera. He handed the camera to her with a smile, gesturing down at his naked body with a suggestive lift of his eyebrows.

“Now it’s your turn.”

THE END

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## Acknowledgements

This book was originally written as a serial and published in my erotica pen name M.K. Elliott. Over the past few years, my Marissa Farrar work has become increasingly steamier, to the point where I realised Marissa and M.K. weren't so different after all! I decided that I would start to move some of my more recent M.K. work over to Marissa's books, starting with 'Survivor' which was originally written as M.K. The second book has been this one, which started out as 'Model Wanted', and finished as 'Dirty Shots.'

So I just wanted to say a big thank you to all of the early readers of Model Wanted, who kept asking for more, and gave me lots of encouragement to finish the serial as a novel, which I've done. Thank you to all of you—you gave me that extra bit of courage when I needed it the most. I hope my regular readers have enjoyed the extra bit of sexiness in this book as well!

As always, I have my little team to thank—my editor Lori Whitwam, and my two proofreaders on this book, Karey McComish and Linda Helm. I'd also like to thank my earlier editor on this book, from when it was 'Model Wanted' Shontrell Wade, as she also helped to shape this book in the early days.

I'd like to thank the cover designer Yoly, at Cormar Covers. Thank you for your patience—I know I can be picky, but I think we got a gorgeous cover out of it in the end. Can't wait to see it in print!

And a final massive thank you to you, the reader, for continuing to buy my books and supporting me. I have the best job in the world!

Thanks for reading!

Marissa. XXX

## About the Author

Marissa Farrar is a multi-published romance, fantasy, and horror author. She was born in Devon, England, has travelled all over the world, and has lived in both Australia and Spain. She now resides in the countryside with her husband, three young children, a crazy Spanish dog, and two rescue cats. Despite returning to England, she daydreams of one day being able to split her time between her home country and the balmy, white sandy beaches of Spain.

Even though she's been writing stories since she was small and held dreams of being a writer, her initial life plan went a different way.

In her youth, inspired by James Herriot, she decided to become a vet, and would regularly bring home new pets to her weary parents. Upon discovering her exams were never going to get her into a veterinary degree, she ended up studying Zoology. Once she completed her degree and realised she'd spent the majority trying to find time to write, she decided to follow her dream of being an author. Seven years later, she was published and two years after that she was able to say goodbye to the day job.

However, she's continued to collect animals!

Marissa is the author of over twenty novels, including the dark vampire 'Serenity' series. Her short stories have been accepted for a number of anthologies including, *Their Dark Masters*, Red Skies Press, *Masters of Horror: Damned If You Don't*, Triskaideka Books; and *2013: The Aftermath*, Pill Hill Press.

If you want to know more about Marissa, then please visit her website at [www.marissa-farrar.blogspot.com](http://www.marissa-farrar.blogspot.com). You can also find her at her facebook page,

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# DIRTY SHOTS

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Warwick House Press

Edited by Lori Whitwam

Cover art by Cormar Covers

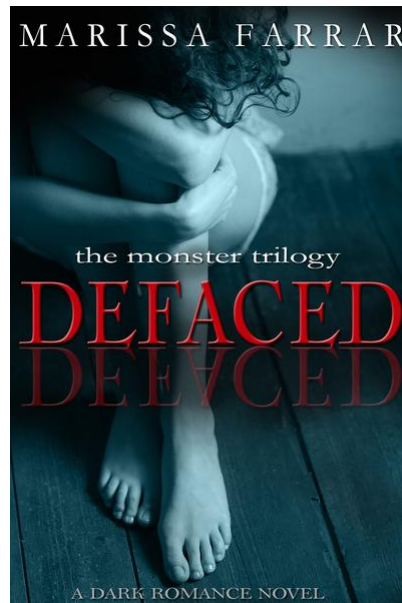
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