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SAWYER

You've come a long way baby.

I want to laugh at that hopeful but wildly inaccurate saying—at least when it comes to my personal progression. Although I try to step forward I freeze just inside the main room of No Limits a popular BDSM sex club in New York City.

What am I doing here?

Before arriving this seemed like a great way to spend my twenty-first birthday specifically by shedding the past that's held me down since I was a kid. Endless responsibility no fun always being the good girl dutiful daughter and excellent student. I need a break. So what's wrong with doing what I want for once? Nothing right?

Excitement courses through me heating my skin. Before the night's over I will explore flirt and have sex with strangers.

My pulse races. Okay maybe one stranger. How hard can that be?

Dozens are here for masquerade night except there are no costumes. Not that I expect anyone to dress like Batman or Catwoman. That would be silly. The women's formal gowns and the guys' tuxedos resemble a scene from a royal celebration...except for their accompanying masks. Everyone's wearing one that depicts a particular animal. To foreshadow the sensuous and uncivilized acts to come?

Heat pours through me settling between my legs.

Mingling patrons laugh and touch each comfortable in this prelude to true decadence which includes bondage submission discipline and fucking.

I lock my knees to keep steady.

Loud laughter rings across the spacious room coming from a guy in a horsehead mask. I'm guessing it's a less-than-subtle advertisement as to how well he's hung. I admire him for being able to cut loose so easily. If only I could. Maybe tonight...

He slips his arm around a woman in an owl mask and a crimson-sequined gown. Each time she laughs her nipples graze her plunging neckline and threaten to spill over.

For those who might notice they don't let on or don't care about anyone's action except their own. Several kiss as if their lives depend upon it. Some guys fondle their partners' boobs while the women cup those bad boys' balls.

Feeling like a voyeur and liking it too much I turn away. Mr. Horsehead and Owl Lady stroll to the sweeping staircase leading to the upstairs rooms.

Since the BDSM equipment isn't down here it must be up there. Crops whips and cat o' nine tails dance in my thoughts along with a bench where a Dom secures his sub face down her ass high legs spread her soft folds slick with desire as she awaits punishment then pleasure.

My pussy creams.

Mr. Horsehead lets out another loud laugh that's vaguely arrogant. Owl Lady snuggles closer showing her approval. If he has the goods between his legs she's in for quite a night.

Once they ascend the steps I lift my head to the overhead chandelier as though I might see through the ceiling as he mounts her and—

An elbow jabs my ribs.

I bite back a wince and try hard not to frown. The elbow belongs to my BFF Jessie who's here to encourage or protect me whichever way this night progresses. "Easy Jess. I don't want marks on me this early if at all."

"No shit." Giggling she grabs two champagne flutes from the roaming server and shoves one at me. "Happy B-day Sawyer. Drink up and be shameless. Next week it's back to the salt mines for us."

More like our final semester at Columbia but who am I to argue with such enthusiasm? As I sip my drink she guzzles hers. That's Jessie. Lighthearted to the extreme and the perfect complement to my caution.

She smooths her reddish curls and burps daintily. "I gotta say you bringing us here is your best idea ever. This totally beats A.C."

In Jersey slang A.C. means Atlantic City specifically its gaudy casinos. Jessie's a Jersey City girl like I was until Mom remarried and my stepfather Franklin moved us to upper crust Greenwich Connecticut. There the toney set didn't exactly welcome Mom and me with open arms. That gave us time to lose our working-girl accents which Franklin insisted upon and Mom wholeheartedly agreed with. I kept quiet and did what I was told. As always the good girl.

Wanting to forget at least for tonight I gulp my drink.

Lush music plays dark and erotic. Several women sway in time to its earthy beat.

Jessie elbows me again. "Will you just look at this place?"

It's hard not to. Rather than the cheap glitz in A.C. this is the real deal. Gleaming dark wood expensive

rugs gold trim and sparkling crystal everywhere. A place fit for an aristocrat. Say the Marquis de Sade.

I snicker at the thought.

Jessie taps her glass against mine. "Great you're getting in the right mood. So what should we do first?"

Expectation twinkles in her green eyes.

I eye the crowd then tug on my gown's neckline you're getting in the right mood. So what should we do first?"

Expectation twinkles in her green eyes.

I eye the crowd then tug on my gown's neckline which is modest next to the Fredrick's of Hollywood styles the others wear.

Jessie watches me. “Keep doing that and you’re going to rip your dress. Shouldn’t you let the guys here do that?”

“I’m pretty sure tearing each other’s clothes off is against the rules.” Then again... “I didn’t think my dress would be so blah next to the others here.”

Frequenting designer clothing shops isn’t on my schedule. Despite Franklin paying for my education and apartment he didn’t give me his platinum AMEX for a shopping spree at Oscar de la Renta’s. Not that I want it. Having to reinvent myself to meet his expectations or face him cutting off all funds for my future is enough thank you. And that’s only the beginning. After tonight the next phase of his “Sawyer’s-career-development plan” begins meaning me interning at his real estate development company.

My stomach churns and my head hurts. Suddenly I want all the booze in this place. Although I should be grateful for the amazing opportunities he affords I feel as though I’m suffocating.

Jessie regards my gown. “Your dress looks okay to me. At least it’s from a store. Hell I made mine.” She grins. “And did a damn good job of it I might add.”

I adore her fuck-the-world personality and still hope some rubs off on me. "It's amazing."

"Even with my mask?" She touches the whiskers. "What kind of animal is it?"

"A cute little meerkat. Much better than the dumb one the staffer gave me." I finger the long ears on mine.

"I don't know about that." She leans close and speaks in a low voice. "Wearing a bunny mask gives off the right vibes. That you can keep going and going like that pink critter on TV who's always banging his drum."

I laugh.

She does too. "So what made you pick this place out of all the others around? Please tell me it's because it has the best BDSM and other attractions."

Not hardly. The truth is I haven't a clue what goes on here other than what its discreet website shows. Those pictures have no nudity people or Story of O-type rooms displaying kinky action. It does mention Zane Montgomery.

He owns this pleasure palace. He's also my stepbrother. The guy I've harbored a secret crush on since I was fourteen and his dad married my mom. Back then he seemed worldly and talk about hot. At nineteen he made the fourteen-year-old boys in my class look like toddlers. He actually shaved and insisted everyone call him Z not Zane. For weeks I dreamed about the letter Z slashed across walls like he was Zorro.

Since he never glanced my way and made himself scarce—except for that one time when we almost kissed which I figured was a joke on his part—I didn't have much interaction with him. Hopefully tonight's no different. "If my stepfather finds out about me coming here... God I don't want to think about it."

Jessie makes a face. "Why would he know about this unless you expect him to show up? Damn does he play at these places?" She sucks in a breath. "Does your mom?"

"Of course not." I fight laughter. "That would be insane."

“Then how would he possibly know you’ve been here?”

I should tell her about Zane but can’t. Lusting after my stepbrother is bordering on creepy even though we’re not blood relations. With no other option I lie. “No reason. I worry too much. You know that.” I bump my shoulder against hers and offer my broadest smile despite the mask cutting into my cheeks. “Before we decide what to do let’s survey the landscape.”

“Seriously? Snuggling up to the cutest guys and cupping their family jewels works too. And cuts through a lot of red tape.”

“True” I say. “But how do you know they’re cute with these masks on?”

She looks stumped then perks up. “We can still see if they got good bods. If worse comes to worse we can tell them to keep the masks on while we’re playing.”

“Okay but shouldn’t we be looking for guys with good personalities too?”

She rolls her eyes. "It's a sex club sweetie. We're not here to get engaged. Who'd want to hook up permanently with a guy who does this for fun? Not me. I want someone loyal who accepts my flaws and thinks I'm the greatest thing ever."

I can't argue with that logic. "Good looks it is for tonight. But I still say we play it somewhat safe and check out the goods before we start pawing them."

"If you insist." She eyes the guys nearest us.

I'm hoping she doesn't shake her booty too and get in deeper than she's prepared for. Like me she's a virgin at this club scene. Sure she's dated a lot but deep down she wants a trusting and committed relationship like she said which perfectly describes her mom and dad's marriage.

If anyone here messes with her head by getting too enthusiastic...

Even though No Limits requires health checks and a thorough orientation to weed out dangerous players no system is perfect.

I keep one eye on her while I also scan for a potential lover who'll turn me every which way but loose...while we're naked.

My heart skips several beats. I squeeze my flute so tightly I'm afraid it might break.

Relax. You're not facing a firing squad. This is about fun. So have some!

I drag in several calming breaths as I survey the prospects making certain I don't meet anyone's eyes. I'm not ready for that intimacy. Thankfully—or sadly—no one has me on their radar. Jessie might be right about fondling the guys below their belts to get their attention.

No prospect on the right thickens my blood. The balding guy does give me pause. I thought the age group tonight would be twenty-something. Surely no more than thirty. I don't have anything against older people but for this I want staying power between the sheets.

I think.

My emotions are like hot-and-cold torture. I push them aside and attack this as I would a school project or my upcoming internship weeding out negatives and focusing on positives.

A piercing squeal cuts across the room. A woman in a fox mask laughs and swats at the wolf-mask guy tickling her. It's hard to tell if she's having fun or not.

Another masked man—mid-twenties or so—strides into the scene and says something I can't hear. The tickling dude instantly stops what he's doing and backs away.

Flushed the woman gives the wolf guy a dirty look then touches her savior's sleeve and looks at him adoringly. Because he's her date or hookup?

Other women gravitate to him. I'm not surprised.

Unlike Mr. Horsehead's dumb mask this man wears an ebony one in leather resembling a hawk. It's powerful and sexy exposing his strong jaw and sensuous mouth while also complementing his broad shoulders slim hips long legs and height. At least six feet possibly more.

His hands are large fingers long. Every woman knows what that means.

My insides flutter.

I like his spiked dark brown hair and his effortless stubble that's completely masculine.

Not only is he easy on the eyes he subscribes to old-world chivalry that's lacking in so many other guys...protective without being possessive respectful while also having fun.

Without thinking I step toward him. Several other women do too. A few stroke his sleeve. One rubs against him.

He politely avoids each even the woman he rescued.

She's not his date or hookup. So far he's free.

My skin tingles and my pussy aches. I have no shame for wanting him. However actually saying those words and risking rejection are a whole other ballgame. To consider he'll choose me over everyone else is nice but not a sure thing. Tracking down Zane and asking him to introduce me to Hawk Man is a great thought...except I'm not brave enough to put it into action.

Before I can decide what to do Hawk Man's eyes meet mine.

Everything seems to stop except for my racing heart.

His gaze lingers on me male interest sparking on his face the emotion growing quickly heated and promising indecent delights.

My breath catches.

2

ZANE

And who might you be?

It's not like me to notice the available eye candy at my club. For me everything that happens here is strictly business not pleasure. However there's something about the young woman in the bunny mask that's intriguing...and enticing.

Pleasant warmth pools in my groin. My cock couldn't be harder my balls so damn plump they start to ache.

Fuck she's got a great figure. Plush breasts that could easily pillow a man's head. Hips that give a guy something to hang onto while he's plowing into her tight hot cunt.

My throat tightens. Taking a breath isn't easy.

Her pale blond hair gives her a regal and innocent look. A delightful combination. Her pouty lips could fuel many guys' wet dreams and prove indispensable on his dick and—

Someone's stroking my shirt buttons. Her tanned hand and blood-red nails head south to my fly.

She purrs then snuggles close. "Hey baby."

Before she goes too far or addresses me as Zane a name she couldn't possibly know I lightly clasp her wrist.

She actually bats her eyelashes at me their length catching on her cat mask.

Again she purrs. "Hmm I like a man who enjoys res-s-s-straining me. Let's s-s-play."

Although her strong come-on is expected here her slurring proves she's had too much champagne. To keep her from lowering my fly I clasp her other wrist and glance at a security guard then incline my head toward Ms. Purr. A subtle cue she needs to leave not only to protect her safety but the guests and club. There's no chance in hell I'll allow anyone to booze up then cry rape. Always a worry during masquerade nights when anonymity brings out the stupid in some patrons.

Tommy a security guard who's built like a tank crosses the room to me. Other guards follow all wearing tuxes and masks so they can move inoffensively through the crowd.

Tommy gives me an apologetic smile beneath his puppy mask and speaks softly. "Sorry I missed our guest drinking too much. It won't happen again sir."

He and another guard escort the woman past the staircase to a private room where she can sober up. Their laughter and hers shows nothing is amiss. Exactly as I want. When male and female security aren't taking care of business as the guys just did they mingle amongst themselves while in the crowd making certain they only have eyes for each other. That way they appear to be guests who've found their partners for the night which keeps the others at bay. Should a guest insist on horning in the guards have scenarios to handle the problem without the individual feeling rejected or policed. An ideal solution.

Now for the servers. They know there's a two-drink limit down here. Enough for a mild buzz but nothing close to getting sloppy and careless which could lead to bad press the police and lawsuits.

My temples pound at the thought. Always cautious when it comes to No Limits I keep an even closer eye on the guests.

Thus far they're behaving themselves. They sure as fuck better.

I work too damn hard to lose anything. For two years I sweated blood to make this place a success even though it began as a nightmare. Not for me...for dear old Dad. He's the consummate manipulator who uses people better than the sleaziest politician then goes in for the kill dominating every fucking aspect of a person's life. He pulled that shit on me until I was old enough to leave and never look back.

Me opening a sex club was the final nail in our non-relationship. One of my goals. I was honestly surprised to discover I love the lifestyle presented here. The freedom to be who you are even if it's only for an evening and to have everyone accept your faults as well as your assets. I'd never experienced that before and got hooked. Now I have plans to open a second location on the other side of town hopefully within the month.

Tommy joins me and keeps his voice low. "Everything's taken care of. Like I said it won't happen again. The guys and me will keep a closer watch."

"Do you know who served the guest beyond the drink limit?"

His chin and thick neck grow red.

He's a great guy and I hate to put him on the spot but this is business. "Are you worried I'll fire the server?"

He makes a pained sound. "She's a good person and needs the dough. Her mom's real sick. Insurance doesn't pay for everything."

The sick-mom part brings back those horrible moments when I lost my mother. My gut hurts.

I squeeze Tommy's shoulder. "I'm not going to fire anyone. But I need to have a word with the girl. Who is it?"

He glances at Bethany who's across the room. She shakes her head at two men who keep reaching for the flutes on her tray. Like a dancer or juggler she keeps the booze from their reach without spilling a drop or falling. Frustration tightens their features their faces turning red. The one on the right crowds her forcing Bethany to back into a wall. She slides to the left away from him. He and the other guy don't follow but they do laugh.

Of all the...

Outrage slams through me. If there's one thing I cannot and will not abide is any man threatening a woman and finding it funny. Those lousy pricks are going to learn some manners.

“Tommy I want you to bring those guests to Annalisse’s office.” If anyone can put the fear of God into them it’s Annalisse my floor manager. Should a guy give her shit she makes him regret it. “Guard those two until she arrives. Tell her I want them permanently banned from the club. Once that’s finished put them in a cab. Don’t leave their sides until they’re small spots in the distance understand?”

“Yes sir. But what about Bethany?”

“Her position’s in no danger... Hold on.” Tommy’s behavior regarding her is out of character. He’s seen other servers get the boot and didn’t blink. Not even when he had eyes for the beautiful ones. “Are you and Bethany an item?”

His gaze slides to her and back. If his face got any redder it would melt.

I smile. “Okay you are. May happiness and peace go with you.”

He swallows hard. “You don’t mind?”

“Why would I? Screwing with patrons is prohibited for staff not you guys hooking up with each other away from the club. Besides you’re both adults. Although I do wonder how someone as cute as she is could be attracted to an ugly goon like you.”

He laughs heartily. “Thanks boss. I’ll get the guys and will take care of those fools ASAP.”

Once he does I gesture Bethany to the side which is relatively deserted.

She hesitates then slumps doom in her eyes.

Good God does my staff think I’m a prick who’ll scream at them or worse fire their asses when they only try to do their best?

If nothing else convinces me I need to lighten up it’s Bethany’s downturned mouth. I recall too many times when Dad browbeat the maids and cooks while Mom was alive belittling the help she hired with

every shouted word asking if they were stupid then waiting for their answers which would either confirm their ineptitude or challenge his take on things. A no-win situation that got his rocks off. The only help he didn't fire were those who sobbed uncontrollably and begged for another chance usually in a foreign language since he liked to hold deportation over their heads.

I don't want to believe I came from him and might end up as horrible. Bile rises to my throat. I force it down.

At last Bethany reaches my side. I want to give her a brotherly hug but keep my hands to myself so she can't misunderstand any comfort I give. "Are you all right?"

Her head jerks up panic in her eyes. Her trembling makes the flutes tinkle against each other champagne sloshing over the tops. "W-why?"

"I saw what those guests did...or tried to do. No one who works here has to put up with that or demeaning language. If anyone tries you tell Annalisse and me. The ones who just bothered you are permanently banned. You'll never have to worry about them again."

I throw in a smile to make her feel better.

She bursts into tears.

Fuck. I didn't want that. "What's wrong?"

"N-nothing. I didn't expect... I was sure... You're being so nice... I need to dry my eyes."

I take her tray and offer my handkerchief. After blotting her face she sniffs then looks guilty at her makeup streaked on the linen.

"I'll wash and iron this" she says. "You'll have it back tomorrow."

"Keep it. I have dozens." The truth. "You might want to blow your nose though before you return to the guests. Unless you'd rather go home. If so fine take the rest of the night off."

“Oh no. I couldn’t.” She crushes the handkerchief to her chest her normally reddish cheeks practically glowing and making her honey brown hair seem lighter. “I need the money.”

“You’ll be paid.” I return her tray. “Go on. See to your mom.”

Shock crosses her cute face. “How did you know about—”

“Tommy told me.” I smile. “He’s a decent guy. Make each other happy.”

The kind of bliss I’ll never know. Love and commitment are for other people not me.

My father was a lousy teacher in that respect. I prefer to stay alone and simply fuck whenever the urge hits rather than destroying someone else’s life with the toxicity I likely inherited.

Bethany smiles through her newest tears. "Thanks Mr. Montgomery. I'll be here next shift for sure. Eager to keep your guests happy."

"As long as you don't serve them past their drink limit I'm good."

Her eyes round. "I wouldn't ever. I haven't. I didn't want to say anything but some guests who want more take it from the other patrons."

A wrinkle I didn't consider. "In the future don't keep me in the dark about their rule breaking."

"I swear I won't." She crosses her heart like a Girl Scout then rushes toward the hall that leads to the staff room.

My delight at her happiness lasts longer than it should. Emotions are dangerous. They make me vulnerable which I won't abide. It's better to get back to ensuring this group's pleasure so their gushing word-of-mouth leads others to this place.

Halfway across the room I remember the bunny girl...her voluptuous figure pale hair luscious red lips.

Where are you?

I search the room. She isn't here. Did she go upstairs where the BDSM toys other playthings and beds are so guests can fuck themselves silly without regret? Is she doing so now with another man or men? Does she like them?

My cock deflates regret fueling its descent when it shouldn't. I don't know her and never will.

Go back to work.

Something I'm good at.

Like a fool I climb the staircase searching for Ms. Bunny hesitant to see her yet also eager.

At the landing I choose the right hall where the bedrooms are her image looming in my mind.

If I find you what then?

As I think about what I want desire heats my blood.

I have zero luck finding anyone in No Limits that I crave other than Hawk Man. When the woman in the cat mask pawed him and he didn't leave I was pretty much done with this place no matter how celebrated it may be.

There's something about Hawk I hunger for on a visceral level. Call it pent-up desire coupled with aching loneliness the other men can't satisfy. They might be great lovers physically but also seem like regular guys. Into their own satisfaction not noticing or worrying about a woman's needs as Hawk did with the one he rescued from the tickler.

I know it's foolish to trust or long for a complete stranger who'll always remain that way. Still...

Tired of Jessie pulling me around this place I stop in the deserted hall and sag against the ornate molding. "Care to tell me where we're going?"

She huffs. "I don't know if I should. You might say no. Come on get a teeny-weeny bit adventurous. You might like it."

The hope in her eyes breaks my heart. I'm screwing with her night too and that's not fair to her. "Sure. Sorry I've been such a drag. I promise I won't be from here on out."

“Woot!” She pumps her fist. “Hear that?”

Listening I wait for squeals moans grunts and growls as various lovers satisfy each other but instead there’s only a distant thump thump thump. “You mean the faint pounding? I think that’s my heart.”

She snickers at my lame joke then yanks me away from the wall. “It’s music. Let’s boogie. That’s a great way to get close and personal with a guy before doing the nasty. Plus after all that rockin’ and rollin’ we’ll be on an endorphin and dopamine high. Everyone looks great when you’re riding that mood.”

She has a point and because we’re BFFs I can’t hold her back. “You go ahead.”

Suspicion rises in her eyes. “By myself? So you can split?”

“Explore.” I raise my gaze to the ceiling. The lovely artwork there all nudes—what else?—surprises and impresses me. “I’d like to see what they have for equipment here.”

“I can come with.”

“You could but you’re already bouncing to the beat. Go please. Have fun. I swear I won’t leave. I’ll just look around and will hopefully get lucky.”

She pumps her hips to the music. “If you’re sure...”

“I am. We’ll meet out front at closing—that’s two a.m.—with no regrets. Agreed?”

“You bet.” She smiles wide enough to show her gums. “By the way take notes on what’s happened to you. I want details.”

Laughing I give her a hug then wave her on her way.

Once she's gone I drift toward another stairway that leads to the upper floor and the serious end of this business. "Ready or not here I come."

Perspiration wiggles from beneath my mask the drop landing on my chest. I brush it away before it can reach my dress. In addition to the mask being uncomfortable I'm betting it's screwed with my makeup.

Although the stairs await my ascension to paradise at least sexually I should look good. A pit stop in the ladies' room to fix my face spritz myself with perfume and make certain my breath is fresh is in order.

Getting through the guests in the hall leading to it isn't easy. Why so many congregate here I don't know but I push my way through.

Someone grabs my wrist.

Hawk?

Heat floods my chest and face. I spin around. My hope collapses at a man in a panther mask who's still holding my wrist. Not liking that I try to pull away but his grip tightens.

I frown. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing yet but I'm planning on changing that real soon." He grins showing blinding white teeth. "How about you and me go upstairs and have some fun?"

"No thanks." I yank my hand away.

He laughs loudly his booze breath about knocking me down. He tries to grab my other wrist.

A panicked scream rises to my throat which is so tight no sound can escape. Desperately I rummage through my purse and pull out a flashlight-size taser. "See this?" I press it to his groin. "It's a taser. Touch me again without my consent which is prohibited here and I'll permanently sterilize you."

The others in the hall back away.

He presses closer. "Aw come on baby. Don't be mean."

"I'm not. I'm deadly serious. Back off or I'll—"

"What's going on here?" a deep voice says.

It belongs to Hawk.

His authoritative question and presence excite me better than the smuttiest film. My heart's beating so fast my vision dims.

He crowds Panther Guy. “The lady said she wants you to back off which you’d better do before she makes good on her threat.”

Panther Guy chuckles. “I was only having fun.”

Hawk’s imposing stance shows he’s not amused.

Another man whose neck is as thick as my thigh rushes in. “Security. Sorry for the trouble Miss.”

He and another muscular man escort Panther Guy from the hall.

I don’t care where they take him. Hawk captures my full attention. I fill myself with his crisp aquatic scent and bask in the male heat rolling off him. Next to my height he seems positively enormous and wonderfully protective. Even so I don’t want him to think I’m helpless since I’m not and never have been. “Thanks for lending a hand but I did have things under control.”

He glances at my taser. A smile tugs at his luscious lips. "I can see that. You're into edgeplay?"

With him I'm game for anything. Unfortunately I don't know what he's talking about. "Edgeplay?"

"Electrical play like with tasers. That has to be cleared with the Dungeon Master first. I'm guessing you haven't done that right?" He playfully wags his finger.

His gentle teasing and heated gaze melt my insides. My face is so hot it stings. He hasn't even touched me yet and I'm having the best time ever. "Guess I'm busted." I smile shyly. Something I never do. "The truth is I'm a virgin when it comes to the club scene."

A deeper intensity floods his eyes primal hunger at its finest.

My pussy aches. I speak before I know it. "I need someone to show me the ropes."

ZANE

I'm not certain how a woman can be adorable hot hot vulnerable and seductive at the same time but Bunny—my nickname for her due to the mask—is the total package.

My cock's so eager for her sweet slick cunt the fucking thing presses against my fly wanting out. I hope she doesn't notice. I sure as hell don't want to scare her before things get hot and heavy between us. Which they will.

Screwing with guests is against every rule I have but for her I'll make an exception. "If you'd like I'd be happy to show you around."

Her eyes light up but her throat and chest turn nearly as red as her sumptuous lips. A delightful blush and it's for me. Pride makes me want to puff up. Good sense warns that my emotions are idiotic. I can't help it. To imagine any unwelcome touch from another guy on her mouth creamy skin or spectacular figure isn't something I can do.

She offers a smile that weakens my knees.

Eager to play I grin. "Am I hearing a yes?"

Her laughter peals through the hall. "Of course. Lead the way upstairs."

Sweet. She's hungry too.

I offer my arm. She easily slips hers through it.

Her touch electrifies me. Her fragrance intoxicates. Some rich and flowery scent with a hint of musk calling to mind a torrid night silk sheets and naked bodies.

My mouth goes dry. Once on the landing I direct us to the left. "The playrooms are this way."

Her arm tightens slightly against mine then she relaxes. "Have you been in all of them?"

As the owner I can't avoid it. As to whether I engage in this play the answer is also yes. "I have. Does that bother you?"

"Absolutely not." She presses closer.

Whether she wants my protection against the various aspects of BDSM or my instruction on its finer points I don't know. Whatever's going through her mind I'm glad she's here.

I stop at the first room with the saltire or X-cross a staple in BDSM dungeons. Thanks to the window passersby can enjoy the action. For those who prefer no voyeurism during their play the club offers private rooms.

A naked young woman is strapped face forward to the saltire. Nude guys—except for their zippered black hoods and leather boots—hold wide punishment straps. The woman's pale ass and upper thighs are reddened slightly from the licks she's already taken.

Bunny grips my arm enough to hurt.

Before things get too intense in the room I bring her to the next window. A woman's bent at the waist and strapped face down over a small table her ass elevated wrists and ankles secured to the legs. An eyebolt on top is attached to the ring on her slave collar completing her bondage. Near her lips is a leather phallus bolted to the table and pointed in her direction. Currently it fills her mouth to silence her ecstatic cries.

Given the stripes on her thighs and ass she agreed to a riding crop for punishment. That's the pain. Now for the pleasure. Her partner rides her from behind his thick cock sliding in and out of her willing pussy his shaft glistening from her moisture that proves her arousal.

My pulse sprints and my balls want to crawl up into my body. If I don't get relief soon I'm not certain what I'll do.

Bunny breathes fast and hard her creamy brown eyes so wide they show the whites. But she doesn't look away.

I like that. "Does this interest you?"

She blinks slowly her eyes glazed. "It's...uh..."

I figure it's time to take a wild guess. "Too much?"

"No. Well maybe for me since I've never done this stuff. Otherwise it's stellar."

That's not the word I would use but I'm glad she's not put off. "Do you have any idea what you'd like to try? Or do you know anything about BDSM play?"

“Only what I read in Story of O and erotic romances. Seeing it in the flesh so to speak makes it real.”

She’s definitely not ready for hardcore. “It’s okay to take this in baby steps. We all start out as virgins.”

“Even you? I doubt that.” She laughs softly.

The sound tinkles like tiny bells and makes me so fucking hard my suffering dick would scream if it could.
“I’m going to take that as a compliment. Ever hear of impact play?”

“Can’t say that I have.”

I nod glad I’m the one introducing her to my world. “It’s also known as spanking.”

Her mouth forms a delightful O. “Yeah I definitely heard of that. Is something that mild allowed here?”

“Everything you could possibly want is in this place.” I lead her to another window. A woman in a chipmunk mask is draped over her partner’s leg. As he paddles her she laughs shouts and kisses his hairy calf.

Bunny smiles fascination in her eyes.

Unable to deny my intolerable need any longer I press my mouth to her ear. “If that were you and me in there I’d strip you slowly as if you were a long-awaited gift I finally received. I’d watch your dress catch on your tight nipples then slide past your navel inching lower and lower until it exposed your fragrant bush. I’d breathe in your scent and tongue your clit but only after I slipped my fingers into your slick cunt...to keep you still and close to me. Once I had you screaming in delight and begging for more I’d turn you over my knee and paddle you for making me wait too damn long to have you. Each time I paused in my discipline I’d stroke your clit sending you over the fucking rainbow again and again. Then we’d move onto other pleasures. Bondage voyeurism submission and whatever else we come across. Your pleasure would be my only goal your delight mine to give and assure.”

Before she can respond I go for broke. “Would you like to play with me?”

SAWYER

For the first time in my life I can't speak. I'm reeling from his confidence in talking about how he'll strip arouse and delight me. His gentleness in saying that's his only goal.

I was right about him not being selfish like other guys I know. They're boys. Hawk's a real man knowing what a woman not only wants but needs.

I came here tonight to have anonymous no strings kinky-as-hell sex before dooming myself to Franklin's career plan. To my utter surprise I'm getting much more. A lover who's worthy. A man who cares about my feelings despite our being strangers and never seeing each other again.

My heart cramps at this being our only time together but that's reality. For me to turn him down now would be insane. I'm many things but not that.

I smile so hard the mask hurts my cheeks. "I'd love to Hawk."

He blinks. "What did you call me?"

"Hawk. I've been using that name in my head because of your mask. Do you mind?"

"Not in the least. But once we're in our room the address is Master."

"Of course." I lower my eyes submissively. "Nothing else will do."

"You learn fast Bunny."

I tug on one long ear. "That's me."

"The mask looks cute on you."

I prefer him to say I look sexy.

He smiles. "I like it."

That's a compliment I can live with.

He takes my hand his palm warm his grip light but firm. "Would you prefer a room with a window or one without?"

A window excites me but I'm not there yet. "Private please."

"Your wish is my command." He winks then kisses my fingers.

My legs go watery. Given that and his long strides it's an effort to keep up on the way to our room.

He stops at the door and regards me. "Ready?"

Feeling bolder than I ever have I don't hide my feelings. "Long overdue."

"Yeah? Enthusiasm gets you extra-special treatment."

I want to ask what he means but don't have the chance as he opens the door.

Wow. Our room is like something out of the Arabian Nights or a smutty historical novel. Jasmine and musk scent the air. Richly colored silk drapes cover the walls in between large mirrors that reflect the four-poster bed. It's enormous purple silk cascading down each post. Red orange and gold pillows crowd the mattress. The Persian rugs are thick enough to sleep comfortably on.

Despite their splendor my gaze jumps to the mirrored ceiling—which obviously shows all the action—then creeps back to the bed. No matter how hard I try I can't look away from it.

The door clicks shut behind me.

My heart slams into my throat. Not from fear...excitement. My pussy couldn't be damper. My nipples are so hard they sting.

Hawk waits by the door watching me. If he expects the virgin Bunny to run screaming from him he's in for a major surprise. I want him as I have no other man. The others were to experience sex or to relax. This is...

I'm not certain what motivates me more—his indisputable masculinity easy charm understanding nature or this place. Maybe it's everything combined.

No one would ever accuse me of being spontaneous but I cross the room wreath my arms around his shoulders and ease his mouth to mine. Not giving him the chance to dominate me yet I spear my tongue between his lips.

God. His fresh peppermint taste is almost as good as his unique flavor. Something intangible I can't describe. I sweep my tongue over his inner cheeks loving his heat pouring into me.

He pulls me close my boobs crushed to his chest his rigid cock against my pussy. Heaven.

Our tongues slow dance then proceed to waltz and finally boogie hard. He fights me for dominance and wins easily his tongue plunging into my mouth wordlessly demanding I suckle it.

How could I do anything less?

Willingly and submissively I suck him savoring his flavors losing myself in his strength heat and passion.

He makes a pleased sound. Our kiss grows noisy and sloppy then surprisingly tender him again taking the lead.

He explores my mouth with genuine carnal hunger showing he doesn't want to be anywhere else or with another woman.

His passion fuels my desire for him. I run my hands through his hair then touch his sleeve his hip his fly.

He pulls his tongue in and breaks free.

No. I didn't do anything wrong. How could I? This isn't a monastery. I doubt the second circle in Hell could be lustier than this place.

Since I don't like to wait for another person to take charge in something I want and he's not ripping off my clothes I have to speak. "What's wrong?"

He stares at me blankly. His color's high his breathing strained. That looks turned on to me.

After rubbing his mouth he shakes his head and his eyes clear but his pupils are still dilated as they should be during arousal.

I can't figure this out. "Sorry but I'm having trouble reading your cues. You look turned on but you're way over there and I'm way over—"

"Only because we need to lay down some ground rules first."

Meaning? If he's talking about me wanting to date him after this I know that's a nonstarter. Maybe at some future time when fantasy turns to reality we'll run into each other click instantly and end up being a couple. Right now I figure that will only happen while I'm asleep and dreaming. "Such as?"

He looks as confused as I feel. "What you're willing and not willing to do in this room."

Ah those ground rules. "The masks stay on." Mine's uncomfortable as hell but also lends a mysterious air those ground rules. "The masks stay on." Mine's uncomfortable as hell but also lends a mysterious air plus he likes it. His is sexy beyond anything I can imagine. Something I can definitely live with. "Agreed?"

"Yep. Now as to your limits you—"

"Wait." I lift my chin. "My limits? Don't you have any?"

His bronze complexion reddens. He shakes his head. "As long as you enjoy what we do then no I don't."

Ordinarily I like running the show when I can but here I'm at a total loss. "Can I be honest with you?"

Panic flashes across his eyes but he recovers quickly. "I guess."

"It's nothing bad." Before confessing I bite my lower lip a bad habit I have when I'm uncertain. "I don't know what my limits are. I'm here to find out. I've been wound tight for a really long time and want to let loose for once. Not worry about expectations. G-g-give up c-c-control." Of all the times for my voice to crack. I clear my throat. "You know?"

He doesn't nod or shake his head but his gaze softens from an emotion I'd call tenderness. At this point I prefer it to passion.

"Actually I do know." He smiles briefly. "I think everyone's been where you are now struggling against convention and responsibilities. That ends for you while we're here. As to you giving up control I promise nothing will happen that you don't want or can't agree with."

Sounds good. "So if I say no you'll stop?"

He rubs his mouth but can't quite hide his smile. "Using a safe word is how it's done here. Did you skip orientation?"

My face burns. "I hung on every word which all got hopelessly jumbled in my head the moment I stepped inside this place."

"Understood. What would you like to use as the safe word?"

"Uh...how about lemon drop?" A less-than-stellar choice but it's the only one I can think of.

"Lemon drop it is." He crosses his arms and looks down his nose at me. "Strip."

I freeze. "Huh?"

He taps his foot.

Wow this is getting intense and so soon. "I thought you were going to strip me."

"Changed my mind. As the Dom that's my right."

Apparently. "Are you going to strip too?"

His arms tighten. I take that as a "no."

Me being nude when he isn't puts me into a full-body blush. That's not because I have issues with how I look. I don't. This game is new to me its rules seemingly fluid. Not that I'm backing down. Hell I don't want to.

I toss my purse on a chair and remove my heels. Since I'm only wearing my dress and a thong the rest will be easy to shed.

His eyes never leave me their hazel color darkening by the second.

That's the look I want in a lover. His unashamed interest relaxes and excites me. I slip the spaghetti straps over my shoulders and let the silky material pool at my waist bearing my breasts. Anticipation and the coolish temperature pebble my areolas.

His attention drops to them and his hard cock nudges his fly providing a perfect outline of his length. By my guess eight or nine inches. Definitely above normal.

I want to squeal in delight but control myself and push the gown over my hips. It flutters to my feet exposing my black thong. Several of my curls peek around the elastic.

He swallows hard his Adam's apple bobbing. "Take it off."

His rumbling voice is far deeper than earlier further proving his arousal.

I like him even more for that.

The second my thong is off he puts out his hand. "Give it to me."

I do.

He presses the crotch to his nose inhales deeply of my scent then sighs.

A delighted sound that thrills me.

Before I can reward him for the incredible honor he's given me as a woman he grabs a rope from a chair and ties my wrists in front then secures them above my head to a bedpost.

Exposing me fully to him.

His gaze trickles over me lingering on my boobs and curls his smile widening by the second.

God I'm loving this.

At last he hesitates. Waiting for the safe word?

Even if I could speak which I can't I wouldn't say it.

Pure pleasure stokes the fire in his eyes. He kisses me harder than earlier our passion at full tilt.

Just as my lungs burn for air he licks my nipples then suckles each in turn.

Outrageous pleasure tears through me heat bursting everywhere. A dull familiar ache settles in my pussy my clit wanting relief.

He strokes it.

I tremble at the delight erupting there and moan. He captures my mouth and plunges his tongue deep to keep me silent and submissive.

Trapped in his erotic world I yield opening my legs further and arching my back willingly giving myself to him.

Ever the Dom he slowly teases my nub then strokes fast alternating the pace keeping me off balance. My climax edges close only to drift away then return.

Oh my God I have to come!

I press closer to urge him on. He stops. When I still he continues. At last I let him lead the way as a Dom should.

Exquisite delight coils between my legs and grows maddening like an itch I can't scratch. Perspiration coats me. I can't think or breathe but he still won't let me come.

I pull my mouth from his. "Holy hell please. I need relief."

He touches his cheek to mine. "You'll get it as we play out your deepest darkest fantasy. What is it?"

I go hot then cold. Since high school I've fantasized about a pirate bidding on me at a slave auction then deflowering me on his ship while his crew watches and demands their turns.

I can't admit that. It's too weird. Rather than outright lie I settle on a partial truth. "Allowing a stranger to dominate my body."

He eases back and pins me with his gaze. "With my tongue or cock?"

5

ZANE

Bunny's lips part but she doesn't speak.

I sense her waiting for me to decide which I will not.

Despite what some believe about BDSM play a Dom doesn't have sole control in the interactions. The power's equal between a master and sub.

I'm antsier than I've been in a long time as I wait for Bunny's response.

She regards my mouth then my groin. Weighing which option is best?

I know the answer but won't push. This is her call.

A pretty blush spreads from her chest to her throat and jaw. She bites her lip a gesture I'm beginning to love but also fear. It could mean she's unwilling to go too far.

She hauls in a deep breath then releases it with her words. "Both Master."

My heart leaps. If ever there was a time for angels to fucking sing it's at this moment. However I won't

go overboard in my enthusiasm. Her cool confidence downstairs at least with the guy in the panther mask takes on a new dimension for me. She's capable of defending herself but she's also vulnerable. I long to protect her.

An odd way for me to feel about a stranger.

Maybe it's because we're both sides of the same coin. Abused by life wanting away from the crap it requires if only for a few hours. I know zip about her other than her admitting she's too tightly wound. After speaking with her no one has to tell me she needs happiness badly.

I want to give her as much as possible in the little time we have. This place offers me an outlet for my desire to control. For her it's a chance to relinquish the same and to celebrate the inner person she hides.

I'm more than willing to help her on that journey...though only tonight. Once we enjoy a brief respite we can purge each other from our systems. It's the only way.

Unable to hold back any longer I kiss her harder than I intend leaving her lips slightly swollen my stubble reddening her cheeks.

To make up for my callous behavior I sink to my knees my face near her bush.

She stiffens. "Whoa hold on wait."

Confused at her response I raise my face. "Did you mean to say lemon drop?"

"No. I don't want to stop what we're doing but I do have a question."

Now? When I'm barely able to reason or keep from jumping on her? "Okay. What—"

"Why are you still dressed?"

That's what's on her mind? Tension drains from me. I want to laugh but restrain myself. I'd rather cut off my balls than hurt her feelings or have her believe I don't take her seriously. Affecting my most imperious persona I set the stage for our play. "You're questioning your master?"

"What? No. Well yeah." She slumps. "Tell me you'll eventually strip and I won't say another word."

Aw she wants me naked. How could I not love that? "Don't worry. You'll see skin soon enough. Now hush."

She giggles.

The sound nearly breaks my heart. Before I fall too deep into the rabbit hole she represents I press my face to her delicate curls and shiver at their enticing scent. Natural and earthy a woman's call to a male to conquer take and pleasure her.

I'm not about to turn down the invitation.

She's already primed for me her folds plump and slick from her arousal. I lick each.

She gasps and wiggles. That won't do. I clasp her hips to let her know who's boss—as long as she wants that—then I carefully hold her clit between my teeth and suckle the alluring spot.

Her wild cry fills the room. It won't be her last.

As I alternate between licking and sucking her nub I slip two fingers into her cunt. A precautionary measure to keep her still and also because I want inside her any way I can.

Her next cry turns to an excited moan then a whimper. Perfect music to accompany the act.

To say she tastes incredible doesn't do justice to what I experience. She's salty and faintly sweet but also clean and refreshing. Better than most food and drink. Exactly what I require tonight.

I do my best to keep her from coming too quickly. Drawing out the act will help her remember this night at least in my mind. For the moment it's enough. I abandon her clit to tug her curls between my teeth.

She laughs then complains about wanting to come forgetting our roles demanding satisfaction.

To bring her back to our rightful play I suck her folds sniff her curls then give her a hickey near them. Marking her. Something I haven't done with any female since high school. Why I revert to an adolescent act I don't know or care. As long as she doesn't complain or say the safe word I'm good.

She's panting hard now and whimpering. "Please Master. I have to come or I'll—"

Her words end in a gasp from my mouth back on her clit my tongue licking fast and slow then somewhere in between.

She inhales sharply tenses and wails...announcing her climax.

Proud as fuck at her joy I want to boast about my part in it but can't ruin the mood.

While she's still gulping air I stand and touch my lips to her ear. "That was the pleasure. Now for your punishment."

"Huh? What?"

I turn her to face the bedpost then slide my fingers down the furrow between her cushiony ass cheeks. Satin and velvet are no match for her softness.

She pushes to her toes. "What are you doing?"

My finger's circling her anus. Given her surprise I stop. "You don't like me touching you there?"

“Uh...I don't mind but what do you mean by punishment?”

I squeeze her ass. “Spanking.”

“Oh.” She sinks to her heels. “Now? Why?”

“For making me wait too long to taste touch lick and suck you. Isn't that enough?” I harden my voice for our game. “Tell me it is and that you deserve discipline.”

She looks at me in wonder. “I do Master.”

Her awe brings me under her control faster than a kick to my nuts. Her acceptance of the man I am and what I want to do in here with her encourages me to please her as much as possible.

Not that I'll confess my unexpected emotions. This is about physical pleasure not burrowing into her heart and reaching her soul.

I shake off my sentimental notions and become the consummate Dom again. With one hand on her hip to hold her steady I paddle her fast I paddle her fast my licks assured.

She yelps. "Harder Master."

I didn't expect that but comply. Her ass grows rosy and must sting. My palm sure as fuck does. Not wanting to take this farther than she can withstand I ease up on the swats and also slow them. "Will you behave now?"

She presses against the post her breaths strained and tattered. "Yes Master."

Delighted I untie her wrists then position her on the mattress on all fours her head down ass up legs apart. "Don't you dare move."

She doesn't allowing me to relish the titillating view. Her folds are as pink as her ass and so puffy they've separated showing the way to paradise...her cunt awaiting my cock.

I crave her to a point I'm about to jump out of my skin. Getting undressed is a major bitch. I tear off my shoes. One hits the wall the other the hardwood floor. I struggle with one sock and say to hell with the other. The rest of my clothes do their damndest to fight me. I battle each. Fabric rips. I couldn't care less.

Finally the only thing left is my shirt. Not wanting to mess with my cufflinks or the buttons I yank it open. Stuff tears. Big deal.

Getting a rubber and putting it on takes too much time but has to be done.

The mattress bounces from my weight and hurried advance. Not wanting to frighten her I fondle her ass and kiss her spine. "I'm back."

She coos. "I'm glad. You were away too long."

My throat tightens at her desire for me and this. I shouldn't let sappy shit get to me but with her I can't help it. I kiss her shoulder and ear. "Ready for me?"

She turns her face to mine. "The question is are you ready for me?"

Despite how effortlessly she reverses our roles I like her sass and kiss her thoroughly.

While she's still sucking air I mount her tunneling my cock into her precious cunt.

Fuck fuck fuck. She's so tight and hot the top of my head nearly blows off. Every hair on my body stands on end.

Her pleased moan only adds to my delight.

Wanting her to squeal in pleasure I push my cock's last remaining inches inside her cunt then stroke her clit.

She bucks. "Oh my God that's amazing. Please don't stop Master."

How can I after that heartfelt entreaty and praise?

Feeling like a fucking king I pump slow at first then gradually increase my pace.

Instantly she matches the rhythm and tightens her sheath around my dick to intensify the friction between us.

My nerve endings fire every-fucking-where leaving rapture and warmth in their wake. I try to swallow but can't. I take a breath and wheeze it out my chest too tight to breathe normally.

She squeezes harder faster.

I match then exceed her pace both on her clit and her pussy each of us intent on winning.

She breaks first her squeal as uncivilized as I desire her cunt pulsing wildly around my cock confirming her satisfaction.

It's not enough. I pump until my dick can't take additional stimulation and I'm close to frustrated tears. Release crashes through me with more force than a two-ton truck. I throw back my head and shout not caring how loud or crude I sound.

Somehow I figure she'll like it.

Spent I pull out. My head falls forward. When I can finally see again she's on her back legs spread arms above her head ripe for the taking.

She grins. "Thanks. That was...stellar."

I laugh. "Glad to hear it. Give me a sec and I'll..."

I can't finish. I'm too damn weak and woozy from one of the best orgasms ever plus having worked since dawn. I collapse next to her and sprawl out taking a good part of the mattress. Wanting a hug and a kiss I reach for her.

She scoots away.

That's not what I expect but I hold back a frown. "What are you doing?"

"Ogling. Once I'm through we'll snuggle. Okay?"

Who am I to disagree? “Ogle away.”

She ignores the sock barely hanging on my toes and my torn shirt to gaze at my balls and dick. Neither are at their best. My nuts are limp and my deflated cock’s still wearing the rubber.

Her downturned mouth says she doesn’t like that. “May I?” Without waiting for my answer she pulls the condom off and tosses it over her shoulder. “That’s better.”

I honestly can’t recall another woman scrutinizing my equipment as she does. Her delighted sounds and broad grin please me. Even so I can help but tease. “There are other parts of me you know.”

Her blush returns more vivid than the previous ones. She drags her attention from my balls and cock to explore the stuff north of it that my opened shirt exposes. I expect her to ogle my abs and pecs.

She stares at my navel surprise—or perhaps shock—in her eyes.

Is something gross stuck in it? I try to lift my head to check but overwhelming fatigue doesn't allow it.
"What's wrong?"

She eyes the tattoo over my heart a Chinese symbol for control and dominance.

Her color drains. She glances at the pillows in here. Each has the same symbol. She scoots back then again stares at my navel.

Suddenly I get it. "That's a birthmark." I touch the maroon splotch near my belly button. "Nothing else or bad."

She scrambles off the bed.

Instantly alert I push up. "What are you doing?"

She pulls on her dress then grabs her purse and high heels. "I have to go."

"What? Why?" I push to my knees.

She puts out her hand but doesn't look at me. "Don't. Stay where you are. Dammit lemon drop!"

Screw that. "At least tell me what I did wrong."

"You..." She whimpers then swears. "This was a mistake."

Before I can leave the bed she bolts.

SAWYER

This is going to be hell.

It's the first day of my internship at Franklin's company and I want to die. No time for that though only sucking up my feelings and behaving as the trooper I am. Dutifully I slog into the conference room with several other interns.

I choose a seat farthest from where the speaker will sit. One so I can be as invisible in this crowd as possible. Two so no one accuses me of brown-nosing on the first day. I figure most here know Franklin's my stepfather. For those who don't but then make the connection...? My misery will definitely increase. Why speed up that train wreck when things are already shit?

From here on out I'll have to fight rumors that any success I attain is due to nepotism and that diversity

laws rules or what-have-you are why I'm here in the first place. Few will see me as a bright young woman who always excels. I'll be Montgomery Development's newest token female my superiors treating me the same. Meaning my life will be complete crap.

I want to curl into a ball and sleep for a thousand years.

The chair to my right hits mine.

"Sawyer hey."

Aw gawd. It's Greg. Could this get any lousier? He and I share the worst sort of history mainly him competing against me for three-and-a-half years at Columbia. Each time I came out ahead he said he let me win because he didn't give a fuck about the award or special assignment. Those few times he won he never let me forget it. He actually boasted that men were superior because of their testosterone strength and cocks.

Playing into his fantasy I told him he was right and that I couldn't wait until he birthed a kid through his dick then grew a brain and while he was at it some real balls. The kind Ruth Bader Ginsburg had. Ones similar to Rosa Parks and the suffragettes who had to convince guys with single digit IQs that without women they wouldn't even be on Planet Earth.

That shut him up for an hour. During that time I bet he looked up those female icons I mentioned.

Before this meeting's over I figure he'll let everyone know I'm Franklin's stepdaughter and that he only gave me a chance at this internship to keep my mother happy. It's not true but no one will believe me if I say otherwise. Such is my world.

Greg plops in his seat and pats his slicked-back hair. The do coupled with his pasty complexion and overbite makes him look like a middle-age vampire.

He bares his long teeth in a weird smile. "Looks like we're going to be competitors again."

I refuse to comment or acknowledge his existence.

He bumps his shoulder against mine then whispers in my ear. "I know your secret."

My stomach drops and my face goes cold blood draining from it.

Oh hell. He can't mean what I think he does. How could he? No one knows about my night at No Limits. I even lied to Jessie claiming I hooked up with Panther Guy. She bought the detailed fiction I presented and my forced glee. When I got home that night I threw up cried then wanted to leave the city and start over somewhere else.

Until this moment I didn't allow myself to revisit that evening pushing every memory into my brain's deepest recesses where I wanted them to get lost. That didn't happen. If I could take a pill to purge them permanently or drink them away I'd be willing to try.

It's either that or admit I actually fucked with Zane my damn stepbrother. Not only that I adored what he did...his mouth on mine his tongue on my clit his cock inside me his scent and heat voice and touch turning me inside out stealing my thoughts stroking my battered heart and soul.

What freak feels that way about her own stepbrother or willingly jumps into bed with him?

Greg bumps my shoulder again. His way of twisting the knife. "As I said I know your..."

I tune him out to focus on my worry.

Why in the hell did Zane have to unbutton his shirt? If he hadn't I could look back on our time together in reverence rather than horror.

The second I saw the birthmark near his navel my stomach cramped. When we were teens I spied on him each time he swam at the house. That reddish spot is burned into my brain. I can't count the times I fantasized about licking and suckling it before diving into his best parts beneath his swim trunks.

Despite that reality staring at me in the club I still hoped and prayed Hawk's birthmark was a coincidence. It's not as if they're unique like fingerprints. I was feeling pretty good about that fantasy until I saw the Chinese symbol on his pec.

When I poured over No Limit's website to check out the action I paused repeatedly on Zane's photos. In several he wore an unbuttoned shirt the separated panels revealing his tat. If that hadn't convinced me who he was the same design was on the pillows in the damn club he owns.

I should have been struck dead at that moment. Instead I wanted him inside me again and again and...

More bumping from Greg. This time he also taps the table near me.

I shove my laptop toward his hand.

He snatches it back.

An intern on his other side asks him a question. I have no idea why since Greg knows zip about zip. Especially how dangerous I can get if he threatens me with Zane.

Damn damn damn. I can never see him again which should be easy. He never comes to the house in Greenwich. From what Franklin says I'm sure Zane would rather die than visit Montgomery Development. Not that he's welcome at either place.

I won't be either if Franklin learns what we did. Not only is he a control-freak he's shallow as hell. Everything to him is about image and what other people think. Mainly the bluebloods whose pedigrees he covets. To hear them laugh or talk about his stepdaughter's taboo relationship isn't a scenario I want to face. The gossip will likely kill Mom. First though Franklin will torture her as only he can.

After the shouting and recriminations he'll claim the only way to fix this and save his reputation is to cut off me and Mom. His attorneys will screw her in the settlement saying the prenup he ordered her to sign before the wedding is void. Because of my fuck up with Zane she and I will be back in Jersey City without jobs money a place to live a place to live and zero hope.

I can't let that happen to her.

Greg bumps my arm for the nth time.

I bare my teeth. "What?"

He sniffs sounding more congested than insulted. "I kept speaking to you but you didn't answer. What planet were you on?"

"One in a distant galaxy far far away from here and you."

He sneers then leans close. "As I said I know your secret."

I pretend disinterest rather than give into stark fear. "I don't know what you're babbling about nor do I care."

"Is that right?" He smirks. "Nepotism doesn't bother you? Wait. How could it since your stepfather owns this company."

That's my secret he knows? I want to beat him to death with my laptop for nearly giving me a heart attack but maintain my composure. "Our family relationship is hardly a secret. By the way take this as a warning—stop bothering me or I'll accuse you of sexual harassment. See how far you get professionally with that on your record."

“Me harass you sexually?” He laughs. “I’d rather die.”

“Keep being a dick and it can be arranged.”

The remaining interns file in.

Ron our manager takes his seat. “Quiet people. This isn’t playtime any longer. It’s the real world.”

Franklin enters the room chest puffed out his permanent scowl intact like a conquering hero. He stands at the head of the table his salt-and-pepper hair perfect the same as his five-thousand-dollar suit. “I expect you to use your time wisely at Montgomery Development. If you were hoping for a warmer welcome than that you don’t belong here. Find a job in social work or counseling. What we do in this company isn’t for wimps so let’s get started. You’ll each be working on a proposal for a new development project. We’ll award the top performer a scholarship for an MBA program plus a full-time position here after graduation.”

The interns applaud enthusiastically. I force myself to do the same.

Franklin ignores the others and hones in on me. "I want everyone present to know there are no free rides here. Regardless of personal relationships there will be one scholarship and job offer to the best performer. No other."

A sour taste rises to my mouth even though his nasty comment is typical Franklin. At Sunday dinners I endure his lectures that bachelor's degrees are practically worthless in today's job market. If I shame him by not excelling I'll end up in retail or pushing fries at a fast-food joint.

Sadly he's right about me requiring the advanced degree which I can't hope to pay for on my own.

Greg taps my forearm to get my attention. Before I can claw out his eyes he gives me a "you're toast" grin.

With Franklin's toxic message hanging in the air he leaves the room.

Ron assumes control saying there are cars waiting outside to take us to potential project sites. We'll be split into groups to do recon.

Since Greg insists on riding with me the journey's endless. The second we stop at an outdated midrise I race from the vehicle enter the place then stop dead.

Even if I want to move I can't.

A real estate agent is wrapping up with a client.

Zane.

He meets my gaze. My life and that evening with him at No Limits flashes before me.

ZANE

I gape at Sawyer.

What the fuck is she doing here?

She couldn't be representing dear old Dad for Montgomery Development could she?

Fuck. I let my hurt at Bunny abandoning me in the club distract me to the point I didn't consider Dad's interest in a rundown midrise.

I should have. Other developers are sniffing around trying to bag properties on the cheap to revitalize them and the area. All following Gordon Gecko's mantra for greed and profit. It doesn't take a genius to guess Dad is likely eyeing the whole block for another blah mixed-use development starring Starbucks a trendy nail or hair salon state-of-the-art gyms and million-dollar condos. Places that look down on sex clubs.

Now he's got uptight always perfect Sawyer to do his dirty work?

Like hell.

I excuse myself from Ernestine my long-time agent and approach Sawyer. "We need to talk. Privately."

The pale dude next to her wrinkles his nose. "Who are you?"

"None of your damn business" I say. "I'm talking to her."

I refuse to discuss family relationships around this little turd then have it get back to Dad about my interest in this place. Knowing him he'll buy it to spite me.

I grab Sawyer's arm. "We can talk over there."

She holds back. Doesn't matter. She's coming with me unless she makes a scene. My guess is she won't. Like Dad appearances matter to her.

Once we're in the secluded area I don't mince words. "Why the fuck are you here?"

She refuses to look at me. "What I do isn't your concern."

"It sure as hell is at this place. You're here with those other people because you're working for my father. An internship right? I couldn't care less about that or what you do with your life. But I do want to know if you're going to report back to him about me being here."

She stiffens. "You're the last thing I want to discuss with Franklin."

"Prove it. And look at me dammit."

She doesn't.

It's not like her to avoid my gaze. Her uneasiness around me is a surprise too. Of course it has been two years since we last spoke which lasted no more than a few minutes. At that time I wasn't growling at her or swearing.

I probably shouldn't have sounded so harsh a few seconds ago but I'm not going to apologize. Hell this is my livelihood and I want the truth.

"Sawyer tell me what's going on."

She flushes.

What the fuck does that mean? God women can be so opaque at times not to mention intractable. “Will you at least look at me?”

She bites her lower lip.

For some reason I have a déjà vu moment. As if she and I already had this conversation and now we’re reliving—

Wait. That’s not it. A memory returns about lip biting and me liking it because...

Everything stops. Colors dim. Sounds fade. Acid shoots to my throat.

Although I try to deny what’s right before me there’s no mistaking why that lip biting is making my heart

race and sending my brain into overdrive.

Holy shit. Sawyer is Bunny who chose lemon drop as her safe word because we were going to play then fuck and we did and... Jesus Jesus Jesus.

Things just got seriously screwed.

7

SAWYER

After the longest and most painful ten hours of my life I drag into my apartment and sag against the door. Too bad I can't hole up here forever safe from the world Franklin and especially my thoughts about Zane.

“Aw God.”

Seeing him didn't prove anything except he thinks I'm out to get him for Franklin of all people. If that isn't enough I ache for him in a way I never have for any other man.

I drop my briefcase and cover my face. If this is truly the first day of the rest of my life as those dumb posters say I don't want to try for the second third or another moment after that.

There has to be a way to avoid seeing him or Franklin again. “Come on think.”

Bad move. My weary brain conjures a scene where I leave the internship because it's not right for me then ask Franklin to understand. I don't have to consider his response. After calling me an ungrateful nitwit he'll tell me to go ahead and “find myself.” To help me out he'll cut me off financially so I'll finally know what a shitty world this is when there isn't a generous guy like him to help out. Armed with a not-quite-completed college degree I'll have to find a job that pays enough to afford an apartment in the city. Once I achieve that doubtful goal I could take out student loans to finish my last semester at Columbia then work full-time and attend MBA classes at night. By the time I'm in my late thirties or early forties I'll have an advanced degree and tons of debt while competing against twenty-somethings for the plum jobs.

Yeah that'll work.

I plod to my bedroom. Undoing my hair getting undressed then tugging on my tank top and fleece cat pants is a monumental undertaking. Exhausted I eventually make it to my kitchen and stare at my microwave as if it will magically create dinner for me that I'm too nauseous to eat.

Rap rap rap.

I flinch at the knocks on my front door and hope it's someone from the state telling me I won the multimillion-dollar lottery. With the winnings I can book a flight to another country and never return here.

Always cautious I peer through the peephole and bite my lip at Zane in the hall.

Why is he here?

God he looks great. Heat rolls through me along with immense dread. What do I do now?

Letting him in isn't an option. Carefully and quietly I step away from the door. The floor squeaks.

Damn. I pull in my shoulders and hope he didn't hear anything.

WHAP—WHAP—WHAP.

My pulse jumps at each forceful knock. The stupid door's trembling from them.

"Come on Sawyer." He pounds again. "I know you're in there. I can hear your floor creaking. Open up."

I can't stop shaking. "Go away. Leave me alone."

"Not until we talk."

He can't be serious. There's zero I want to discuss with him especially our time together at No Limits. At the midrise he finally put two and two together that I'm Bunny the truth plain on his face even if he didn't say as much.

I glance through the peephole again. He's assumed his Dom stance: arms crossed shoulders squared lips pressed into a thin line.

Big deal. I'm not caving. "Didn't you hear me? Go. Away."

He tightens his arms. "That's not up to you. We can do this the easy way in the privacy of your apartment. Or we can do it while I'm out here and your neighbors can hear everything I say."

Just what I don't need an audience to his anger and anything he might spill about our night at the club.

I consider calling the cops to get him to leave but can't. Franklin would kill me for dragging the Montgomery name onto a police blotter. Against my better judgment but with no other option I unlock the door and open it a crack.

Zane's shoulders relax and he uncrosses his arms but still wears his Dom face. "I consider myself to be in good shape no flab. Even so I can't squeeze through the tiny sliver you've allowed. Are you going to invite me in like a normal person or not?"

"You're not normal."

His jaw tightens. "I was talking about you. So which is it? Do I come in or not?"

"Are you giving me a choice?"

An emotion I can't read crosses his face and disappears quickly. "You've always had a choice Sawyer. Especially the other night. Remember it?"

Heat prickles my cheeks. Teeth clenched I swing open the door and step aside before he says anything else the neighbors shouldn't hear.

He offers a tight smile. "Thanks."

The moment he's inside my apartment seems too small everything diminished next to his size heat and presence.

After I lock the door I face it rather than him. Longing mixed with irritation floods me. "You have a lot of nerve coming here. How'd you even find my apartment?"

He sighs. "Look at me and I'll tell you."

His softened tone surprises me. I glance over my shoulder...doing as he wants. Like a good little sub at No Limits. That was there; this is here. I turn around and push my hair back I face it rather than him. Longing mixed with irritation floods me. "You have a lot of nerve coming here. How'd you even find my apartment?"

He sighs. "Look at me and I'll tell you."

His softened tone surprises me. I glance over my shoulder...doing as he wants. Like a good little sub at No Limits. That was there; this is here. I turn around and push my hair back preparing for a fight.

He gazes at my tresses. "I like when you wear your hair that way. The same as at the club. Whatever you did to it today while you were at the midrise sucks."

He's the first person to refer to my professional hairstyle like that. "It's called a chignon."

"It still sucks. You look better the way you have it now. Beautiful in fact. You should wear it that way from now on."

“Excuse me?” I plant my hands on my hips. “You wanted me to look at you and I am. Now I want an answer. We haven’t spoken for two years so how’d you find my apartment?”

He arches one dark eyebrow. “You were easy to track down given that Dad’s funding this place for you.”

I want to slug him but keep my fists at my sides my nails digging into my palms. “Not everyone has a huge trust fund to fall back on as you do Zane. Some of us actually have to work and succeed for a living.”

His other eyebrow jumps up. “As I have with No Limits? You were there. You saw the crowd and the surroundings. In fact you visited the website several times.”

I blink. How does he know that?

He wags his finger at me as he did at the club. “Don’t deny it. We track visitors. That’s called part of

taking care of business so it succeeds. You even bookmarked the page.”

Perspiration rolls down my temple. It doesn't cool my burning face. “Y-you shouldn't be here.”

“So you keep saying.” He tilts his head and regards me thoughtfully his face a mask. “Would that be because we're competing for the same property or because we had sex?”

Intense heat rushes to my throat and chest partly from embarrassment more so from the memory of his mouth and hands on me his cock in my pussy. I dismiss my escalating arousal and try to be aloof. “How'd you finally guess it was me?”

“By the way you keep biting this.” Smiling softly he drags his thumb across my bottom lip.

My breath stalls. His touch registers from my mouth to between my legs my folds growing slick and wanting.

"I'll never forget that." His pupils dilate. "Nor my desire to take use and enjoy you in every way you'll allow."

Smutty scenes flash in my head these taking place in No Limits my apartment Franklin's conference room and even school. I push them back and swat his hand away. "Fat chance of that happening."

"Have you forgotten it already has?"

I'll need a lifetime to forget our night together but I have to try. "Enjoy your memories. There will never be a repeat of what happened between us at your club."

Hurt fills his eyes. "You didn't enjoy our play?"

I can't be that dishonest though I should. Anything to get him to leave. Since it's clear he won't I step back. "What does it matter if I did or didn't?"

“So you did. Not that I had any doubt.” He rubs his chin. “The only question now is...did you specifically come to No Limits to have sex with me?” He puts out his hand to stop me from speaking. “Before you answer we check visitors to the club’s website to see what interests them. We’re extremely thorough when it comes to market research. Most visitors don’t linger on my pictures above everything else. One IP address did. Whoever that was spent an inordinate amount of time ogling my pictures. That’s compared to the mere seconds that person looked at what my club offers. Funny thing that happened shortly before you showed up at the club that night. I’m thinking that’s not a coincidence.”

If only I could sink through the floor and disappear forever. Since that’s not an option I use indignation to protect myself. “Whatever you’ve fantasized about me or my reasons for going to No Limits you’re wrong. My friend begged me to accompany her. If I hadn’t she wouldn’t have gone. I didn’t want to cheat her out of a good time.”

His face says he knows I’m lying.

Fine. A part of me did want to tempt Fate and see if we’d hook up. I’ve been that way since he came into my life and the almost kiss we shared as teens. The memory still hurts unless... Is it possible he wasn’t playing with me back then but was showing genuine feelings?

I haven’t a clue and it’s too late to revisit that long-ago moment. “You should go.”

“We haven’t talked yet Lemon Drop.”

Him using my safe word doesn’t set right. It’s sick and depraved for me to want him. He’s the one who likes kink his club providing ample evidence of his desires.

I’m the presumed good one. The child who grew up fast because Mom couldn’t manage a motherly role or her responsibilities. When Franklin entered the scene he didn’t make things easier. From day one he didn’t tolerate a mouthy or difficult kid which I wasn’t. In his world though he took even the smallest disagreement as full-out rebellion.

Zane didn’t care his behavior moody or snarling. Who could blame him? At the time he just lost his mom to cancer. Yet Franklin didn’t waste energy on grief or trying to understand that Zane couldn’t buck up and pretend nothing was wrong. Nor could he warmly welcome a new stepmother who was helpless to the extreme and couldn’t think of anyone except herself.

I still ache for his loss and the impossible position he was in. In those days I tried to make it better by being as pleasant as I could. Those few times he returned my smile or answered a math question I had I thought we could be close...as stepbrother and stepsister.

Never happened. Just as well.

Zane rocks on his heels. "Looks like you're giving me the silent treatment Lemon Drop."

"Don't call me that."

"You prefer Bunny?" He grins.

I may never smile again. "I prefer you leave."

"Because you refuse to admit you got precisely what you wanted from me at my club and that you enjoyed what we did more than anything you've experienced with another man?" Eyebrows arched he waits for my response.

Even if words didn't fail me I'm not admitting to anything.

He doesn't look pleased. "Pretend all you want but I can still taste you on my lips."

I slap him. I should be sorry but I'm not hoping he'll have the decency to leave.

He advances getting in my personal space.

Excitement rushes through me. My nipples peak and my folds grow damp when they shouldn't.

"No matter what you're thinking" he says "and I know it's not good there's no shame in what we did. Even at the property when the truth dawned on me that you're Bunny I couldn't regret our time together. I won't. The truth is I want you again and again."

Warning bells sound at what he's proposing...at what I want too. No. That can't happen. I won't allow it. Screw desire. Our being together would only lead to ruin. "You can't be serious."

New hurt touches his eyes. "Do you hear me laughing? Of course I'm serious."

I shake my head. "We need to forget that night."

"I can't." He frowns. "I refuse to."

That sounds like a threat. "Are you saying I have to go along with this or you'll—"

"What?"

Panicked I blurt out my biggest fear. "How much do you want for your promise to keep quiet about what we shouldn't have done and to never reveal it to anyone else?"

ZANE

Her question shocks me to the point I step back. Once my surprise wears off I'm pissed. How dare she think so little of me that she believes I'd force her into sex? Or that other shit she spewed.

I speak through my teeth. "Are you actually accusing me of wanting to blackmail you?"

Her mouth moves but no words come out.

Fuck she does think that. As angry as I am a part of me can't blame her. Without my club giving me an opportunity to blow off steam and dominate I'd likely turn into a controlling prick like Dad. Which she obviously fears.

I rub my mouth to keep from saying anything wrong and cross to the door more than ready to leave.

"Wait." She touches my hand before I can turn the lock. "I shouldn't have said what I did. I'm sorry. I panicked and really didn't mean it that way."

Genuine remorse fills her eyes.

Her regret and shame touch me in a way I can't ignore. I want to kiss her fingers as I did at the club but I'm not dumb enough to chance it. "Okay. What way did you mean?"

She bites her lip then wrings her hands as she paces.

Call me crazy but that doesn't bode well for what's coming. "That bad huh?"

"What? No." She halts. "I was thinking of another angle."

"Another what?"

"A way for you to get the property since that's what this is all about." She waves her hands. "Let me finish before you get upset all right?"

She's asking for a fucking lot since this isn't only about the property for me. Hell the building's not even a consideration. Her accusing me of being a dick certainly is. However I gesture for her to resume.

"Thanks." She gives me a limp smile. "The truth about our night would improve your odds of getting the midrise. I'm sure Montgomery Development would pass on it then."

If she believes that answer absolves her it doesn't. "You're suggesting I tell Dad what we did—which I enjoyed and you know I enjoyed—to get a damn building?"

"No." She resumes wringing her hands. "I'm thinking you could threaten him with telling everyone else. You know his professional and personal circles. He wouldn't like that."

Or the subsequent stroke or possibly heart attack he'd have. "You want me to do something that would make him so mad it might kill him?"

"No!" She rubs her forehead. "I'm thinking you could use it as leverage."

"You mean blackmail."

She shifts from foot to foot. "It sounds awful when you put it that way."

“What other way is there?” I want to shout but keep my voice even because she’s edgy and I want to prove I’m not as bad as she believes. “Do you honestly think I’m incapable of closing a business deal without using blackmail on him you or anyone else? What’s next? Me trying subterfuge then cheat—”

“Of course you’re not incapable. That’s not even an issue.”

My temple hurts from my sudden headache. “So you think despite my capabilities I would use blackmail cheating or whatever to get what I—”

“No!” She flaps her hands. “I thought—”

“I don’t want to hear it.” Now I’m pacing. Hell she’s driving me nuts in a bad and a good way. “In case you’ve forgotten I have an undergraduate degree and an MBA from Yale. I graduated at the top of my class. Summa cum laude. I have a wildly successful club. Why would I need to destroy you him or anyone to achieve anything?”

Alarm then indignation crosses her face. “You’re shouting at me...just like Franklin does.”

For her to say I'm anything like him is worse than a knife to my heart. I didn't mean to yell. I tried not to and I'm sorry. Still... You are fucking killing me woman. "Tell you what. I'll apologize for raising my voice as soon as you say you're sorry for misjudging me. Go on. I'm waiting."

She twists her hair into the shape she wore at the midrise knowing I don't like it that way.

"Sawyer. I. Am. Still. Wait—"

"You're wrong about me misjudging you Zane. I haven't...or I didn't mean to. I screwed up because I'm under an enormous amount of pressure. That's no excuse I know. And I am sorry for what I said earlier. But now I'm merely pointing out what you should already know. Your father has enough money to do whatever he wants to you and me unless you have something to hold over him. Which would obviously be what we did."

This is getting worse by the second. "You mean if he doesn't play ball the way I want I tell all to the world?"

“You’d threaten. You wouldn’t actually go through with it.” She leans against the wall. “I believe that would work far better than me recommending he pull his bid. I could certainly do that but it’s not like he respects my opinion no matter how sound it may be.”

Hell he doesn’t respect anything or anyone except those far above him on the social scale. Maybe it’s because his wealth came through investments from my mother’s trust fund not his money. Hers. Her millions and pedigree are likely the only things that made him notice her. Being a good person isn’t in his nature. When she fell ill he went full-blown dick. Not once did he go with her to the hospital for her chemo sessions. I did. As she lay dying my lies about him being stuck at the airport and trying to make it back gave her hope she could say good-bye to him. At the time he was in the city spending her money and seducing his assistant. Playing the big shot. A VIP. A powerful man finally.

He was none of that and never will be. And he wonders why I want no part of him or his world.

However tonight isn’t about him or why I came here. This concerns Sawyer and her inner self awakening at the club letting her live for once on her own terms.

With her a part of me also came back to life. One I didn’t regret losing until I had such a good time with her.

I simply want us to have some fun and forget this other shit. I know she's under a lot of pressure. I saw it firsthand the few times I was around her in Greenwich before I was fully on my own. I'm certain things got far worse for her with Dad over the years. I also realize she didn't mean to hurt me with what she said but it did sting. When she didn't know who I was at the club she accepted me without hesitation liking me for who I am. I want to return to that.

To keep from coming off like a jerk I moderate my tone but I have to be honest. "I'd never betray you for any reason. That's not who I am. I hope you understand that someday so you can actually learn to trust me. And I'm not here to discuss my father or the property. I don't want your help in getting it in any manner legit or otherwise. As far as the building's concerned I want you to do your internship thing and decide what's best for Montgomery Development. What I would like to talk to you about is what happened between us."

"No absolutely not." She focuses on the door. "There's nothing to discuss. As I said at the club it was a mistake. Let's agree it will never happen again."

"Are you honestly prepared to agree to that? Note I said honestly not put on B.S. for society's sake. There's no one here except you and me. I don't give a fuck what the world thinks. All I care about is us."

Her gaze flicks to me then away. "I don't know how to answer you."

“Sure you do.” I cup her chin and tilt her face so she has to look at me. “Come on Sawyer. Quit bullshitting yourself for once.”

“I don’t. I haven’t.”

“You’re sure?” I stroke her cheek. Her lids flutter. That’s it. Get real and stay real. “The Sawyer I recall would cut off her own arm cook it then eat the damn thing if she thought her mom my dad and society in general would approve. I know you. Your feelings desires and needs are the last things you consider. That’s fucking wrong. It’s about time you came first.”

“I...that is...we shouldn’t...”

“Why the fuck not? We’re both adults. No one’s putting a gun to our heads. There’s zero to be ashamed of.”

“Are you nuts?” She pulls away. “Incest is illegal in every state New York included.”

“That’s bull and you know it. We’re not related by blood weren’t raised together and barely know each other. I’d say we were total strangers if not for the night we had at my—”

“Do you have to keep bringing that up?” She pushes her fingers through her hair. Those pale waves loosen and fall around her shoulders.

As they should. “Thanks. I love your hair that way.”

“Good God.” She kneads her forehead. “Us being together is the kind of smut the Upper East Side thrives on to spice up their deadly dull lives. I wouldn’t be surprised if our pictures made it to the front page of the New York Post or Globe. Maybe even the Enquirer.”

I struggle not to laugh. “You’re being paranoid. We’re not nearly important enough to hit the front page.”

She groans. “I don’t want my private life splashed across any page.”

I get what she's saying. If things spiral out of control which I can't and won't allow she'd suffer the most her reputation taking the biggest hit.

Mine I don't care about. So what if I lose the chance to legitimize my business and never see the inside of the New York Athletic Club as a member? I'm already an embarrassment to my father and the family name which I'll never rectify. The elites are eager to snub me as the owner of a sex club in order to prove their superiority. That includes those who've served their prison sentences or are out on parole for their major financial crimes. But hey they're squeaky clean and I'm not. Sure.

The only thing that matters to me is Sawyer. She blossomed at the club and deserves to experience what being happy and free is like without anyone's judgment. I'm more than willing to take the journey with her. To have her explore her sexuality with anyone else is too painful to consider. I'm not possessive by nature but I want to be the man she looks to for pleasure comfort and hope. I'll treat her emotions well and will never deliberately hurt her.

I am not my goddamn father.

Admitting that to her isn't something I'm ready to do so I try to reason. "Do you think you can forget what we shared and return to how you've lived thus far? All work no play? And when you do play

nothing like what you can find in No Limits?”

She wraps her arms around herself. “You don’t know anything about my private life. I have lots of fun and not only the vanilla kind. I’ve gotten into kink before our night at the club.”

“By reading Story of O and romance novels? That’s what you indicated when you didn’t know who I was. Are you now saying that’s not—”

“All right all right” she says. “I haven’t been the Marquesa de Sade. So sue me.”

I cradle her cheek. “I’d rather pleasure you.”

“I... You... We...”

“How about this? Take a month to indulge in your limits anything you want with me as your guide.” I cup

her face. “No strings attached.” It’s the only way we’ll both be comfortable and able to eventually move on. “At the end of the month if you want to walk away for good I’ll wish you well and will wave you on your way.”

9

SAWYER

As Jessie would say I’m back at the salt mines. Specifically my internship project research burying me alive.

To stand out the old Sawyer would beg Ron for more work.

The new Sawyer can’t think about anything except Zane’s visit our discussion and my accepting his month-long proposal.

While it's undeniable he makes my blood sing by simply being near I agreed to become his lover and sub due to a side of himself I didn't consider though I should have.

Every time we're together he shows genuine concern for my well-being and wants me to come first to explore what pleases me not anyone else. He's definitely not like his dad.

He's a good man that I slapped. My heart sinks shame consuming me. I still haven't apologized to him. First thing on Saturday I will. It's the day we agreed to begin this new chapter in my life with him as my willing guide.

Desire tenses my inner thighs and tightens my nipples. My rolling stomach's immune to my excitement the practical part of me revisiting what could happen if someone discovers what he and I are doing.

I know he'll protect me even to his own detriment which I don't want. Considering there are so many variables in life keeping a secret like ours will be a 24/7 job. What if I run into someone who's seen me at the club and that person knows Franklin? What if I get rattled and blurt something I shouldn't? What if...

My head pounds from the possible downsides no one can predict.

Wanting to be as safe as I can I click on the bookmark for the club. My face warms at Zane knowing I did so and that I also drooled over his photos.

I figure after we dive into new kink on Saturday my blush will be permanent.

Excited again I delve deeper into what the website offers rather than breezing over the interior photos or lingering on his. There's a section on the BDSM lifestyle I didn't notice earlier that explains this play beautifully. It's not paternalistic or misogynistic as some think. The power between the Dom and the sub is equal. Nothing happens in the chamber unless the sub agrees no matter what the Dom wants. He or she in the case of a Dominatrix can also submit.

Rather than the games focusing solely on sex they're about having a safe place to be in control or to lose it...to celebrate who you are as a person. Something everyday life doesn't allow society ordaining everyone to fill certain roles with only minor deviations. When those who aren't hetero or don't feel comfortable in their own skin stray off the so-called righteous path there's usually hell to pay. Especially in locales that aren't as open-minded as this city.

Zane understands that. Another tab shows the sizeable and recurring donations his company makes to LGBTQ and sex-positive organizations. No Limits also hosts regular workshops on safe play for beginners.

How did I miss this stuff before?

My only answer is my biases are no better than Franklin's my mother's or anyone else's when it comes to Zane. Although I don't look down on him for opening No Limits as his dad and Mom do—the club fascinates me instead—I didn't consider anything beyond the sexual aspects when it's so much more. For me to be anything like them stops now. I want to understand his chosen profession and celebrate it as he does.

I hang my head in renewed shame. "God I really need to apologize to him. And not only for the slap."

"Apologize to whom?" Greg says. "Better still who'd you hit?" He steps behind me and bends at the waist to snoop at my screen.

I snap it shut and push my chair back. The top hits his stomach the roller his foot.

He jumps back. "Hey watch it. You're about to amputate my toes."

"Look at anything on my screen and I'll gouge out your eyes." I swivel in my chair to face him then cross my legs my foot bobbing close to his groin.

He takes another cautious step away.

Until he's in the next country I'll always be on the alert. Since we're the only ones currently in the room I speak freely. "Let's get something straight. If you screw with me on this project in the least I'll have your balls on a platter guaranteed. Look at my research and you're dead. Try to eavesdrop on my phone conversations and you'll regret it. Keep your distance or suffer the consequences." I swing my foot toward his groin again.

He scrunches his nose. "Are you actually accusing me of trying to steal your worthless ideas?"

"You tried it at Columbia. You're not getting a second chance here."

He lifts his chin...like a sulky heroine in a romance novel who's miffed at her guy. "Not only are you paranoid you're clearly having delusions too. You should drop out of the program and save Franklin the embarrassment of committing you to Bellevue."

I chuckle. "Franklin? You and he are on a first-name basis now?"

Greg's face turns fifty shades of red.

I tent my hands and tap my forefingers. "Before you start blubbering your answer my guess is no you're not on any familiar footing with him. Remember I see him at Sunday dinners when he asks me how things are going in my life. I could bring you up during those conversations and tell him how you're trying to steal my work that you're calling him by his first name and—"

"Do that and I'll tell him you've tried to steal my ideas. Who do you want to guess he'll believe?"

My stomach falls. I wouldn't put it past Franklin to dismiss how I consistently excel so he can side with Greg aka the enemy and make my life a holy nightmare.

My silence gives Greg a chance to boast about his project ideas. The fool doesn't realize how much he's revealing and that he's giving me an opportunity to top him on each.

Winded he pulls in a breath and glares. "I'm going to beat your ass in this and I expect you to congratulate me when I win the scholarship and position."

I'll chew off my tongue first.

He turns on his heel and leaves me alone with my worries. Losing this competition isn't an option. If I do I'll graduate with no job or money for my MBA which will mark an end to my student days. Franklin will certainly stop paying for my apartment then which means I'll have to move back to Greenwich and become his psychological prisoner or strike out on my own and hope to hell I make it in this crappy economy. Even some new Yale grads and recent Harvard alums are working at Starbucks or for Uber.

I groan and immerse myself in my work. My eyes are burning and my neck hurts when my cell phone rings.

It's Zane.

To my surprise it's really late. The office appears empty. Cautious about a straggler eavesdropping I stand by the window and keep my back to the door. "Hi."

"Hey. Are you still at work?"

"Yeah." I rub my aching neck. "Lots to do. I shouldn't have made that detour to your club's website."

He laughs. "You looked it up while you're at Dad's place?"

Smiling I lean against the glass. "I thought you already knew that from tracking the site visitors. Don't tell me you're falling down on the job."

“Nope. My IT gal is. I’ll have to have a word with her.”

“Be nice.”

His chuckle sounds from the other end. “Sure you want that?”

“What I want doesn’t count. I already know you’re being good.” I breathe on the glass then write his name in the foggy part. “I read the page on your donations to those causes I also support. Good for you.”

He doesn’t comment.

I don’t expect that and break the silence. “Are you still there?”

“Yeah. I uh... An email popped up and distracted me.”

Bull. My praise embarrasses him. His reluctance to acknowledge me—or likely anyone—saying something nice brings tears to my eyes. Franklin really did a number on him and I’ll never forgive my stepfather for that.

Zane clears his throat. “Did you like my gift?”

“Gift? I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“I sent you a package” he says. “With clear instructions for the mailroom to put it on your desk.”

“Let me check.” Stacks of paper and books decorate the top. Beneath one pile is a small package.
“Success. Give me a sec to open it.”

Inside is a box within it a delicate silver chain joined by an O ring.

For him to send me this surprises and touches me. However I'm still confused. "It's beautiful but—"

"No buts about it. I want you to wear that for a month. You're not to take it off."

That explains nothing. "Why?"

"It's a reminder you belong to me alone during that time."

My legs give out. I lean against the desk realizing our month and my submission begins now. Uncertain whether I'm ready for this I want to argue against it but can't. Knowing I belong to him especially while I'm in Franklin's company is a major turn on. A dirty little secret only Zane and I share.

Plus it's a constant reminder of the pleasure he can provide beginning this Saturday. I weaken at the thought of his weight on mine his mouth exploring my most private areas his cock driving deep within my pussy dominating and making me his.

Lightheaded I lower my face. This is going to be some month. Not that I'll give in too easily. Where's the fun in that? "What happens if I refuse to put it on or if I take it off?"

"I'll punish you."

His voice holds a smile and a threat his tone deeper than it's ever been.

My pussy tightens craving his touch. The scant air I take in spills out.

"You sound breathless" he says. "Good." He makes a pleased sound. "Put the necklace on."

I obey then bring the phone back to my ear. "It's on."

"Touch yourself. Your nipples first then between your legs."

"What?" I grip the phone so hard the plastic groans. "No. This place has more security cameras than Fort Knox."

He makes an impatient sound. "The workday's long over and you have one Master to satisfy. Find a private space now."

Oh my God he's serious.

To my utter surprise I like it and race to the ladies' room. The lounge area and every stall are empty.

I choose the one farthest from the exit and lock the door. "I'm here...in a private place."

“Are you wearing a thong or panties?”

Instinctively I touch my hip. “Panties. Why?”

“Remove them. In the future you’ll wear a thong whenever you’re at work. With me you’ll be naked beneath your clothes.”

My knees shake. I wilt against the wall my desire accelerating to a point I can barely speak. “Yes Master.”

My hands shake as I take off my underwear.

His breathing quickens. “Are you naked below the waist?”

“Yes.”

“Touch your nipples” he says. “Play with them until they’re good and hard...ready for my mouth and tongue.”

His commanding voice tightens them instantly. I do as he orders and flick my rigid nipples. Delight tears through me. My breath spills out.

“Are you doing as I demand?”

It’s an effort to speak. “Yes Master.”

“Good” he says. “Now you’ll hold the phone so I can see your cunt. Then you’ll masturbate for me and won’t stop until you come.”

My face and chest couldn't get hotter.

A faint rap comes from his side. "Tell me you'll do as I command."

"I-I will." I position the phone between my legs. "I am."

The first stroke on my swollen and needy clit has me holding back a delighted shout at the dazzling pleasure centered there. The following strokes liberate me from convention expectations and responsibilities. I rub faster and harder an easy task given I'm practically dripping my arousal greater than I've ever known.

As he watches.

The first spasm hits without warning then grows into a cascade of wondrous pleasure my pussy contracting crazily from my climax. Spent I rest my forehead against the door bring the phone to my ear and listen for Zane's proud cries.

He's breathing normally.

I push away from the door. "You didn't come?"

"Nope."

There's only one explanation. "I didn't hold the phone right? You couldn't see what I was doing?"

"I saw everything. You did a great job."

Then why didn't he come? Unless... "You didn't masturbate too?"

“Nope. Waiting will make our experience that much better on Saturday. You’re not to play with yourself during the interim. Do you understand?”

No I do not. Uncharacteristically I whine “Why?”

“I refuse to share you even with your hand. For the next month you’re mine Sawyer. To pleasure discipline and dominate.”

He ends the call.