

A SEXY BDSM SPECIAL AGENT NOVEL

SPARKS



He's About To
Deliver Her
Toughest Assignment
Yet...



USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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Sparks

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What is a soul? It's like electricity – we don't really know what it is, but it's a force that can light up a room. - Ray Charles

Sparks

“I am going to break you. That’s the whole purpose of this exercise. From the moment the door inside that room closes, I am not going to be Mr. Nice Guy. I am going to do everything in my power to hear you scream, and I won’t stop until I hear you beg for mercy. Do you wish to proceed on that basis?”

Today my name is Lois Reeves. I have an appointment with dominant “James Leverett” this morning, because my next assignment requires that I be a “submissive” and I have no idea what that entails. I’m about to find out... by jumping in at the deep end.

One

“I am going to break you. That’s the whole purpose of this exercise. From the moment the door inside that room closes, I am not going to be Mr. Nice Guy. I am going to do everything in my power to hear you scream, and I won’t stop until I hear you beg for mercy. Do you wish to proceed on that basis?”

Then you’re going to have a very long day, I thought. Looking up from my hands, which I’d been obsessively staring at for the last five minutes, I finally risked another glance at his face. My heart slammed into my chest, my eyes went wide, and my throat closed around the sounds I wanted to make. Goddamn. Why did he have to be so damned beautiful? If it had been any other male in the universe, I wouldn’t have had a problem, but this one looked too much like him. It took nearly all of my willpower, and I had an impressive amount of the stuff, to answer him back. “Yes.” My eyes immediately returned to my hands, where they were safe.

He looked at me from above the glare of his computer screen and sighed. I knew what he was thinking. She’s a small, thin, frail-looking sparrow, and a good stiff wind would probably blow her over. She won’t last more than an hour. Thankfully, he kept his reservations to himself. Returning his gaze to the keypad in front of him, he then typed in my answer to the previous question. Three little taps. I heard every one. Those three letters could mean only one of two things: my death sentence or my salvation. At this moment in time, I barely cared which one was waiting for me. Tomorrow would give me those answers. I could wait until then.

The man then began to boldly assess me, his eyes rolling up and down my body, and it was easy enough to fill in the blanks. My hair was a scraggly mess, and the black sack that I currently wore was for comfort rather than style. There wasn’t a scrap of makeup upon my face, my body was an unpleasant pasty white courtesy of the English winter, and I hadn’t even considered things like perfume or heels. I was a mess. The recent weeks had played havoc with my self-esteem, and I had barely considered my appearance this morning.

“You can pull out, Ms. Reeves. That option is still available to you.”

That annoyed me. He had my answer. Now I was going to have to look up at him again. Steeling my expression against the onslaught of his pretty face, I slowly raised my pale grey eyes towards him, and the look he received was devoid of emotion. “No, I can’t,” I said. “This is my last lifeline. I do this, or I do something stupid.”

He tilted his head, considering the matter, whilst he twirled a very expensive

fountain pen around in his fingers. “Do you even like pain?” he asked.

I smiled weakly. “I’m not entirely sure. That’s what I’m going to find out.” I didn’t care about the pain. I’d been through pain far more excruciating than anything that could be delivered by his hands.

“Why don’t you go for something a little tamer to begin with? Most girls opt for our ‘introduction to spanking’ package, or ‘sensual BDSM’ for their first encounter with us. Those packages are also much cheaper, by the way. You could then see what turned you on, before committing an awful lot of money for something you may not actually like.”

My steely gaze became more determined as the man in front of me tried to thwart my carefully constructed plans. This was not about desire or arousal. This was about me, but obviously he didn’t know that. All he needed to know was that I would not be taking any other package than the “Ultimate Guide to Pain.” I had my reasons. If he knew them, he’d probably have me committed to the nearest mental institution, so it was just as well that he was a complete stranger who would be interested in nothing more than taking my money.

“Can I ask why you want that particular package?”

Mumbling underneath my breath, I cursed myself for speaking too soon. This was not how I had envisioned my simple booking session would go. It was supposed to be a “hand over your credit card and run” type thing. A few simple questions, and a time and place were all that were needed, surely? Why was he trying to complicate things? I didn’t want to have to deal with this today. I just wanted to crawl back to my dark room and wait patiently for tomorrow to dawn. Unfortunately, I had to get through this first.

Looking him directly in the eye, trying to ignore the pale blue orbs of concern, my lips thinned. “Why do you care? Can you deliver it or not?”

“You need to answer the question. If you can’t answer it, then this conversation is over and I will be escorting you to the door.” His mouth hardened.

I nearly gasped out loud. Who was this idiot? Did he try and psychoanalyse all his sexual conquests? What for? Kicks? “This is ridiculous. Get me the manager.” My eyes darkened, and we stared each other down for the longest moment. Then, strangely, he smiled. As he crossed his arms in front of me, I watched that smile, and he took his own sweet time with it. My position of power from a moment ago had changed, and though my gaze did not waver, I knew instinctively that the shift was not in my favour. My intuition was rarely wrong, and this time was no exception.

“It just so happens, I am the boss.”

“Great. Stop messing around and take my money.” I was now furious. My eyes could not return to my hands, because then he would have won, and I wasn’t

going to let him have that, though it cost me dearly. Instead, I stared right through his skull and headed straight for his cerebral cortex. The gloves were off.

“Why do you like meting out pain? Do you enjoy hurting women?”

If possible, his smile got wider. “Is that what you think we do here? Hurt women?” He paused, and I resisted the urge to squirm. “Are women all over the world,” he leaned over the desk to give me the full weight of his stare, “crazy enough to pay for that kind of thing?” His pen tapped sharply on the desk, daring me to answer.

“All over the world?” The words didn’t come out as I’d intended them to, ending up as more of a pathetic whisper. Backing up against my chair, his large frame making me rather uncomfortable in the fragile emotional state I was in, there were a couple of seconds silence as I deliberated my next move. Needing desperately to get back to normal so I could return to work, I needed the release that I suspected only this kind of scenario could bring, without me being back in the field of course, which wasn’t going to happen until I was cleared. I’d been off work for six months now, and the inactivity was killing me. For someone who lived their life on the edge, sitting down in front of the TV channel hopping every day was one of the worst punishments possible. The adrenaline junkie in me was clamouring for a high, and the most excitement I’d found in downtown London recently was a near mugging attempt. That put a smile on my face for an instant. I might look small and frail, but I’m five foot eight inches of solid muscle, sinew, and bone. I can do things with my hands and feet that are virtually impossible. The poor white trash guy, who foolishly tried to cut the handle of my bag off, never knew what hit him. Before you think I’m an animal, I’m not. I didn’t put him in the hospital. I just made sure that he’d think twice before trying to take advantage of another lone female on her way home from work. My efforts left him with a set of matching cracked ribs, and I know from experience that you won’t get up to any trouble with those for at least six weeks.

“Yes. We’re the best there is. Women all over the world flock to our agency and trust us with their deepest, darkest fantasies and desires. We do our best to make those come true. We don’t ‘hurt’ people unless it turns them on. We’re not sadists. Well, most of aren’t, anyway.” There was a gleam in his eye that gave me chills for a moment, but it slipped away almost as fast it had arrived, making me wonder if I’d imagined it. “So I repeat, why do you want that particular package?”

His words snapped me firmly back to the present. As he returned to his seat, I was granted a little breathing space, but my relief was short-lived. Pushing the computer screen to the side of him, I now had an unencumbered view of his

impressively bulky frame. My eyes began wandering, helpless to stop themselves. If I was a fly trapped in a spider's web, the guy in front of me was a fucking tarantula: venomous and deadly. Examining him more closely, I realised I had gravely underestimated him.

When I entered the offices of "Elite Encounters" I had expected to be interviewed by a nerd. One of those geeky types that couldn't get a woman in the normal way, so they had to resort to kink and fetish in order to live out their dreams. That would have suited me just fine. I had no need or desire to find the guy behind the desk attractive. It was actually going to make the whole process a lot more difficult, but there was little I could do about that. Finding myself waist deep in scalding hot water, I decided then and there that I was not going to run. The challenge of attaining my goal had notched up several levels, but I was going to see it through. The other options didn't bear thinking about.

The question. Focus on the question. Why do I want this particular package? What he actually meant was, why did I want pain? I wondered what the standard response to that was. Because it turns me on, I guess, but I couldn't use that card. We'd been there. His ice-blue eyes were burning holes into the back of my retinas, so I had to think of something fast.

"Because I want the best. This agency had the most impressive recommendations of all the others I've researched, and this package is, by many accounts on your website, 'the best.' As money isn't an object, if I decide I can't handle it, I won't be demanding a refund if that's what concerns you." I smiled brightly and waited for his response. My eyes had adjusted their attention to the chiselled perfection of his jaw, which was freshly shaved. I found myself wondering, oddly, what it would be like to kiss him. As soon as the thought entered my head, I kicked it out. That was not something that would be in the cards. I needed to keep my distance from this man. He might get to use my body, but everything from the neck up was staying firmly under my control.

"It doesn't." He stood up and walked around the desk, settling himself on top of the lacquered black wood as he sucked in a long, slow breath and studied me. His hand reached forward, and he placed a single finger underneath my chin, bringing my face up so I'd have to meet his gaze. I flinched. It was instinctive, and I couldn't help it. Damn those haunting eyes and the effect they had on me.

"You don't like being touched." The statement begged to be contradicted, but I wasn't in the mood for explanations.

"If that's true, it's going to prove a problem for our little session tomorrow," I countered, and I couldn't stop a giggle escaping. A sex scene without being touched would probably be an interesting affair.

He scowled at me, and inwardly I smiled. I had piqued his curiosity. The

session would be going ahead, for one reason or another. I breathed a little easier.

“Then why did you flinch?” he said.

“You surprised me, that’s all,” I replied, and my inner smile finally manifested itself on my face.

“You lie expertly and without a single tell, but you already know that.” His words were succinct and his eyes stayed on mine, giving them nowhere to hide.

My smile immediately faltered. How in the hell had he been able to read me so easily? The finger underneath my chin pulled upwards until my eyes were swimming in the pale blue of an Arctic dawn. The temperature had just dropped twenty degrees, and I had a hard job controlling the tremor that wanted to rip through me. He had me and he knew it.

“Go home.” There was no arguing with that tone. His expression had gone flat and the corners of his mouth had turned down. The room plunged into total silence, and it felt like I was being sucked into a vortex with no end in sight.

His left arm indicated the door to my right, and he looked down at me in disdain. It was the final straw. I lunged for him.

Two

He was ready for me. Somehow, I managed to misjudge my attack, and instead of him landing flat on his desk, where I would have pinned him down effortlessly and given him a piece of my mind, the person being flattened was me. It happened so fast that it knocked all the air out of me. I lay there gasping for a few seconds, before his body pressed itself down over mine. Grasping both of my wrists, he held them over my head, and the look he wore was predatory. My synapses nearly exploded, but I held my instincts in check. He wasn't going to kill me. He was going to express his displeasure, then kick my ass out the door, figuratively speaking with any luck. If he expected me to be cowed by his actions, the man was right outta luck. I simply grinned up at him.

"Nice moves," I said when I'd finally gotten my breath back. I hoped the damn asshole couldn't feel my heartbeat, which was nearly rocketing up to one hundred and forty beats per minute. I didn't run much faster than that without exploding.

"Should I call security? Do I need to escort you from the building?" He raised a single eyebrow at me, but the rest of his face was perfectly still. He obviously took his games of control seriously. I sighed.

Looking at him, with what I hoped was the most cajoling look I possessed, I opened my mouth and licked my lips. I didn't do it to tease or torment - it was more of a stalling tactic, but when I saw the spark of fire in his eyes, I realised that he thought I was playing with him. Not wanting to antagonise him further, I decided I'd better tell him a watered down version of the truth and hope that he'd take pity on me.

"I need this. I can handle the pain, so that part of the arrangement isn't going to be a problem. The thing with me is that I need to be pushed to the absolute limit, and I need someone that won't stop until they get there." His lips were so close to mine that I could feel his warm breath on my mouth. The tingle it imparted feathered across my face and somehow reached my groin. I couldn't keep myself from clenching, and from his answering half-smile, I knew he'd felt it. The infernal man was nearly as observant as me, I realised, with a good degree of vexation.

The blue eyes ate me alive. They devoured every feature of my face, from the roots of my hair to the small cleft in my chin. It felt like I was being examined under a high-powered microscope, and by the time he'd finished, my ego was feeling decidedly uncomfortable.

"There's a little more honesty in that response than the one previous, but I have

a feeling the story you're giving me is the abbreviated version. So I'll make you a deal. You can meet me for dinner this evening. We'll chat. If I'm satisfied with your answers, we'll schedule your session for tomorrow afternoon."

I looked at him incredulously. Dinner? An hour or more of ridiculous pleasantries and small talk, while I had to sit opposite him, forcing myself to look at him? The idea was hideous, and I immediately dismissed it. "No," I whispered.

"Then you will have to find yourself another agency and another dominant. Good day, Ms. Reeves." He removed his considerable weight from my body and turned his back towards me as he straightened the cuffs of his blue shirt. For some ridiculous reason, I felt absurdly bereft. Recovering my composure, I flicked the long rope of my plaited hair behind me and stood up. My mind was whirling. There were other agencies, but I'd have to book an interview appointment in order to be seen. That meant I'd have to wait at least another two weeks before the session commenced, and it was time I couldn't afford to waste. I was going crazy trapped between four walls, and I needed a fast-track package back to work. I could do this. That particular fact was still being debated as I walked over to the frosted glass door and grabbed the metal handle. Pulling it open, I didn't manage to wrench it more than an inch wide before I paused.

"Just dinner?" I hated the element of weakness that made me ask the question. This was not me. I was all wrong. Watching his reflection in the glass, I saw him raise his head as he returned my refracted stare. His eyes were the only part of his face that gave anything away, and there was amusement there. Apparently I was a great source of entertainment.

"Let's get one thing straight. My body is not for sale, and we will not be having 'sex.' As to your session, if I decide to go ahead with it, I'm reasonably confident I can wait until tomorrow."

I nodded, duly chastened. My ego shrank further still. With a small voice, I asked, "When and where do you want to meet?"

He chewed his lip as he considered my question, no doubt trying to figure out the option that would piss me off the most.

"The Barracuda. Meet me at eight o'clock sharp."

My eyes closed in horror, and I counted to three under my breath. I absolutely loathed seafood in all of its various denominations. The man behind me must have been a mind reader. Not trusting my quavering voice to object, I opened the door in front of me and walked quickly through it. Had my level of restraint not been honed with years of perfection, I would happily have slammed the thing until there was nothing left but shards of broken glass.

Three

The evening loomed before me like a nine-headed Hydra. Alas, I was no Heracles, and the chances of me slaying even one of the dragon's evil heads was small. Should I quit now? The thought banged around in my brain for a bit as I tested its weight. Leaving him high and dry in a restaurant did put a small smile upon my face, but I wasn't a quitter. The challenge had been issued and I was going to see it through. Having said that, seeing as how he had decided to make life as difficult as possible for me, I guessed there could be no harm in trying to return the favour.

Taking a long, hot shower, I primped and preened to the best of my abilities. Perfumed shower gel and matching scented body lotion was liberally smeared all over my skin until I was so smooth, James Leverett would have needed a set of suction cups to get his hands on my body. James. It was a nice old-fashioned English name. It didn't suit him. I wondered what his real name was and if I'd ever find out. The odds were against it, I guessed. In any case, judging by the books I'd read on BDSM, I'd be calling him 'Sir' if he agreed to grant me a session tomorrow, and I was in no way convinced that he would.

He'd surprised me. The man had reflexes as good as, if not better than, mine. That was rare. He was also exceptionally intuitive. That should have scared me, but it didn't. If the meeting tonight was a success, I'd be baring a whole lot more than a few dark fantasies. I knew that I'd be naked in front of him, and I wasn't entirely sure how I felt about that. That was a crazy enough thought in itself, because not only would I be naked, I'd probably be bound, too. The idea terrified and excited me in equal measure. In all of the relationships I'd had so far, I'd either been in control, or in an equal partnership. Giving up control was not something I was particularly comfortable with, but I couldn't deny that the thought lit up my prefrontal cortex like a Fourth of July party. It sent heat down my body to all the right places, and I had a sneaking suspicion that I was going to enjoy my little scenario more than I thought possible.

Pulling a sheer, black, lace-topped stocking slowly up my leg, I debated on my outfit for this evening's massacre. He wasn't going to be impressed by a short skirt. He'd probably seen hundreds of naked bodies in his line of work, so I decided I'd opt for the opposite and cover up as much of my flesh as I could. As he wouldn't get anywhere near the real deal until tomorrow, letting his imagination run wild might work in my favour. I smiled. It couldn't do any harm, could it?

Debating my choice of dress, I decided that the Barracuda was an upscale

seafood joint, and I wouldn't look out of place in a floor-length number. It was all new-age sustainable wood, bamboo and flowing water features. Tables were arranged for a romantic tête-à-tête meal, and candles would be dotted about appropriately. Luckily, there was a black sheath by Valentino in my wardrobe. It had been a work-related present, and I had only worn it once, but it screamed "look at me." Generally, that wasn't something I tried to encourage, but in this case, I might make an exception. This session needed to go ahead tomorrow, and it couldn't hurt if I encouraged some sort of spark between us. I was all too aware that this was last chance Saloon Street.

It wasn't long before the mountain of black crepe de chine was tugged over my head and smoothed slowly down over my curves. I then had to perform ridiculous contortionist moves to fasten the waist to neck zipper, but the result was worth it. I would say it fit like a glove, but believe me when I say that no glove fit quite this well. Looking at the front, I had a neatly cinched waist, a delicately outlined bust, and the effect was expertly finished with a black collar that reached around my neck. The back was a little more daring. Two panels of black parted to reveal a cream interior that gently swayed as I walked, and it had been cut out in a 'V' shape that revealed a generous expanse of flesh. Pairing it up with some black stilettos and a simple cream clutch purse, the finished deal was quite startling.

A spritz of Coco Chanel and full war paint completed the look, which included traffic-stopping scarlet lipstick. Taming my glossy chestnut curls into submission, I placed them into a French knot and used half a bottle of hairspray to glue them in place. I was in control at the moment, and that was the message I wanted to convey. I immediately laughed at myself. Who was I kidding? As soon as that beautiful face was before me, I would need tranquillizers to subdue my body's response. That would work in my favor behind closed doors, but it would be almost unbearable seated two feet away from the man. Briefly considering the idea of a stiff drink before my interrogation commenced, I dismissed the thought. Whilst it might dull the sight of blinding beauty before me, I needed all my senses on high alert. Undoubtedly we were going to spar at the dinner table, and I needed to keep my wits about me. Letting down my guard was something I had always been uncomfortable with. That's why I needed him in the first place.

Keeping an eye on the clock, it was slightly disconcerting to find I only had twenty minutes to spare. Be still, my pounding heart! Ignoring my nervous flap of either dread or anticipation, I managed to occupy my time searching for a few finishing touches. Sitting down at my Victorian dressing table, I pulled out a pair of gold filigree earrings and slowly slid the posts through my ears. Rummaging

around in my jewelry box again, I found a matching bracelet that would complete my look. I sensed I was going to have to work for my dinner, and if that was the case, I intended to enter the arena in full armour.

Four

“Fuck.” James shot to his feet as I approached.

He’d been there at the table, waiting for me as I was led across the restaurant. The whole place seemed to go silent as I glided past, and it was the first time in a long time that I enjoyed the power my body could hold over the opposite sex.

“Lovely to see you, too,” I replied, smiling softly as his ironclad composure from earlier slipped somewhat. It was nice to know he wasn’t entirely unaffected by my presence. It certainly wouldn’t do him any harm to have a taste of his own medicine. My heart rate was currently thumping out heavy metal beats, and my chest did not appreciate the exertion, especially as it was heavily confined in tight black silk.

“What happened to the shy and retiring little mouse that graced my office earlier?” He recovered quickly, to give him his dues, but I had prepared myself for a barrage of questions.

Sitting down as our waiter neatly placed my chair underneath me, I said, “You were worried she wasn’t going to be able to stand up to your devious torments. I’m here to tell you she will.” I took the menu that was being hovered near my head and offered up a cheerful, “Thank you.”

With a single finger, he pulled down the leather bound menu that I was now hiding behind and waited for me to look up. When I reluctantly did, he shook his head. “That is not what I’m worried about. I think you will probably stand up to all I could dish out and more. Your ability to handle yourself during the session doesn’t concern me.” The piercing blue eyes searched my features as if trying to read my mind. One look at the determination in his expression and I was almost convinced that he would succeed.

“Then why am I here?” I pushed the menu back up so that my expression was once again covered. The man in front of me was far too perceptive, and I didn’t want to give him anything more than I had to.

“Because I’m hungry and I like seafood.”

The menu lowered again, because I couldn’t resist rolling my eyes at that comment. “And?” If he thought he was a master of interrogation, he hadn’t seen anything yet. I raised an eyebrow as he took his time answering my question.

“I also like pretty girls.”

I couldn’t help a snort at that one. “Oh, please. You can do better than that.” If there was a touch of sarcasm in my voice, it was too bad.

“I think you’re emotionally damaged.”

His comment stole my breath away. How on earth had he been able to detect

that from a half hour meeting? Looking at him steadily, without giving a clue as to my thoughts, I merely replied, "Aren't we all?"

He looked thoughtful for a moment, then frowned. "What happened?"

The menu shot up again, and it gave me a few precious seconds in order to compose myself. We were not talking about this here. As words like 'langoustines, oysters, lobster, and seafood bisque' blurred in front of my eyes, I blinked away the tears and inhaled slowly.

"If you don't tell me now, I'll get it out of you in the scene, and that will be harder for you."

I began to rise from my seat. "Are we having a scene, then? If so, I've had a lovely evening and I'll see you..."

"Sit."

James issued his commands with the kind of tone you did not ignore, and my body instantly obeyed, even though my mind rebelled. It was the story of my life.

"What happened?" His tone was softer now, as if coaxing me into thinking he wasn't really a monster, but I already knew that for a lie. This man was my worst nightmare and ultimate fantasy, all combined into one.

I lowered my hands slowly towards the edge of the table and let my fingers grip it tightly. He had my full attention. The tears were thankfully gone, but they had now been replaced by outright fury. "Why do you care?"

"I don't," he said. "I'm curious, but you're a stranger. You usually have to know someone in order to care." He then closed his menu and placed it beside his wine glass. "I think I'll have the king scallops with lime and coriander, followed by the lobster in garlic butter."

"Thank goodness you don't have sex on your mind, then," I remarked, my eyes frantically scanning through the dishes for something that wouldn't turn my stomach.

He laughed. "Garlic breath has never managed to scare any of my dates away before. Would it scare you away, Lois?"

I didn't want to go anywhere near that question. The man was already well aware of exactly how attractive he was. Getting women in his bed would require little more than a click of his fingers, and probably not even that.

Studying him openly, I considered the question. His chiselled jaw, high cheekbones, thick eyebrows, and a perfect Greek nose were all excellent features. A flock of dark, wavy hair, artfully flicked away from his face, curled gently at his neck, and if that didn't grab you, he now wore a day-old beard that screamed sex with around one hundred decibels of intent. When you paired all of that with the piercing ice-blue eyes, he was drop dead gorgeous, and I would

have run at least fifty miles in the other direction in order to avoid him. Thankfully, I wasn't after date material. I just wanted an afternoon and a stranger. I could pretend he was ugly for a few hours. My body might not listen, but that was too bad.

Finally, I looked up and smiled at him. "I don't date men."

His eyes shrank to narrow slits, and he was clearly sceptical with regard to my latest statement. "You don't date men, as in you like women, or you don't date anyone?"

It amused me that he felt the need to clarify the point. A snort of laughter escaped my lips at the look on his face. "I am not a lesbian, no." I had probably just destroyed some of his wildest fantasies with that statement, but he waved his hand in the air, indicating I should continue. "I don't have the time or the inclination to date. There's nothing more to say." Zeroing in on the menu yet again, I decided on the miso soup to start, followed by the sea bream with lemon and chervil butter. My stomach would handle those without too much fuss.

"Do you like sex?" The expression upon his face was puzzled. He was thinking, here's a pretty girl who doesn't like men. Some jerk's done a number on her. Unfortunately for the male sex, it was usually the other way around, but I wasn't about to tell him that.

"I like sex." Fortunately, our waiter chose that moment to break up our scintillating conversation, and he briefly took our orders. James also ordered a bottle of Sancerre to accompany our meal, and his cutlery was then reset, giving him all the necessary implements with which to destroy his crustacean. I was far happier with my simple knife and fork.

When we were alone again, James frowned upon my choice. "Don't like getting your fingers dirty?"

"Isn't that supposed to be your job?" I queried innocently. His eyes darkened, and he gave me a lazy smile in return.

"I haven't decided. I know what I should do, and that's tell you to go home and find someone else." He rubbed his chin thoughtfully and sighed.

"You've gone to an awful lot of expense to do that," I replied, as my eyes sparkled with humour. I couldn't help it. What was he up to?

"You intrigue me," he replied, pursing his lips. "And I feel the need to unravel you. That doesn't mean I will, but you have my curiosity spiked."

Great. He had me down as a science project. I could feel the beginnings of a headache buzzing between my eyes and wondered if I'd remembered to put some aspirin in my bag.

"What do you do for a living?"

On second thought, aspirin probably wasn't going to cut it. I wondered if I had

any of that oxycodone left from my last prescription. I might need that.

“Doctor, lawyer, stockbroker, ballet dancer, footballer?” He regarded me thoughtfully as he slowly drawled each choice.

The man had a unique way of putting me off my guard, but I’d had far too many years of practise in subterfuge to fall for such tactics. “I work in advertising.”

He raised an eyebrow and smiled lazily at me. “For whom?” By his sceptical look, it was clear he didn’t believe me.

“Activity Advertising.” The lie slipped from my tongue far too easily, and it was said with conviction.

“And where are they located?”

Obviously the lie wasn’t quite as good as I thought it was. The next question was usually what position I held there. Keeping my face carefully neutral, I said, “Our offices are on Silver Street in Enfield.” As my knowledge of Activity Advertising was limited, I hoped there wouldn’t be too many more questions headed my way. If there were, I was going to have to improvise, and that tended to get messy.

“Who’s your boss?” James had now put his elbow on the table and his chin rested upon his hand. He looked at me idly, but I was not fooled for a second. Somehow, the infernal man knew I was lying. But how? This was the second time he’d seen through my façade, and I was beginning to worry my standards were slipping. When he pulled a fancy looking smartphone from his pocket and started punching some keys around, I knew I was in trouble.

“Richard Mullane, although I fail to see why you’d want to know a detail like that.” I was on the defensive, and I couldn’t help a petulant frown.

“And how old is Mr. Mullane, exactly?” James sucked upon his bottom lip in an effort to contain his laughter, but his eyes were alight with mirth. I wanted to throttle him.

“I’m guessing he’s in his forties, but I’m not very good with ages.” I had absolutely no idea how old Richard Mullane was, and there’d been no accompanying photo of him on the company’s website. I could have researched the man further, but hadn’t thought it would be necessary. Clearly I had been wrong.

“Oh, I think you’re exceptionally good at everything, Ms. Reeves. Too good normally, I suspect.” He leaned back in his chair and stretched out his neck, and for a moment I thought I was off the hook. “Okay, I admit age can be tricky. Let’s go for hair colour. What colour is his hair?”

“I refuse to answer any more questions along this ridiculous vein,” I remonstrated, desperately hoping that the chefs of the Barracuda would hurry up

and pull their fingers out. I needed James Leverett distracted and quickly.

“It’s my last question. I promise I’ll stop after this one.” He smiled at me, and in reply I shook my head mutinously. “How hard can it be? You work with the man. Does he have blond, brown, black, red, or grey hair? You’ve got a twenty percent chance of getting it right, Lois. Or I could just reel all sorts of questions off about Activity Advertising for the next half hour or so.” His eyes saw right through me in that instant and I shivered.

“Which I could refuse to answer,” I bit out.

“Then you might as well go home now, because we will not be meeting tomorrow. Just answer the damn question, Lois.” Those eyes did not leave my face, and inwardly they made me squirm.

“So it’s Lois now, is it? What happened to Ms. Reeves?” I was clutching at straws and he nailed me immediately.

“Don’t even think of trying to divert the conversation. Answer the question, Lois, or we’re done here.”

“Rubbish. You’re going to walk out on king scallops and lobster? I don’t think so.”

“Want to put that theory to the test? Because not only will I be walking out on my meal, I’ll be walking out on you.” James put his cell phone back in his pocket, and the sound of his chair legs scraping across the wooden floor made me wince.

“Grey.” It was a calculated guess. The law of averages said that anyone who’d risen to managerial status in a firm was probably in their forties or fifties, and there was a good chance that a male might have grey hair at that age.

James pushed his chair back under the table and smiled at me. “Okay, it’s your turn now. If your scene goes ahead tomorrow, do you have any burning questions about what might happen?” He raised an eyebrow.

Taking a deep breath, I considered his words. Having a sudden urge to play with the cutlery, both hands were carefully placed in my lap. What did I want to know? Everything. Nothing. Where on earth did I start?

“Do you get pleasure from hurting people?” That little gem had been at the back of my mind for some time. I didn’t feel guilty for asking it. It was his turn to squirm.

He rubbed the pad of his thumb across his lip as he considered his response, but it was clear he was entertained by my question. “This is why I was concerned enough to bring you here tonight.” His index finger pointed to the table in front of him. “You don’t understand the concept of BDSM at all, do you?” Shaking his head, he sighed. “It’s not about the pain. You watch too much TV. Most people who practise BDSM hardly touch upon the pain side of things. Sometimes, as

the relationship progresses, a little pain can be introduced, but that's a personal preference. BDSM is all about pleasure. That's what I do. In a session, I'll give a submissive anywhere from three to fifteen orgasms. My job is finding out what makes her tick, what turns her on, and then using that information to the best of my ability."

I couldn't help but frown. "So what's all this spanking, caning, and cropping business then? Pleasure?" My look was disbelieving. I'd read a few books and seen a couple of movies. I almost knew what I was talking about.

"Yes," he hissed at me. "Pleasure." I noted that his pale blue eyes looked even sexier when they were fired up. "The sting of the crop will ignite a thousand nerve endings that you never knew you had, and the residual burn will set flame to a thousand more. A little pain will flood endorphins and adrenaline all through your body, heightening your awareness to such a degree that a whisper of air upon your flesh will feel like a hurricane. It can also delay an impending orgasm, intensifying your climax tenfold when you finally manage to fight past the delicious burn that is consuming you. It's all about pleasure."

James had started to wave his arms about and was looking very animated. He was obviously very passionate about his work. I looked unconvinced, but I wasn't going to contradict him. This was his thing after all, but I couldn't resist adding, "And control."

He rolled his eyes at me, but he inclined his head in agreement. "Yes. That's exactly it - pleasure and control. A lot of people find a great deal of relief in giving up the latter." I knew those eyes were assessing whether I would be one of them. He'd already formed his own opinion of me, and I debated for several seconds before asking the next question, but in the end it seemed to escape of its own accord.

"Do you think I will?"

He turned his head away from me and looked into space for a moment. I could almost hear the cogs of his brain turning. The resulting silence burned me. This was important. I was almost willing him to say "yes," but I'd rather have an honest opinion. Without doubt, that's exactly what I was going to get, and my body unconsciously clenched in response. There was a lot riding on this.

"You're a difficult case," he said eventually, and these were not the words I wanted to hear. "Normally, I can give a 'yes' or a 'no' with little more than a quick chat and glance, but where you are concerned, I have an inkling I'm not working with the full picture."

Annoyingly, the food chose that moment to arrive and I had to wait several agonising seconds before our conversation could continue. Watching fractiously as our waiter fussed with the positioning of our plates and condiments, I had to

take a moment to tell myself to calm down. This was all Mr. Attractive's fault, and his presence was starting to have an adverse effect on my emotional wellbeing. Still, he would only be in my life for one more day. Hopefully.

Five

“Right, where were we? Ah, yes, do I think you’d be happy giving up control?” He sliced one of his juicy scallops in half and speared it with his fork. Melted butter dribbled onto his plate as he raised the morsel to his mouth. I found myself watching in fascination as he chewed. When I realised what I was doing, I subsequently wanted to slap myself, but how can you war with your own hormones? I was a mess.

“I’m going to rely on my intuition for this one, I think,” he continued, unaware of the inner struggle I was having. “I don’t think you’ll be happy giving up control. I suspect you might even be a control freak and have your life ordered out to the smallest detail, but that’s not what you asked, is it?” He finished his mouthful, and his words had just about registered in the haze of pheromones that surrounded me, jolting me to my core because he had pegged me with frightening precision. “But yes, I think you’ll find the relief you seek. In body more than mind, perhaps.”

And what the hell did that mean? Too stunned to speak, I swirled my spoon around in the bowl of miso soup before me. Clouds of fish stock began swimming around, and little slivers of seaweed stuck to my spoon. Bringing up a mouthful to my lips, I tasted it tentatively. I was somewhat surprised to find that it was actually quite refreshing, and it wasn’t long before all thoughts of talking left me. We didn’t say another word to each other until we’d cleaned our plates dry.

Upon finishing his starter, James took a long sip of the Sancerre and sighed in contentment. I concurred with his opinion of the wine. It was the perfect accompaniment to seafood, bone dry and deliciously aromatic. I would have to be very careful not to guzzle too many glasses. Having my tongue loose and wagging around this man would be exceptionally foolish.

“Any more questions, Lois? Or are we going to talk about knitting and babies for the rest of the evening?” He eyed me with a smirk.

Choking on my wine, I was annoyed to see he thought himself thoroughly amusing. It appeared he’d caught me checking him out. Sighing, I decided I’d need to be more discreet in future. His ego would spontaneously combust in a few seconds if I wasn’t. “I usually like to get to know someone a couple of weeks before I think about having babies, but I’m game if you are.” I winked at him. It should have wiped the smirk off his face instantly, but instead, it just got wider. Taking a deep breath, I ploughed on, “As to the knitting needles, you’ll have a better chance at improving your life expectancy if I don’t have any.” I

lavished an icy stare upon him, which had absolutely no effect whatsoever.

“I can picture you with a set of knitting needles, you know. Not actually knitting, but fending off all the annoying males that might make the mistake of entering your world. You are a prickly one, Ms. Reeves. I bet you haven’t managed too many long term relationships in your past.”

“I don’t need knitting needles to defend myself,” I replied. “I can do enough damage with my hands and feet.” I picked up my black, Chinese lacquered bowl of soup and drank the remains. I didn’t particularly care if the ogre across from me was offended.

“That I don’t doubt,” he replied. “And the long term relationships? Managed any?” He slowly wiped an imaginary spot of food from his lips. My eyes found themselves entranced, and all of a sudden I could picture myself kissing him. What the hell? This was so unlike me, I nearly dissolved into a fit of hysterics. It looked like I was about to have my first crush, and the guy across from me was an absolute animal.

“You’ve had your question time,” I replied with saccharine sweetness. Wondering if two could play his game, I ran my tongue across my bottom lip to see if he was similarly affected. Sure enough, his eyes dropped, and it was several seconds before he realised I had asked another question.

“Sorry, you’ll need to repeat that,” he said. “My attention is being shamelessly diverted.” He sucked his finger into his mouth as if to clean it, although I knew for a fact it was not dirty. He’d wiped it on his napkin only a few moments ago. Somehow I managed to glance away, though it took considerable willpower on my part.

Clearing my throat, I attempted to rid my mind of distractions. As long as I didn’t look at him, there wouldn’t be a problem forming logical sentences.

“Let’s say the session does go ahead tomorrow. What can I expect from the moment I enter the scene?” It was a good question, superbly executed bar the lack of eye contact, and I was pleased with myself.

“Are you talking to me? Because if you are, you’ll have to look at me if you want an answer.” His hand reached across the table and he curled his fingers under my chin, drawing me closer to him. I desperately wanted to recoil and take refuge in a dark, quiet place somewhere, but I was damned if I’d let him see fear. “Look at me.” His voice pounded in my ears, and my arteries were filled with blood that was rushing around at ninety miles an hour. “You can’t be afraid of me. So what is it? Are you frightened of the attraction between us?”

Dragging my eyes back up to his was harder than walking through quicksand. All my poise and elegance had left for the moment, and I cursed myself for ever having agreed to this stupid meeting in the first place. The trouble was that every

time I looked at him, I saw Kiel in those ghostly blue eyes. I needed to get over it. "I'm looking at you. Where's my answer?" I didn't want to give James any more than I had to. A little knowledge was a dangerous thing, especially in my line of work. He released my face, and I silently sucked in a bucket load of air. Breathing was such an important commodity.

"Fine, if that's the way you want to play it, we'll go for the abbreviated version." I nodded. Short and sweet worked for me. "Well, as soon as the door closes I'll ask you to get naked." I immediately lost the air I'd just struggled to inhale, but honestly, what had I expected? This wasn't a sparring match. This was sex. Not in the conventional sense, perhaps, but it was close enough. "Then I'll tie you up with either ropes or cuffs, depending on which is your preference. Do you have a preference?" The thought of being completely immobile whilst naked in front of him was dancing around excitedly in my head. It turned me on. Who was I kidding? It felt like someone had punched me in the gut and rewired my brain all at the same time. Squirming uncomfortably, I let my hands fall to either edge of my chair and gripped it tightly. This was yet another scary thing I was going to have to deal with - intense arousal. My vibrator was going to get an impressive workout at the end of my date. There was no way I'd be able to sleep as worked up as I was. There was an uncomfortable silence as James kept looking at me, and I realised he was expecting an answer to his question.

"Oh, right. Um, no, I don't think I have a preference." If my voice was slightly breathless and rough, he didn't seem to notice.

"Some girls don't like marks. Cuffs tend to leave marks if I do my job right, but even rope will chafe if you pull and twist within your bindings."

"I can hold myself still. That won't be a problem." I was more than capable of remaining perfectly still, just as I was able to move exceptionally quickly. It was almost an ingrained part of me now.

"You won't be able to hold yourself still in a scene with me. I guarantee it." He pressed his lips together, and his eyes twinkled, as if he was trying hard to hold back laughter.

I rolled my eyes. "You're not a god. A sound spanking and a few swats with a paddle aren't going to make me wail and scream."

"You see, Lois, this is where we have a problem. What do you think's going to happen in that room? A little light spanking and a bit of hair pulling?"

"You pull hair as well? My, you are multi-talented." A large, pink lobster was then paraded past me, and the pungent smell of garlic was upon the air. It was divine. My mouth watered, and I wondered why I'd never been brave enough to tackle it before. My sea bream, on the other hand, although perfectly cooked and seasoned, looked insipid in comparison.

“You have no idea how talented I am. There’s a reason women pay an awful lot of money for my services.”

I took a mouthful of perfectly cooked fish, which disintegrated on my tongue with a delicious tang of lemon, before I answered him. “And why do they part with so much money, Mr. Leverett?” Having a few suspicions of my own, they rested mostly on the fact that he possessed a singularly beautiful face, and the most mesmerising eyes I’d ever seen. How many women had fallen for that package, I wondered? Setting your sights on him would be akin to chasing a fairy tale. Thankfully, I didn’t want something that ephemeral, which was why he was only getting twenty-four hours of my time.

“Call me James. Tomorrow’s session will be informal address, as it’s your first time. Everything else about it will be formal, though.” He winked at me.

My face remained impassive and I paused for a second. “And the answer to my question, Mr. Leverett?” Goading him was too much fun to resist.

“You have no idea how much I want to take you over my lap right now and spank the living daylights out of you.” He flexed his fingers and his expression went dark. My delicate lace panties turned to mush.

“You’d probably be arrested for that kind of thing in a public place,” I offered helpfully. “But feel free.” I was enjoying myself. The chemistry, the wine, the food, the banter... whatever it was, electricity began to spark in fiery white light around me.

“And it might almost be worth it.” James peeled the tail flesh out of his lobster and cut it up into small bite-sized pieces. Picking one up with his fingers, he popped it into his mouth and a look of serene contentment crossed his face. “Delicious. You should try this.”

“I don’t know if I’d...” I had no chance to finish my sentence because James was pressing a small sliver of lobster against my lips. When I tried to decline his offer, the lobster was pushed firmly into my mouth and I bit down on his fingers in protest. Glaring at him, I released my hold, but did not appreciate his heavy-handedness.

“What if I was allergic to seafood?” I barked after I’d chewed and swallowed the most amazing thing I’d ever eaten in my life. I was now contemplating knocking him out, just so I could steal his dinner.

“If you were, you probably wouldn’t have ordered fish for dinner,” he pointed out reasonably. It did not make me feel better. I wanted to yell at him, to ensure he kept his fingers to himself for the rest of the evening, but I also wanted more lobster. It was a painful battle of mind over matter, and it was going to lead to my own personal destruction if I didn’t choose wisely. It was a struggle I was sorely tempted to lose, but somehow I managed to stay on the path of

righteousness. “Who’s diverting the conversation now?” I said. “Why do women pay you an awful lot of money? Are they so masochistic they’ll do anything for an adrenaline high?”

“If they were, sky-diving, mountain climbing, or pot-holing would be cheaper.” He cracked open a lobster claw and sucked the contents into his mouth. I swallowed tightly and looked forlornly at my fish. Sighing, I decided to stare at him until I got my answer.

“You have no idea, do you?” He shook his head and licked his fingers, one by one. My pulse couldn’t take much more of this. Wanting to growl at him in frustration, I kept my gaze cool and held the stare. Eventually, he would give in. I hoped.

“Pleasure. Intense, unadulterated, fucking amazing pleasure. There isn’t a single woman who’s managed to withhold an orgasm from me, and I manage to make ninety percent of them go multiple. An average scene will have my client climaxing anywhere between five and ten times. The figures are more dependent on her stamina than my ability, for the record.”

My jaw wanted to drop open, but I was chewing, and it wouldn’t be a good look. He was lying. He had to be lying. Ten orgasms in a two-hour session? My stamina was good, but that would probably kill me. As to multiples, they were a thing of myths and legends. I have fun during sex, don’t get me wrong, but that much fun? If I signed up for this gig tomorrow, I’d probably have a heart attack. When I’d finally finished eating, I said, “Talk is cheap,” but he had me worried. Beginning to wonder if I had bitten off more than I could chew, my appetite quickly waned.

“You’ll regret that statement, because I’ll see it as a personal challenge. I may even be able to break my all-time record of fifteen orgasms. I suspect you’re one of the few women who might be able to handle me at my worst.”

“So our scene is going ahead?”

“I’ll probably regret it, but yes, providing you answer my last few questions satisfactorily, if you’re still interested, I’ll see you tomorrow afternoon at two o’clock.”

My stomach felt like it had dived to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean and, as it was about eleven thousand metres deep, it was quite a dive. Oh God, what had I just signed myself up for? *Quit worrying*, I admonished myself. It wasn’t like I had a choice. Duty called.

“Now do you want some kind of indication as to what will happen to you when you’re in a scene? What are your hard and soft limits, safe word, allergies, and anything else you think I should be aware of?”

This was happening. I felt terrified and excited all at the same time, and I

wasn't sure if it was a good combination. "No allergies, I'll use the traffic light system, and I have no limits - hard, soft, or otherwise."

He nearly choked on his wine, but managed to recover himself just in time, setting his glass carefully back down on the wooden table. "None?" The way his eyebrows had just risen up, you'd think I'd just told him Brad Pitt was gay.

"None," I repeated. I sensed I was going regret that decision, but there was a reason for my madness. Besides, I suspected that even at his worst, James wouldn't be that scary.

"Trust me when I say you do not want to give me free reign over your body, Lois, because I will take you at your word. If you have limits, you need to talk to me now. I'll reel off some of the things that I think you'll object to, shall I? Vaginal fisting, anal fisting..."

"Don't make me repeat myself again, Mr. Leverett." I had no wish to hear all of the things that might be in store for me. I'd read the checklist that Elite Encounters had sent me, and it was an eye opener, but I could handle pain. Besides, the session was only two hours long. It would be a piece of cake. "Surprise me."

He shook his head in disbelief, but he said no more. His eyes captured my attention, though. They were laced with concern. Great, I'd gone and got exactly what I wanted, and he thought I was a complete nut. He was probably wondering if he could revoke his earlier offer and wash his hands of me. How did I get myself out of this one? Several of my fastest brain cells were put under immense pressure before I managed to come up with something halfway believable.

"I don't want to know what's coming. This is all about the experience for me. I want to see how much I can take, be it pleasure or pain, and I trust you not to dish out more than I can handle. Does that make sense? I live my life on an adrenaline high, and I need another fix." My eyes pleaded with him not to rescind his offer, because I wasn't sure I could complete this process all over again with another agency.

"Advertising is that good, huh?" he asked dryly.

Cursing myself for my stupidity in revealing too much, I held my head up to face his gaze. Somehow, James had put me at ease and I found it ridiculously easy to talk to him. That would have to change. I could not continue to let my guard down like this. The attraction flew between us like charged ions, and some kind of electrostatic force irrefutably called my body to his. I hated it. It wasn't something I could fight, and he filled my body with an unpleasant abundance of nervous energy that desperately needed to be released. Tomorrow. I needed tomorrow.

"Nailing a big client is lots of fun," I whispered, plastering a bright smile upon

my face.

“Tell me about it,” he said, and the amused sarcasm in his voice did not go unnoticed. My eyes danced as I swam in the bright gleam of his teeth. The man was a predator, and if he were a shark, I was fish food. I considered crawling under the table, but settled for kicking him in the shins. He didn’t even wince.

“You need to give me something to go on, sweetheart. The scenes are planned around you. They’re based on what turns you on. The aim of the game is to have you sobbing in pleasure and unable to articulate a single word because your body is convulsing so damn hard. In order for me to get you to that state, I need to know what makes you tick.”

He looked at me expectantly. I then looked at a corner of the ceiling. I couldn’t have his eyes on me if I wanted to think. My poor brain cells were under such pressure this evening, and with relatively easy requests. The “attraction thing” was going to be the death of me. I simply could not concentrate. *Focus, damnit!* Retreating to a quiet, distant part of my psyche, I slowly came back to earth. Okay, what did turn me on? It was a reasonable question, given the circumstances. Up until now, I’d never really thought about it. Figuring I should just be honest, my gaze refocused upon his beautiful face and I took a deep breath.

“I’m not really sure how to answer that question,” I confessed. “My sex life has been rather tame up until now. I enjoy all the usual things, like kissing, oral, missionary, on top, and I’m familiar with a few sex toys, but I’ve never really fantasised about anything in particular.” My life was far too busy for fantasies and idle thoughts. Maybe I’d been missing out all these years. Perhaps I should have explored the naughty book corner and been a bit more adventurous.

“So why are you here? One of your girlfriends dare you or something? I can’t, for the life of me, figure you out.” James looked utterly confused for a moment, and I took no small degree of pleasure in his discomfiture. He could have a little of what I’d been having.

Forking a mouthful of green beans into my mouth, I chewed slowly. Why did this have to be so hard? I hadn’t figured on needing a cover story just to get my ass spanked. Trust me to get the most particular dominant in town. Thankfully, I could think on my feet... or not, as the case might be.

“I’ve watched *Fifty Shades of Grey*. It looks like fun. I’ve imagined myself in Anastasia’s place and I’m taking the next step. Whilst I may not know exactly what turns me on, my body’s booked two hours for you to experiment upon it. I’m sure you’ll figure something out, being as you’re the best there is.” I arched an eyebrow at him.

He cracked the other claw of his lobster open, towards me, and juice splattered

upon my face. Blinking furiously, my hands turned into two tight fists itching to wrap themselves around his neck, knowing he'd done it on purpose.

"If you've got grease on my dress, I am sending the cleaning bill to you," I bit out.

"Don't goad me." He raised both of his eyebrows at me and returned my angry stare. "I never said I was the best, and you aren't going to get what you want that way." Pulling out another juicy titbit of lobster from its shell, he waved it in the air and watched as my eyes followed it. "How about I run some scenarios by you, and you tell me if you fancy trying them? If you answer nicely, I'll reward you."

He waved the garlic-scented fragment in front of my face, and my eyes followed it as if hypnotised. My mouth instantly watered, and I craved the creamy taste of it upon my tongue. I'd lost my earlier battle. "Begin," I whispered.

"Hmm. Let me think. Well, after we get you naked, the first thing I'd do would be to tie those hands of yours behind your back. That should tame your feisty streak. Then I'd pull my favourite leather chair out, take a seat, and drape you over my lap. I might leave you like that for a few seconds, because anticipation is a bitch, and then my hands would very gently run up and down the length of your body. Gentle little flurries of my fingers would caress you, from your neck all the way down to your back, then they would focus on the two globes of your ass, before traversing all the way down your legs, kneading and stroking. I'd probably do that for a minute or two, to see whether you'd start squirming. If you're squirming, I'm happy, because it's obvious that you like what's happening. Just to be sure, I'll ask you to spread your legs before dipping a finger inside you. If it comes away wet, I'm generally on the right track." He tilted his head at me, and his eyes devoured my face. "What do you think so far?"

I wasn't sure I could speak after that, but I was desperate to learn what came next, and just about managed a weak, "Continue." My hands were once again gripping the edges of my chair, but this time it was to stop them diving under my dress and embarrassing myself in public.

He fed me the small piece of lobster he'd been teasing me with, although I'd almost forgotten it was there. I sucked it greedily deep inside my mouth and sighed blissfully.

"See, it isn't that hard to play nice, is it?"

"I'm waiting," I said darkly.

His eyes cut straight through me. "Say 'please.'"

I didn't even hesitate. "Please."

He made a funny sound in the back of his throat. “Maybe you’ll be easier to work with than I thought.”

I licked my lips slowly. “Doubtful,” I said, before taking a hearty gulp of my wine. I was going to need it to get through this. When the silence seemed to drag on, probably because he was trying to figure out where that statement had come from, I decided to encourage him. “Pretty please, continue in that deep, sexy voice of yours, and don’t stop until you get to the good part.” He gave me an annoyed look, and I couldn’t resist a small smile of victory. The man could be ruffled. Dominant or not, he was at least human. It was reassuring.

“You’re going to regret that,” he said, swirling the contents of his wine glass around and grinning wickedly at me. It was with shock that I realised I wanted to kiss him. I was already imagining the taste of his lips on mine, and the sharp, acidic twang of wine as I inhaled him. The thought was far more delicious than my lobster, which meant it had to be banished immediately. Thankfully, he chose that moment to distract me. “Where was I? Ah, yes, I was seeing if you were wet. Are you?”

My mouth went wide and I spluttered. “Good try, but we’ll keep that a surprise for tomorrow.” My eyes narrowed. The man was ridiculously disarming. I had nearly, oh so nearly, answered that question.

“The squirming around was as good an indication as any, but you’re right, it’ll be more fun if I do my own research later. Let’s move on. Assuming you were aroused by my antics, I’d get you used to the idea of a little pain first, to see how you coped. A few gentle hand spanks would rain down upon your ass to see how resilient your flesh is. Different skin tones colour up at different rates, and as you don’t have too much flesh covering your bones you will bruise easily, which means I’ll need to be careful. Although we call the session ‘The Ultimate Guide to Pain,’ we try not to leave any lingering marks. I’m not going to lie to you, though. You will feel sore for a couple of days afterwards, but we’ll give you a few tips to manage that.”

He was trying to tell me that I wasn’t going to be able to sit down comfortably for a day or two. I tried to imagine myself with two bright pink ass cheeks, and an involuntary tremor ran through me. It was bizarre. I hadn’t thought about sex for so long, and now I was horribly horny at the thought of a hand slamming against my butt. My poor vibrator was going to get a fast and furious workout tonight, make no mistake.

“The trick with spankings is to start slowly and build up a good, steady rhythm. By the time I’m finished with you, your ass should be a brilliant shade of crimson. If we were talking the ‘Ultimate Guide to Pain Package,’ then I wouldn’t stop until there were tears. Depending on your pain tolerance, I’d

probably move on to a flogger, then a paddle, and if needed, a crop. How does that sound for a warm-up?"

He looked at me inquiringly, and his concentrated focus on my face made it clear he was very interested in my answer. The devil in me responded with more audacity than it should have. I uttered a single word so softly he'd have to strain his ears to hear it, but he was close enough to read my lips. "Tame."

I watched as he sucked in a breath. His eyes slowly blinked, twice. The silence in that second was deafening. Frozen in place, I wondered how he was going to react. Too late, I was just beginning to realise that this man could be very dangerous when pushed.

"That's why it's called a warm-up," he said just as quietly, and he leaned over the table towards me, so close I could smell the exotic warmth of his aftershave. Slowly, I breathed in clary sage and a hint of lime. It was divine, and I had to stop myself inhaling a lungful of the stuff.

"So what happens in act one?" I'd moved further forward, my pose just as aggressive as his, and having his face a hairbreadth away from mine didn't intimidate me in the slightest. It affected me, of course, in a primal, lust-filled, I-need-to-mate-with-this-man kind of way, but I could control that. Just.

"Can I assume you are not going to embrace the BDSM lifestyle after this date?" I did not miss the trace of irony in his voice.

"And why would you assume that?" I queried, batting my eyelashes at him provocatively.

Twirling a loose strand of my hair around his finger, he tugged me closer towards him, and I felt a painful jolt of arousal fly through me. "Because I have never seen someone less suited to becoming a submissive than yourself."

"Well, you know what they say about assuming things, don't you?"

He bared his teeth, and I wasn't sure if it was a smile or a snarl. "It's your ass over my lap tomorrow, and don't you forget it, young lady." He released my hair, and I slowly returned to the safety of my seat back. "I am curious, though. Are you planning on entering the lifestyle? As a Domme, perhaps?"

I smiled. "I'm going to be a submissive. I have a three-week training period to ease me into the lifestyle, and then the fun and games begin. This is just a taster session."

James poured himself another glass of wine as he digested this. He looked like he was having trouble connecting the dots, which was understandable. "Why would you chose an extreme package for a taster, if you're going to be put through weeks of training?"

"Let's just say I'm curious as to how much pain I can handle." It wasn't too far from the truth. When I entered my three weeks service, there would be no

escape, and I needed to know what the worst-case scenarios were up front. If I couldn't make it through two hours of James's time, there'd be no point taking the matter any further.

"Hmm," was his only reply, but his eyes were disbelieving.

My plate was then whisked away from under my nose - I barely even noticed. I had eyes only for James, and my head was miles away, absorbed in fantasy. My body was wet, my mouth was dry, and my skin prickled with vibrant energy. It was like being on top of a precipice and knowing that the only way was down - frightening, but fucking incredible at the same time. For the first time in months, I felt alive, and it was a good feeling.

When the waiter came back, he asked if we wanted dessert and coffee. I was about to refuse his offer, but James interrupted and ordered for both of us. My mouth hung open in shock at his high-handedness. Who did he think he was? As soon as we were alone again, I chewed his head off.

"What on earth are you doing? I am more than capable of ordering my own dessert. For your information, I didn't actually want anything, and it would have been nice to have been asked!"

He grinned at me. "I have a rough idea of what you're capable of. I'm purely demonstrating, in advance, what loss of control is going to do to your head. Tomorrow, this is how it's going to be. I'll be calling the shots and you'll have no choice but to do exactly as I say. You think you can handle that?"

I rolled my eyes at his underhand tactics. "'You'll find out soon enough," I said.

"I'm thoroughly looking forward to it," he replied.

Six

When dessert arrived it was a steaming, frothy raspberry soufflé. It looked heavenly, but I frowned at it. My appetite had all but disappeared these last few months, but how could I resist something so beautiful when it was placed directly under my nose? Guessing that I might need a few calories inside me if I wanted to get through the session tomorrow, I decided that it wouldn't hurt to indulge myself. As it happened, I didn't have any choice in the matter.

"I tell you what. If you eat that up, I'll tell you what might commence after the warm-up has been completed."

He raised his eyebrows at me in challenge, but I hardly needed any more encouragement. Picking up my spoon, I plunged it into the warm mousse and scooped up a generous helping of fluff. "Obeying your every command, oh revered one."

"Good girl," he replied, and those two words sent a shudder down my spine. Already, I could see myself crawling around the floor for him, listening for the smallest sounds of encouragement as I tried my hardest to please him. There was a good chance I might make a much better submissive than he thought. I suspected that in the heat of the moment, I'd do anything to please that beautiful face and body.

"So, after we experiment for a bit, I'll probably up the ante. As you appear to have no limits, our capacity for fun is endless. I have a fully equipped dungeon, and there are all manner of things we could try. Clamps, anal training, forced orgasms, enemas, branding, cattle prods, electro-play, hypoxiphilia, TENS play, or we could even crack open the violet wand."

He wanted to shock me - that much was obvious. Half of what he'd just said could have been in another language for all the sense it made to me. It was probably for the best. I gave him my brightest smile, fed myself another delicious mouthful of soufflé, and said, "Whatever you think best."

"You understood barely a word of that, right?"

Letting the soufflé disintegrate on my tongue, managing to pick out the tartness of the raspberries whilst comparing it against the sweet, creamy meringue, I took my own sweet time in replying. "This is really good," I finally managed, using my spoon to point at my decimated dessert plate.

He gave me a look that was halfway between frustration and anger. For a man whom I suspected rarely lost control, I considered the reaction quite an achievement on my part.

"Do you want to know what I do with really naughty submissives in my care?"

His voice was dangerously low, and I suspected that I wasn't going to like this much.

"Is that a trick question?" I asked, doing my best not to look at him as I scraped the insides of my ramekin out.

He continued talking as if he hadn't heard me. "When they strip naked, I place them in front of a mirror. It's a little mean, because it's when they're feeling the most vulnerable, but I get them in front of a floor-length mirror and tell them to masturbate themselves to the point of orgasm three times. It tells me several things all at once. I get to know how familiar they are with their own bodies, how much stamina they have, and how aroused they are at the thought of me watching."

"The alternative warm-up, huh? What do you do for an encore?" I pushed my plate away, satisfied that I'd scraped the contents clean, and risked a look at him. It was a mistake. He caught me and, like a pair of headlights on a pitch-black night, I was blinded.

He knew he had me. The bastard in front of me was so self-assured and confident that it bordered on arrogance, although I didn't know him well enough to confirm my suspicions. He certainly knew the power his body had over women, and it would be a mistake to underestimate him. His brain also seemed to function better than the average male's, and that was reason enough to be wary.

"I strap innocent-looking girls down upon my medical exam table, uncaring that they have no idea of what they're getting themselves into. I then fasten their wrists in thick black cuffs, and I secure their legs into stirrups so they're spread nice and wide for me." He gave me a wicked grin as he waited for that to sink in, and while I knew he was toying with me, imagining myself being opened for him like that was doing funny things to my libido.

"Then I get out an array of scalpels, tubes, clamps, and speculums, and generally keep you on the edge of orgasm whilst scaring the shit out of you."

Two cups of espresso coffee landed heavily in front us, and the waiter gave James a horrified look. Dumping his silver tray of creamer and sugar in the middle of the table, he ran away as fast as his legs could carry him. Unable to help myself, I dissolved into fits of laughter. James, to his credit, looked a little embarrassed. Covering his eyes with his hands, it was clear he was also laughing.

"I really must remember to lower my voice when saying shit like that," he finally managed to get out, when we'd both recovered.

"Might be prudent," I said, pressing my lips together to prevent further fits of giggles.

“Are you ticklish, by any chance?” He was examining me again, like I was a tiny bug under a microscope, and I knew that everything he learned today would be filed away for later.

“You’ll get your chance to figure that out, hotshot. Right now, I want to hear more about the earlier scenario you were talking about,” I wasn’t entirely sure if that was true, but I was curious, and if I was going to get myself into really deep water, to be forewarned was to be forearmed.

“If I continue, I’m just going to scare the fuck out of you. I can already see it in your eyes. Why don’t you fill out that limits form and we’ll talk about something a little tamer? It’s best to work up to the more intense forms of play. I certainly don’t want you throwing a whitey on me, mid-scene.”

My lips drew together in a puzzled frown. “A what?”

He rolled his eyes. “A white out or grey out. Some people have an adverse reaction to some forms of play, especially if I’m pushing their limits, and pass out. It’s just a mild form of shock, but having unconscious females all over the place is bad for business, as I’m sure you can imagine.”

I snorted to myself. “You’re not going to have that problem with me. You might have other problems, but that won’t be one of them.”

“That’s what you say now, but it might be a whole other kettle of fish when you’re strapped down.” He looked me up and down for about the fiftieth time that day. “You already look like you’re on the verge of passing out, and probably haven’t eaten a decent meal in forever.”

“Well, thank goodness you’ve fed me today, so I’ll be in tip top shape for your evil games tomorrow,” I said. He was right, though. It had been nine months since I had eaten a single meal with more than four hundred calories. Surprisingly, my stomach hadn’t rebelled at the feast before me, but if I was going to get back into racing shape, I would need to pay attention to my nutritional needs. Taking a sip of my coffee,

I inhaled a lungful of black magic and almost swooned. “What is this?” My eyes devoured the contents of the cup in wonder.

“If you go into shock this easily, Ms. Reeves, we have a problem.” Picking up his delicate, black espresso cup, he took a sip of his own. He gave himself a few seconds to consider the flavour. “Citrus with lemon and maple syrup notes, in my opinion. “I’d say it was Ethiopian Sidamo.”

My jaw dropped in awe, but then my look turned disbelieving. “There is no way you can tell the brand of coffee bean from just one sip.” I shook my head.

“The study of coffee has become something of a personal calling, but you can ask the waiter if you don’t believe me.” He looked supremely confident in his

statement, and for some reason, I expected he was right on the money.

“Yeah, right. Like he’s still talking to us,” I eventually said. We both laughed.

“So, what now, Ms. Reeves? Are you finished with your interrogation? Naughty girls need their beauty sleep, I hear.” Those damn eyes were laughing at me again.

“I need a bedtime story first,” I said. “Finish the earlier scenario, and then I promise I’ll let you get *your* beauty sleep. Let’s face it: You need it more than I do.” I gave him a friendly wink.

He looked comically affronted for a moment, but then his wicked gleam was back. “Ms. Reeves. Oh, Ms. Reeves, I am so looking forward to working with you and your smart mouth tomorrow.” He sucked on his bottom lip, and it was all I could do not to reach across the table and eat him. My hands had to clutch the bottom of my chair again to ensure this did not happen.

“C’mon, please?” The pleading note in my voice was strange, even to my ears, and I was beginning to suspect there was more to this BDSM stuff than met the eye. My body currently felt like it was being force-fed oysters, while someone super-charged all the little androgens and estrogens that were floating around, forcing them to watch TV shows containing Damon Salvatore or Charlie Hunnam over and over again. Suffice to say, I was uncomfortably aroused and actively seeking my own destruction, by the looks of it.

“No. You can be a good girl, sit quietly, and we’ll talk about the weather or something.” His tone of voice indicated that was the end of the matter, but I wasn’t about to back down.

Moving forward, my face crowding him inside our little two-seater table, I said, “Seriously. I’ll give you anything you want if you’ll just finish your earlier scene. You have piqued my curiosity.” If my eyes were pleading before, they had now turned Bambi.

He looked at me with one of those looks generally reserved for small children who have been very naughty. It was slightly patronising and a whole lot of exasperated. That turned me on, too. I wanted to slap my forehead at the realisation of what he was doing to me. “One of these days, you’ll learn to think first and act later. You seem to rush into everything you do with a kind of foolhardy energy that will get you, at best, injured, and at worst, killed.”

He was reading me like a book. I think my latest psychological evaluation had my therapist stating nearly the same thing. It was annoying and frustrating. To even out the score in my favour, I pouted at him prettily and hoped for the best.

Eventually, after several seconds of perfecting my pleading look, he caved. “Fine. Anything I want, huh?”

“Anything,” I affirmed breathlessly, knowing that if it was something I couldn’t

handle, the option of running out on him was still available.

He went silent as he considered my request. His head tilted this way and that as he thought about his options and, finally, a hint of a smile crossed his features. Picking up the flickering candle that had been positioned to the left of us, he tipped it from side to side in his hands. I wasn't entirely sure I was going to like where this was going, but I guessed it could have been worse.

"Heard of wax play?" He dropped two spots of wax onto his forearm and didn't bat an eyelid. It set me to wondering whether he could take pain as well as dish it out.

"I'm guessing it doesn't have anything to do with cleaning out your eardrums?" My insouciant grin was guaranteed to annoy him and, sure enough, he gave me an irritated frown in response.

"All of your sarcastic comments are being added up and jotted down in my head. Your buttocks will be on the receiving end of your misbehaviour tomorrow, Ms. Reeves, so bear that in mind."

I grinned at him. "So what do you want me to do? Dribble wax down my arm and try not to cry like a baby?"

He pondered that for a second, then said, "Well, that's not exactly how I'd have put it, but yes, I guess that'll do."

He held out the glass candleholder, and I had to tease it from his fingers. He seemed to enjoy the contact between us, whilst I wanted to shy away from it. When I'd finally wrested it free from his grasp, his hand lingered in mid-air, and he looked lost for a moment. The implacable mask was back seconds later, and I wondered if my mind was playing tricks on me, but I was trained to notice these things. It's not something I would have imagined. The chemistry wasn't one-sided. What a shame. What a fucking shame. In another lifetime, we could have made the marriage altar, if that had ever been a goal of mine, which it hadn't. There was just something about him, something that I wanted to keep for myself. With a shake of my head, I brought myself back to the present and peered into the candleholder.

As I had expected, there was molten wax, and lots of it. The candle had been burning for a couple of hours at least. Now, I could sit here all day and debate the burning temperature of the wax and whether it would be too hot for my skin to bear, or I could just get the fuck on with it. Half of this crap was just mind over matter, anyway. This would be child's play compared to what was in store for me tomorrow, so it was best just to get it over with. That had always been my motto in life. If I'd been afraid of something or someone, I always met the fear head-on. One day, it probably would get me killed.

I pushed my coffee cup to the left of me and sat my forearm across the table.

Starting from my elbow, I quickly drew a long dribble of wax all the way to my wrist before the holder was snatched away from me. I didn't have to look at James to know I'd shocked him. He'd expected me to drip a few little spots on my forearm, whimper prettily, and brush away a few tears. That was not how tomorrow was going to play out.

Blowing upon the meandering path of wax that decorated my arm, I watched it solidify from a clear liquid into a thick, white, raised line. It had stung on impact, but that was about the extent of my discomfort. There was no lingering burn, and unless I was much mistaken, it wouldn't leave a mark. Peeling off a section in my fingertips, I discovered my judgement was correct. There wasn't even the slightest pink tinge to my alabaster flesh. I smiled.

The smile was wiped off my face in an instant. James had grabbed hold of my wrist, and with his other hand he quickly stripped off the rest of the wax. His grip was like cold steel - hard, inflexible, and unforgiving.

"That was incredibly stupid," he barked. "Everyone will react differently to hot wax, which is why you test a few drops first, as I did. What were you trying to prove, exactly?"

I had to force myself to look at him. "You said that I was to dribble wax..."

"No, you said that, and you knew what I meant. You're not an idiot, so don't even try to play that card."

"Fine. I wanted to see what it felt like, and I don't tend to do things half-assed. It stings a little, but I'd hardly call it arousing." I looked at him crossly. The cold eyes before me had not an ounce of warmth in them.

He clucked his tongue as he reined in his temper. "I think I'm going to like you much better when you're tied up and gagged." The look he gave me was reflective, and I knew it wasn't just my body that he wanted naked before him.

"You say the nicest things," I replied, refusing to take the bait.

"Speaking of nice things," he said, "I guess I owe you your end of the bargain. You want the naughty girl scenario, right?" He slowly eased his grip on my wrist and gently ran his fingers down the inside of my forearm. Ten thousand butterflies fluttered beneath my skin, but I dared not snatch my hand away. I was far too curious.

"Yes," I whispered, already imagining myself on the exam table he had mentioned earlier, with my wrists and ankles immobilised, and my legs spread wide in the stirrups. It was strangely both erotic and captivating.

"Medical play is always good fun for shock value. There's nothing quite like a table full of medical implements to scare a submissive witless. Some subbies love a good mind fuck, and if that's what they're aiming for, I can usually deliver. It can play out one of two ways. I can either perform an intimate medical

exam by playing the role of a doctor, or I can concentrate on things like needle play and minor procedures.”

“Minor procedures?” I swallowed over the thick lump that had formed in my throat.

“Piercings, tattoos, suturing, needle corsets. Piercing the skin with a needle triggers lots of lovely hormones such as adrenaline and endorphins. Some submissives find this kind of play intensely pleasurable.” My eyes widened at the list he had just rattled off. Perhaps I should have paid a little more attention to that sheet of limits I’d been handed.

“You have no idea what a pleasure it will be working with someone who will allow me so much freedom in my pursuits.”

The scope of what I’d just granted him was now beginning to dawn on me. I had been a little generous. Perhaps I should take another look at the form.

“I’m curious,” I whispered, mostly because his continued stroking was playing havoc on my body. “Which aspects of BDSM do you perform?”

He took the palm of my left hand and began massaging my index finger. It was a strange feeling, but not unpleasant. “I like the hardcore aspects, which is why you got me when you booked ‘The Ultimate Guide to Pain.’ The more sensual aspects are performed by some local dominants and dommes that I employ.”

“What do you consider sensual?” I was very interested in the answer - mostly because I wanted to know what kind of things he didn’t particularly relish doing.

He waved his free hand in the air in a desultory manner and laughed. “Lacy blindfolds, aromatherapy massage, heart-shaped paddles, and fluffy cuffs. To each their own, but my sessions tend to be a little more intense. I don’t usually deal with newbies. You might be the exception to that rule, but only because my curiosity has gotten the better of me.”

“So the more intense a scene, the better, from your point of view?” He was working his way through my fingers, and the feeling was actually quite pleasurable now. My hand was feeling warm, loose, and relaxed. When he occasionally flicked his thumb over the pulse point in my wrist, I had to bite down to stop a moan from escaping.

“Yes. As I’ve mentioned before, I want to break you. I want you screaming down the walls for mercy because the thought of another orgasm is as terrifying as it is pleasurable. I want to take you to your absolute limit and force you past it, to a world you never thought you could enter. I’ll push your boundaries and you’ll see stars, but with any luck you’ll want more. Ninety-nine percent of the women who see me are repeat visitors, and I have one of the best reputations in the business. I’m careful with my research and pretty good at figuring out what makes people tick.”

“And have you found out what makes me tick?”

“Not yet, but I’ve barely even started. Rest assured, I will.”

His voice held a worrying degree of certainty behind it.

Seven

When I returned to my apartment that evening, my body was singing with unspent energy. James' effect on me was so bad, I wanted to hump my coffee table, and that was saying something. Practically running to the kettle, I shoved it under the tap and smacked the switch down. Camomile tea. It was supposed to be calming and soothing, and it was the closest I'd get to what I really wanted, which was copious amounts of alcohol. Unfortunately, years of training had taught me that in high stress situations, you needed to have all your wits about you, and alcohol, or indeed its aftereffects, weren't going to help me get through my little situation tomorrow.

No, but several orgasms might. I literally watched the kettle boil while I jumped frantically up and down. My clit was throbbing in earnest, and all I wanted to do was give it some much-needed attention, but I had to get my cup of post-climatic tea first. There was no way I was getting out of my bed once I'd settled down under my duvet, so when the sound of boiling could finally be heard, my eyes lit up with avid delight.

Clutching my tea tightly, I practically ran to my bedroom. This was not a particularly smart move whilst carrying a hot beverage, but somehow I made it there unscathed. Settling my mug down on a coaster, I then tore through my underwear drawer, knowing that a vibrator or two would be nestled around somewhere in amongst the panties and bras. Sure enough, when most of the floor was covered in a carpet of black and white lace, a rabbit vibrator came into view. Hallelujah! Fighting through the sea of crepe de chine that covered me, I finally managed to get free of the thing, and it was also unceremoniously dumped on the floor. I had no time for niceties, and I couldn't even be bothered to take off my underwear. Instead, I took a flying leap upon the bed and switched my rabbit to its highest setting. Using my left hand to scrape my panties aside, I rammed it against my clit in a feverish haste. I came within thirty seconds. It took a further three orgasms before my body felt exhausted enough to sleep. The ferocity of my climaxes had taken me by surprise, because my libido had been entirely absent for the past nine months or so. It appeared that James had awakened it, and instead of coming to slowly, it was demanding that the time lost be made up immediately and in triplicate. I almost felt sorry for James.

The next morning, after a solid ten hours of sleep, I felt a burst of anxiety at the afternoon ahead. It was more a fear of the unknown than anything else, but I was

always a firm believer in the adage “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” I could handle anything that James dished out for me on the pain front, of that I was certain, but there were other aspects that frightened me.

The stripping naked thing for starters, and that was only the tip of the iceberg. Following orders, having someone I didn’t know play about with my most intimate parts, and trying not to scream the place down if I saw him come at me with a needle were all high up on my list. The humiliation aspect also didn’t sit well with me, and if he expected me to masturbate in front of him, we were going to enter stalemate territory, but he’d find that out soon enough.

Everything that happened that morning was mechanical, but I had long been used to robot mode. The toaster beeped, and I added butter and marmalade to the bread. A glass of orange juice followed, although I had no real desire to eat or drink. A sixth sense told me that my session with James was going to be very demanding, and that even if I didn’t feel like eating, it was important to get as many calories as possible into me before this afternoon. I’d never forgive myself if I fainted. A cup of coffee and a bath followed, allowing me time to primp and preen to the best of my ability. Nikki, my beauty therapist, had given me a bikini wax a couple of days ago, but I was diligent in my search and eradication of any other strands of body hair that dared to show themselves. Soap, shampoo, water, and moisturiser followed. I was going to smell like a goddamned florist’s shop, but at least I wouldn’t be covered in thick waves of nauseating, expensive scent. I wasn’t allowed to wear it for my job, so I refrained from buying it. I’d probably saved myself a fortune over the years.

Taking a ridiculously long time over-styling my brunette locks, I tamed them into sleek, long lines with the help of my GHD straighteners. Deciding my makeup needed just as much attention to detail, I got out all manner of pots and brushes, and applied it like a pro. I went for the temptress look. It took an age to get it right, but when I was finished, my eyes looked huge surrounded in black kohl, my skin looked flawless, and my lips had more red on them than one of London’s traditional double-decker buses. Deciding there was no point spending much time on my wardrobe choice, considering it was going to spend the majority of the session lying on the floor, I settled for a pair of jeans and a soft, black cashmere sweater. The colour matched my mood.

Having achieved all of that, I then stomped around my apartment aimlessly for a few minutes. Now what the hell was I supposed to do? I had three hours before I needed to leave, and that was a long time when your nerves were doing an internal combustion thing. My skin felt fevered, and I knew my cheeks were flushed. Thank God the makeup would hide that, although I didn’t know why I was so worried. He knew I was attracted to him. He saw far too much. After a

couple of hours of climaxing, wriggling, struggling, not to mention sweat and tears, he'd see everything - every little thing.

My thoughts were a tangled mess of confusion and anxiety. One moment I wanted to ring up and cancel, and in the next I wanted to storm into his office and demand he see me now. I just wanted to get it over with. After our chat last night, I suspected there was a good chance that I might actually enjoy it, and that worried me even more. If I had an incredible orgasm in the midst of James Leverett's science project, what did that say about me?

For the first time in my life, I wondered if I was about to have a panic attack, and then laughed at myself for being so stupid. Anyone who managed to achieve the nickname of "Ice Queen" at work was unlikely to succumb to hyperventilation at the thought of a little bondage. If I could kill people in cold blood and not give a flying fuck, I would breeze through a short session of ropes and cuffs. Besides, I had no choice. If I wanted to get through my psychological assessment and be handed my next assignment, there was no other alternative. Right now, I needed a distraction, and preferably one that would dispel my feelings of anxiety. I knew just the thing.

Tying my hair back in a ponytail, I stripped off my clothes and put a neon purple tank top and a matching pair of running tights on. All of my hours of hard work would be for nothing, but I didn't much care. Strapping my iPhone to the waistband of my leggings and donning a pair of bright pink trainers, it wasn't long before I shot out the front door, and I didn't look back.

As my feet thundered along the paved streets of London, a blissful feeling of calm returned. Running was cathartic for me. It chewed up and spit out stress faster than any drug I knew, and for some reason my mind seemed to work better as my blood began to pump double-time around my body. It's therapy. If I was out for an hour-long run, I got time to think or daydream about whatever I wanted. The hunk off the TV, how the thriller I'm currently reading might end, or how I'll deal with the next assignment that is always winging its way to me. I guess it's helpful, because I always feel great when I've eaten up a few miles and got a good sweat going on.

Today was no different. I felt better as soon as my feet stepped outside the front door, but organising my thoughts proved difficult. They always came back to James, and I wanted to stay away from that particular topic, seeing as he was the cause of my angst at the moment. Trying to concentrate on admiring the countryside, I turned my attention to people watching. The people of London were endlessly fascinating. Tall, short, fat, thin, gay, straight, punk, fetish, elderly, young... there was always someone interesting to watch. Today proved no exception. I hadn't run more than half a mile before an adult male appeared

walking around Victoria Park in a Spiderman onesie, sporting a pair of bright red Doc Martins. He had a copy of the Daily Mail in one hand and a can of Diet Coke in the other. I waved and smiled at him on my way past, and he waved back, surprisingly enough. Most people in London do not smile or wave. I have learnt this over the years. Everyone is far too busy for that kind of thing. Before my hour was up, I added a woman walking around in a pair of leather panties and thigh-high boots and a Santa Claus. Considering it was April, he was exceptionally early for his shift, I thought.

When I got back to my apartment, I almost felt like my old self again. It wouldn't last, but for the moment, my blood was singing around my body and I felt refreshed and alive. I was ready to face the world, after I'd had a shower, of course.

Eight

Approaching the glass frontage of Elite Encounters, my mask was once again firmly in place. It had only been a short hop on the tube, and my time was spent surfing the net. The first thing I researched was Richard Mullane. I'd meant to last night, but I'd been so horny that had flown right out of the window. If James was going to ask me any more questions about him, I wanted to be prepared.

Searching through Google images I finally managed to find a picture of the man. I winced and then groaned out loud, making the old lady next to me shuffle up a couple of inches. It was a plus - she smelled of stale cigarettes and mothballs. What wasn't so good was the fact that Richard Mullane was about thirty years old and had platinum blond hair. Clearly they started young in advertising. Fuck. Fuck. Fuckity fuck. So James Leverett knew I had been lying all along. How did I miss that? He'd given absolutely nothing away, and that tended to indicate the man was as skilled at subterfuge as I was, which meant I was in lots of trouble. Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.

Mullane's face blurred in front of me as I considered my next move. Turn around and go home or brazen it out. I rubbed my forehead as I considered my predicament. So he knew I was a liar. So what? I bet half of his clients told far bigger lies than I did. Well, a quarter at least. They weren't going to advertise the fact they were kinky, were they? He was probably used to it, which is why he didn't even bat an eyelid. I was just a number. Get a grip, I told myself. Switching my phone off, I tossed it in my satchel and tried not to think about the afternoon ahead.

When I entered Elite Encounters, I was frozen to the bone, even though the ambient temperature outside was close to eighteen degrees Celsius. It must have been my blood pressure plummeting through the floor as the revolving door sucked me in and spat me out. I staggered a couple of steps towards the receptionist, and I swear the twenty-year-old brunette looked at me as if I was drunk.

"Are you okay?" Her eyes looked me up and down, and obviously I was not one of the usual clients that frequented James's sessions. She, on the other hand, was all poised elegance, wearing a fitted navy Chanel suit and high-heeled pumps, accompanied by bright pink fingernails. I immediately felt inferior, and I was wearing red lipstick.

"I'm fine," I said with a weak smile. "It's my first time and I'm a bit nervous." It wasn't a lie. I pushed my black leather satchel over my shoulder and smoothed out some non-existent wrinkles in my skin-tight jeans, wondering what I was

supposed to do next.

She smiled at me kindly. "I'm sure it won't be your last. James is very good at what he does." The smile I tried to give her in return nearly cracked my lips. I refrained from telling her that I wouldn't be coming back to sample James's many talents again, however.

"Umm, do I go straight through, or should I wait here for James?" My voice wobbled slightly and I swallowed.

"You can follow me. I'll show you to the playroom and leave you to strip. There are some coat hooks, and you'll find a chair to the left of the door where you can leave your things. James will expect you to be kneeling on the floor with your arms folded behind your back when he enters."

"Right." Another swallow.

"My name's Annalise, by the way," she said.

I couldn't help but wonder if that was her real name, but I smiled at her back and followed the sharp click of her heels. We moved quickly down a long corridor, and there were large wooden doors to the left and right of me. They were numbered with brass letters, but there was nothing else to indicate their use. I had to go all the way down to the end of the corridor before my room came into view. Number ten. So that meant that ten sessions could be going on at the same time. I wondered if I'd be able to hear anyone else screaming, before dismissing the random thought.

"This is your room," she said unnecessarily. "Do you have any questions before you go in?"

I had hundreds, but I wasn't going to voice any of them to her. "No, no questions. Thank you, Annalise."

She gave me a nod and a smile, turned around on a heel, and bounced away. I put my hand on the door handle, asked myself for the thousandth time that day if this was a really good idea, and then pushed it open. My decision had been made yesterday. Now I just had to go through with it.

When the door closed behind me, I felt more scared than I had ever been in my life. Considering that I regularly dance with murderers and kill in cold blood, this is a big deal to me for some reason. I am scared of feeling something for the first time in months, but I am also scared of not feeling anything. I am scared that this session will work, and drowning in anxiety that it won't. The loss of control frightens me, but conversely excites me at the same time. I'm beginning to wonder if I have finally taken on more than I can handle, before shaking my head firmly. I can do anything. Well, nearly anything. I draw the line at skydiving without a parachute.

As my eyes slowly take in the space around me, my mouth hangs open. The

room is full of all sorts of interesting pieces of apparatus, and I whistle through my teeth as gleaming steel frames and bolts blind me. It's more to do with the harsh LED lighting above, but the effect is dazzling. There's also lots of black leather, a wall full of paddles and whips, and a large wooden X-frame. The exam table that James talked about is tucked neatly to the rear of the room, but features a pristine white mattress, stirrups, and heavy restraints. I start breathing a whole lot faster than I should and close my eyes. *Get undressed, idiot.*

The chair and coat hooks that Annalise mentioned are indeed to the left of me, and I swing my satchel off my shoulders and open it up. It's time to fill it with my clothes. The black sweater comes off first, and my lace bra swiftly follows it. I sit on the red plastic chair, which looks rather out of place considering all the leather everywhere, and remove my flat ballet pumps. Wriggling out of my jeans, I fold all of my clothes loosely and stuff them in my bag. *Take off your panties. Oh God, deep breath, you can do this.* Standing up, I hook two thumbs under either side of the black panties and drag them over my butt and down my legs. I practically throw them in my bag in my hurry to buckle it up. Perhaps I won't feel quite as naked when I'm sitting down.

I opt for the middle of the room and sink to the floor. I remember Annalise's words – you need to be kneeling on the floor with your arms folded behind your back. I follow her instructions to the best of my ability. It is not a particularly comfortable position. The floor is hard, wooden and cold. My right hand grips my left elbow and vice versa, and this action seems to push my chest out. *Good luck with that, James,* I almost smirk. I haven't got an awful lot to admire in that department. Sighing, I try to relax. Now that I have followed all instructions to the letter, there is nothing left to do but wait.

Although it seems like forever, the watch on my wrist tells a different story. The second hand ticks softly with precision workmanship, and though I urge it to move faster, it ignores me. I desperately want to fidget, but instead I breathe deeply. There are cameras in this room. Although I surreptitiously noted four to the rear of the room on entry, there was no way of obtaining an accurate figure without being obvious about my observations. A girl in advertising shouldn't be able to spot covert IP cameras, and even though James already knew that for a lie, I wasn't going to give him any more clues. I'd play the silly girl game, and he could draw his own conclusions.

Closing my eyes, I straightened my back and tried to clear my mind of the swirling rubbish that insisted on residing there. It was obvious that he was going to make me wait, so I might as well use my time productively. Employing some meditation and breathing exercises, I managed to get some perspective on the situation and calm myself down. *Whatever happens, I have a safe word. One*

word and I'll be out of here. It wouldn't come to that, but the bottom line was that this was a reputable agency and James wasn't going to do anything I didn't want him to. He would push, yes, but that was to be expected. All I needed to do was to rely on my training and keep my wits about me. How hard could it be?

When the door opened behind me, there was no sound. The only indication that another person was in the room was a draft of air against my back. Remaining ramrod straight, I didn't move a muscle, but my heart was considering an escape plan outside of my body.

There was a pause, and then heavy footsteps began approaching. The first thing I saw was a pair of black leather boots, and as my eyes trailed up from the floor, my vision swam with black - black jeans and a black dress shirt. Did he think he was going to a funeral?

"Head down." He placed his hand against the top of my head and pushed down, as if I was an imbecile who couldn't understand direct orders. My eyes stared at the wood grain beneath me and smarted. This was a mistake.

His voice softened. "You never look a dominant directly in the eye unless you're ordered to. Etiquette generally requires that your eyes be dipped towards the floor. Judging by your inability to look at me yesterday, I shouldn't think you'll have too many problems with that. Right, stand up."

I got to my feet unsteadily, mostly because my hands were still behind my back, but eventually I stood tall and awaited his next command. My eyes were firmly on the floor, and my cheeks were flaming.

"Look at me."

James had barely been in the room thirty seconds and already I found him infuriating. "You just said I wasn't to look you in the eye unless..." My voice trailed off as I realised my own mistake.

His lips twitched. "You have two ears and one mouth, young lady. If you want to survive this session, you'll need to listen twice as much as you try to speak. Failure to do so will have... consequences."

The way he said consequences made me shiver, but I still couldn't bring my eyes up to his. Gah. I needed to get over this. A finger under my chin solved the problem for me. "How do you feel?"

My mouth opened, but it took me a couple of seconds to formulate a sentence. He waited patiently whilst I drank in the sight of his face and the view that his open shirt provided. My eyes trailed up his abs, which I was not at all surprised by, and then they found an intricate web of tattoos. It was official. The man was swoon worthy, and could probably model for Versace. Reluctantly raising my head up to his beautiful face, which hadn't seen a razor since yesterday, I found

his piercing blue eyes once more. They went right through me. “Umm, nervous, tense, and a little bit of scared witless,” I said.

He raised an eyebrow, “Did you fill out that limits form?”

I shook my head, and his expression was furious. I resisted the urge to laugh hysterically. I was getting emotional, which was exactly why I had come here, but it was far too soon. The effect the man had on me was startling.

“Then you have every right to be nervous, because I am an utter bastard.” James looked downright evil as he spoke, and I didn’t doubt his words.

“Then show me what you can do,” I whispered.

His mouth hardened into a tight line at my insolence. Grabbing a fistful of my hair, he placed his hand in the small of my back and marched me over to a padded leather bench. “Drape yourself over that. Legs stay on the floor, shoulder width apart, and your arms should be stretched out in front of you.” It was clear that Mr. Nice Guy had left the building, though I wasn’t really sure he had ever entered. James Leverett didn’t look like the type to play fair. He looked more like my type, but that didn’t mean I wanted to date him. He just had a ruthless air about him, and he struck me as one of those guys that didn’t only want to win, but needed to. I suspected he pushed the envelope in every direction and took no prisoners. He was exactly what I needed right now.

Obedying his orders, I pressed my naked body into the firm, cool leather and stretched out. I felt less naked like this, although the thought was absurd. When a band of leather circled my left ankle, I jumped. He didn’t make a sound behind me, but I could almost imagine what he was thinking. She’s a crackpot, and she’s going to lose her shit within ten minutes. I had news for him. It would take the full two hours, possibly more, if he wanted to “break me” as he put it, though I hoped not. Another band of leather encircled my other foot.

“How long do you think you’ll last, Ms. Reeves?”

Ha! I was right on the money. He came around to face me, and though he stared at my eyes intently, I made him wait for my answer.

“Probably the full two hours.”

“I have news for you. No one has ever lasted the full two hours with me.” Another band imprisoned me, this time around my wrist.

“Ooh, a challenge,” I said, and I had to bite my tongue from saying anything more.

“Do you know, Ms. Reeves, never has a pert backside looked so damned inviting.”

I laughed. The last band was fastened, and I tested them for good measure. “I think they’ll hold,” I said impishly.

“I know they will. What I’m more worried about is whether you’ll hold it

together. I'm going to be very disappointed if you safe-word within the first ten minutes." I couldn't see his face behind me, but I guessed he was rolling his eyes.

"You wish. I'll hold it together. I just hope you have the stamina to keep up with me." The truth was, I'd been holding it together for so long, I seemed to be physically unable to do anything else. That was my problem.

He snorted. "We'll see about that."

Then James did something unexpected. He began to unbuckle my wristwatch.

"Hey, I need that," I complained.

"That's why I'm removing it," he said. "You may have noticed there are no clocks in this room. There's a reason for that. I don't want you to know how much time is left in the session. For the next two hours, you are going to live for the moment, and besides, you'll be far too busy to clock watch." Pulling it away from my hand, he walked over to the corner of the room and pushed it through the opening in my bag.

Then he came back and took a handful of my hair again, but this time he held it gently in his fingers. "I'm going to tie it up so it doesn't get caught in anything." Threading his fingers through my straightened hair, he gathered it all up neatly and fastened an elastic band to the nape of my neck, making a long ponytail. He then doubled this up, which formed a makeshift bun.

"Remind me of your safe words again. I find I'm very keen to begin reddening your backside, Ms. Reeves."

Resting my chin upon the soft, cool leather of the bench, I took a deep lungful of air and said, "They haven't changed since yesterday." I knew damn well he hadn't forgotten. He was just making sure that I hadn't.

Behind me, James cleared his throat. "You are not the first submissive to play hardball with me, Ms. Reeves, but by the end of this session, I will have you compliant, or so help me God, I'll offer you a refund."

I shot up in the air as he began to run his hands up the length of my body. He started at my calves, kneading and massaging, and then moved up to my ass. I'd expected his hands to be slapping my backside by now, so the gentle pressure was surprising. The man was clearly trying to keep me off balance. I couldn't deny that it felt good, though. Little shivers of tantalising delight were creeping up my spine, and it was with shock that I realised I was already wet. It was a little embarrassing, and I had to work hard to keep my moans inside my mouth.

Continuing his gentle path, he pressed along each vertebrae of my spine for a few seconds before he moved upwards. My shoulders were treated to more of the same bliss from his fingertips, before he finally wrapped his hands around my neck. My eyes widened.

“Are you going to answer my earlier question, Lois, or shall I start fighting dirty?” His two thumbs pressed gently upon my trachea to let me know he was serious, and a feeling of utter helplessness coursed through me. It had been a long time since I’d felt such an emotion. It was sobering. His thumbs pressed a little harder at my hesitation to answer, and I almost choked.

“Traffic light system,” I spluttered. “Green, yellow, red.”

The fingers were immediately removed, but the aftereffects still lingered. The hairs on the back of my neck prickled, and I was now in red alert mode.

“So you can listen. That’s good to know.”

I growled. “Nasty trick.”

“I’m full of them, sweetheart. Each time you push, I’ll shove right back.”

I believed him.

“Okay, now that I have your attention, I’m going to begin the warm-up. I’ll also give you a word of advice, which I wouldn’t normally do, but I am conscious that you are a novice. Listen up, Lois. Do not tense your body. Relax into the spanking. The pain will build up in increments, and at first you won’t notice yourself straining, but take it from me - the more you fight it, the more it will hurt.”

No more words were forthcoming from James. Before I’d had a chance to compose myself, I felt the sting of his palm in the sweet spot of my butt. I’m not going to lie - the contact stung, but it was bearable. He alternated each ass cheek from right to left with impressive speed for a few seconds, probably warming me up as he so elegantly put it, and then he slowed down, which thankfully stopped my teeth rattling in my head and allowed me to process each smack.

Soon, I began to tingle all over, and somehow the spanking that James was administering was connecting the dots all over my body with an intensity that was frightening. My skin started to flush, and the heat began to build. James’s palm was firm and unyielding, and it unerringly hit the same spot. It wasn’t long before each smack began to burn.

It was an insidious heat. It began with a few flickering flames, moved on to a well-tended blaze, and before I knew it, my backside had turned into the mouth of a live volcano. My whole body stiffened painfully in preparation for each new smack, and I realised I was doing exactly what James had told me not to. If I didn’t do something soon, this session was going to be over before it had barely begun, and that would be hideously embarrassing. My pride wouldn’t let me surrender so soon, even if my ass was screaming at the top of its lungs.

With a conscious effort, I managed to relax. I let myself fall back into the bench and began my meditation breathing exercises once more. James was right - as soon as I released the tension from the coiled spring that my body had

become, the pain was more manageable. It didn't go away - don't get me wrong, but if I focused on it, I could contain the spreading fire.

"What's your name?"

The question shocked me. My body instantly tensed up again, and my eyes watered.

"Lois Reeves," I stammered.

The spanking stopped, and I breathed a silent sigh of relief.

"We both know that's not your real name. I am also certain you do not work in advertising, and that's not just because you can't describe your boss. That was sloppy preparation, by the way, Lois. If you're going to lie, make sure you do your research thoroughly." He made a clucking sound with his tongue. "So, what am I going to do with you?"

Oh my God. My head was whirling. He had seen through me. He was far more astute than I realised. Beginning to wonder if I'd made a terrible mistake in coming here, I felt my blood pressure rocket.

"Relax, Lois. I'm not here to learn your secrets. Well, not those stored inside your head." His fingers trailed over the reddened globes of my ass, and my body strained against the cuffs as I tried to escape his touch. It was a mixture of pain and suffocating arousal that those hands dealt, and I didn't know which was worse.

"I think you're enjoying yourself, Lois. It's too much fun seeing you spread naked and squirming."

"I have not been squirming," I said, outraged, because it taken nearly every ounce of willpower I had to remain still.

"I think you need to be punished."

"I am being punished," I groaned. "My backside stings like someone's dragged it along a mile of tarmac."

He laughed. "Not yet it doesn't, but it will, Lois. Until I have my answers, I am going to work you over with a deadly kind of enthusiasm. You'll learn to love it as much as you hate it by the time I've finished with you." He pinched the top of my butt cheek to let me know he was serious, before his fingers ran down the dipped valley of my ass. "Are you wet for me, I wonder?"

His fingers trailed lower, and I knew where they were headed. I groaned at the thought of him feasting his eyes between my legs. Humiliation warred with arousal, and I was pretty certain I knew which one was going to win. When two fingers slid into me, with no resistance whatsoever, I wanted to bury my face into the leather in front of me. To make matters worse, James had beautifully long fingers, and they felt amazing inside me. A whimper of need escaped, and there was nothing I could do to hide it.

“You’re drenched, Lois.” I heard footsteps, and then there he was, looming in front of me. “So beautiful. So wet.” He placed his middle and index finger on my bottom lip. “Suck them. I want you to taste yourself.”

I moaned in heat at those words, and as soon as my mouth opened, he thrust his fingers inside me. Sucking upon them hard, I watched him smile.

“Good girl. Suck them clean. That’s right.” He patted my head with his free hand in a condescending manner, but I didn’t care. My whole body was alive with tormented need. “How do you taste, Lois? Tell me.”

He pulled his fingers from my mouth with an audible pop and waited for my reply. I was face to face with the crotch of his jeans, and the bulge I saw there confirmed that he was not unaffected by me. Good. I didn’t want this to be one-sided.

“Salty, musky, sweet, and syrupy. I like it,” I added, surprised.

“Good. Now look at me,” he said quietly.

I had to strain my head upward to reach his face, but when I did so, he was smiling, and that was when I found him at his most devastating.

“Are you anywhere close to safe-wording yet?”

“No,” I whispered, breathing hard and wishing he would get on with our session. I was beginning to crave one of those orgasms he had mentioned yesterday. I had a feeling they were going to blow my mind.

“Then clearly I haven’t done my job properly. Okay, how can we rectify this? Tell you what, I’ll let you choose... the paddle, the flogger, or the riding crop?”

My breath caught. I looked at the wall and examined row upon row of wooden, plastic, and leather implements. Remembering our conversation from yesterday, I recalled him saying that he would normally use the flogger next, so I guessed I’d opt for that. I wasn’t feeling quite as brave as I had been this morning, so increasing my pain tolerance in small increments might be a wise idea.

When a hand squeezed my left ass cheek, I yelped.

“Well, Lois? Don’t keep me waiting.” He had a handful of my flesh firmly grasped between his fingers, and I had to blink twice before I managed to get my mouth to cooperate.

“The flogger,” I mewled.

Sucking in a hiss of breath as he released his grip, I watched him stride over to the wall. The man looked like a fucking god dressed up in the black getup he wore, and I had a rare moment to myself, dribbling over his pert backside. Men didn’t do things like this to me. Ever. For the first time in my life, my hormones had made an appearance, and I wasn’t sure if I liked the experience.

“I think we’ll go with this one,” he said, picking up a short, black leather flogger with a woven handle. He swished it through the air experimentally a

couple of times, and I found myself wincing already. I wondered how many minutes I'd managed to endure so far and bit my lip.

James, as per normal, instantly read my mind. "Five minutes down, one hour and fifty-five minutes to go. Time to get on with the warm-up, Lois."

Five minutes! It had seemed like much, much longer than that. I instantly began to have doubts as to whether I'd last the whole session, and it had barely begun. This was so unlike me that I had to do a double take for a second.

"Nice choice, by the way. With the flogger, I can warm up your back, the sides of your breasts, the tops of your thighs, and your ass. You're going to be tingling all over by the time I'm finished, but first, I'm going to have a little fun with you."

"You mean you're not already?" I said dryly, rattling the cuffs around my wrists and ankles.

"Not nearly enough, Lois."

There was a chuckle, and I figured that was not a good sound. I heard him walking around behind me, and before I knew what was happening, something impossibly large was being pressed into my pussy.

"What the hell?" I squawked, and my backside bounced up and down in the air as if there was a possibility of avoiding the intruder.

"Stay still, Lois. It's just a dildo. I'm going to fill you up and watch you squirm." With one hand on my ass pressing me down into the leather, he slowly twisted the large plastic dildo inside me. I had no idea how big that thing was behind me, but it felt enormous... and... wonderful. There must have been a tapered end to its design, because with a final firm push, it slotted itself neatly inside of me.

"Does it feel good?"

"Umm..." I said. It did feel good, too good if I were honest, but I saw no reason to tell him that.

"That good, huh? Well, let's see if it feels better now." He swatted my ass firmly with his hand, making me yelp, and suddenly my insides began to shake.

"What the hell..." I mumbled to myself, as the whole of my nether regions appeared to have taken on a life of their own.

"It's a remote control vibrating dildo." The man sounded remarkably pleased with himself. "I can up the intensity like this..." he said, and I squeaked as my eyeballs began rolling about in my head, "or I can change the pattern of the vibrations like that." I was positive someone had just taken a jackhammer to my small intestine. The thing inside me was industrial grade and dangerous.

"You... can't..." I had to take a breath because breathing had suddenly become really difficult, "buy-things-like-this-in-the-shops." The last half of the sentence

sounded like one very long word. It was almost impossible to believe, but already I was on the cusp of orgasm.

“No, we have them specially made for our purposes. But if you think that’s good, just wait until I get the wand.”

Oh, God. If this was mediocre by his standards, I wasn’t at all sure I wanted to find out what the wand could do.

“I have one question before I begin round two.” James dragged the flogger over the back of my neck, and his fingernail traced a slow path up my spine. His touch was electric. Squatting down in front of me, he waited until his eyes were level with mine before he spoke. “Have you had anal sex before, Lois?”

My cheeks exploded with heat. It took me a moment before I summoned enough courage to answer that question. “Umm... why does that matter? You’ve already mentioned you aren’t going to have sex with me.” I had a feeling I was going to have to answer him regardless, but I wanted to put that moment off for as long as possible.

“I’m not. The question is important, however, because it will indicate what size butt plug I will begin our session with. If you choose not to answer, I’ll just go with large and hope for the best.” He pulled out a massive, jelly-like, black rubber thing from his pocket and waved it in front of my face. “Does this look good for starters?” The smile on his face was nothing short of monstrous.

I just gaped at him. Speaking was a little beyond me at that point.

“Lois? Last chance. Have you had anal before? I’m more than happy to start hammering this in...”

“No,” I whimpered. “Never.” My face had just turned an unpleasant shade of grey.

“This is why you fill out the limits form, Lois. Then I’d have known you were an anal virgin.” James shook his head. “Okay, I’ll go easy on you. We’ll start with a slightly smaller one.”

That didn’t exactly inspire me with confidence. As James disappeared from sight, I tried madly to crane my neck around and find out what was happening, but the cuffs and stretched nature of my body would not cooperate. I was left high and dry, and for all intents and purposes, blind.

“You keep yourself in awfully good shape for an advertising exec,” James commented. “Judging by the muscle tone on your body, you spend most of your time engaged in physical activity, which doesn’t really fit with an office-based job.”

I would have snapped back some reply about me being a fitness freak, but he chose that moment to smear freezing cold lube inside my ass, and that put an end to any small talk.

Squirming madly under the single finger inside me, unsure of whether I was feeling pleasure or pain at his touch, James slapped my backside again. It was hard enough that I stilled instantly.

“Stop that. It’s only a little plug, and I’ll go slowly. If you keep thrashing around, I’ll get the crop out, and believe me when I say you won’t like that much.”

I believed him. Lying as still as I could, I panted heavily as one finger became two. James didn’t play fair. He had one hand underneath me working my clit whilst this was going on, not to mention the dildo that was playing havoc with my internal organs. I curled my body up as tight as a bowstring and felt each jarring movement within me.

“Shhh, Lois. Stop fighting me. It’ll go easier on you if you relax.” I took him at his word, mainly because my body was getting tired of being held so rigidly. Once I’d gotten used to the feeling of his fingers inside me, I was surprised to find he was right. Loosening up my muscles and allowing myself to lie back down on the bench, it wasn’t long before I found myself close to orgasm again. There were delicious licks of pleasure flowing all through my body, and the vibrations were heavenly. Just as I thought I might explode, however, something cold was pressed up against my back passage, and before I had time to tense, James pushed it quickly forward. It slid in easily enough, bar the last centimetre or so, which was splintering pain, but the pressure of James’s hand was unrelenting and I had no option but to accept it inside me. The heavy pressure now bearing down made my ass rocket up into the air, and I yelped.

“Take it out,” I whimpered. My hips bounced against the bench as if that might somehow dislodge the intruder, but it didn’t move an inch.

“You’re not the one who gives the orders around these parts. Try and remember that.” He then twirled the plug around inside me, and I grimaced. “Relax. You’ll soon get used to it. The first time is always the worst, and it’s almost a kindness to go quickly rather than slow, but I have a feeling you’ll come to enjoy being filled. Most of the girls I work with do.”

I was about to give him a pithy reply about the likelihood of a next time, but then the plug in my ass began to vibrate, joining forces with its friend. I immediately lost the power of speech.

“Now we’ll begin.”

The flogger cascaded down upon my back in earnest, as if making sure I wouldn’t commit the grave error of talking back to its owner. There was little chance of that. After the first couple of stinging blasts, my whole body went into hypersensitive mode, and the only thing I could do was pant and grit my teeth. Thud, thud, thud. The swats were carefully aimed to cover every inch of me, and

the man was making sure I felt them. After a few minutes, I sank into the bench and forced myself to relax, inhaling the scent of warm leather and sweat. There was reason to be thankful that my stamina level was impressive, because I was starting to wonder how long James could wield that thing for. Thud, thud, thud. The fire inside my body began to build once more, and as soon as he concentrated his attention on my already reddened ass, I nearly blasted off into orbit. The flogger was not in the least bit fussy about what it hit. Its tails pressed each of my plugs into me and licked around my spread open sex and clit. It was in one moment excruciating agony, and in the next some of the most intense pleasure I have ever known – but it was never quite enough. Quite simply put, I was desperate for an orgasm. The trouble was, I would rather have died than admit that to him, so I lay there quietly and took all the punishment he could muster. The word yellow had been on my lips at least twice before he finally paused for thought.

“I hate to say this, but you’re impressing me, Lois. A part of me wondered whether I’d have you in tears by now, but I can see that you’re made of sterner stuff. I think it’s probably time we moved on to phase three. Is there anything you want to ask me before we move right along?” So I was in no doubt as to his meaning, he dragged the tails of the flogger gently up my left inner thigh, then let them settle upon my clitoris, which was screaming for release. I squeaked.

Taking a deep breath, in and out, I managed a cool reply. “No, nothing,” I said brightly, but far too quickly. It couldn’t be helped.

He laughed in response. “Well played, Lois. I wouldn’t have granted you your request, in any case. There’ll be plenty of time for that kind of thing later.” He then set about releasing my restraints. When he reached my wrists, he brushed the sodden mass of my fringe away from my forehead and put his face in front of mine. His lips seemed to move in slow motion, and when I heard his voice, it was deceptively kind and soft. “Lois, when I finish untying you, I want you to slowly slide back down the bench and crawl over to the exam table. My reasons are twofold. One, I get to watch your ass wiggle, and two, if you do decide to faint you won’t have far to fall.”

My face must have been a picture. It was a mixture of ‘you must be fucking joking’ combined with ‘the exam table sounds really scary.’ James clearly didn’t know what to make of my expression, either.

“Are you going to prove difficult, Lois?” His face bore a serious look, but I was sure I detected a sparkle of amusement in his eyes. I wisely shook my head. He nodded in response, and the last cuff on my wrist fell towards the floor.

Free of my fetters, oddly enough my first instinct was to run. When you considered I had paid a fortune to be here, running wasn’t really in my best

interests, but the itch was there. Somehow I managed to ignore it, and I slid off the bench exactly as he had instructed, but when my knees touched the floor, I decided there and then that I wasn't going to crawl. I was perfectly capable of walking the five metres, and he'd still be able to watch my ass wiggle, because I sure as hell wasn't giving him the front view. Making it to the exam table on two legs, I was rather proud of myself when I managed to reach it without even the tiniest of stumbles. My elegance and grace were back. Finally.

"Pleased with yourself?" James's voice had turned cold, and it didn't take me long to realise I had committed a grave error. Turning my head over my shoulder to face him, it was to see two dark eyes bearing down upon me as his body ate up the floor in order to tower over me. Getting up close and personal, his face inches from mine, he said, "Beautiful little display of defiance, Lois. You have no idea how much pleasure that gives me." My stomach dropped at the almost palpable excitement in his voice. "You do realise naughty girls must be punished?" His body gently pushed mine down on to the mattress below, and I felt myself shiver. "By the time you leave this room, Lois, you will be obedient to my every whim, or so help me God, I will join a monastery on my exit. Do I make myself clear?" His eyebrows had straightened into one long line, and it was a little intimidating, but unfortunately not enough to stop my smart mouth.

"Were you thinking Catholicism, Buddhism, or did you have another avenue of..."

"Sit on the damn table, Lois, and shut up. If I hear another word, I'll gag you." A large, round, red rubber ball was then dangled in front of my face, complete with leather straps, and it was enough of a threat that I shut up instantly. I did not want to be gagged.

Hoisting both legs up onto the table, I placed my hands on my thighs and looked downwards. Hopefully James would calm down in a minute or two. It wasn't as if I had done anything really bad. Honestly, from his tone, you'd have thought I'd just committed the crime of the century.

He didn't look at me or speak to me again as he began unfolding two metal stirrups from under the exam table. Great. My pelvic exam wasn't due for another year or so, but if he was performing one now, I wondered if he'd be able to ship off some results for me.

"Does your butt hurt, Lois?"

The question caught me off guard, which it was supposed to do, because he was then manhandling my right leg into a stirrup and fastening black Velcro tape around it.

"Yes." My ass did sting, particularly now that it was pressed against the firm surface of the mattress, but it was by no means an unpleasant pain - more a

tingling reminder of our previous session. My left leg was then placed in the corresponding stirrup, before my arms were chained upright to a ring above my head. My breath caught.

“Good. Are you nervous?”

I rolled my eyes. I couldn't help it. “You've got me naked, restrained, and you're about to spread my legs wide apart. No, I'm just fine and dandy. What are you planning on doing to me?” I bit my lip, and I mean I really bit my lip. This was way out of my comfort zone, but I was well aware that a whole lot of things would be in the upcoming weeks, which might make this seem tame by comparison, so I needed to find a way through my anxiety.

James took care of that problem for me. Snapping on a pair of clear latex gloves, he perfunctorily asked me if I was allergic to rubber products, and as soon as I shook my head, he pushed the stirrups wide and his fingers found their way to my clit. I gasped.

“I'm going to torment you, Lois, because that's what I do best.” With his free hand he plucked a small glass tube from the table behind him, the end of which had a clear length of plastic tubing and a rubber bulb attached to it. “This is a clitoral pump. I'm going to put it over this little bud here.” He pressed down upon my clit, making me moan. “Then I'm going to suck all the air out of the cylinder. This will make your clitoris swell to at least twice its original size. It's going to do funny things to you, take my word for it. I'm also going to demonstrate some of that needle play we talked about last night. Remember the needle corset? I'm going to design one across your stomach. Finally, I'm going to catheterise you. You will experience a complete loss of bladder control, Lois. Call it your punishment for being naughty, but don't worry, we'll play with sounds and electro-stim, too. It's going to be quite a session. But first,” he said with an evil glint in his eye. “I'm going to demonstrate the magic of the Hitachi wand, which is another a kind of punishment all of its own.”

I barely heard his last sentence because my mind was reeling. He was going to shove needles into me and then do what? *Red, red, red*, my subconscious was screaming. My teeth clamped together in an effort not to shout my thoughts from the rooftop. *It might not be all that bad. You may even enjoy it.* This was great. I was arguing with my inner self. God, if my psychiatrist ever caught a whiff of this, I was in serious trouble.

A sequence of startlingly shocking vibrations managed to stop all the voices in my head instantly. If I'd thought the plugs in my pussy and butt had impressive pulsations before, they were nothing compared to the beast in front of me. You know that feeling when someone ramps up the sound really loud in a concert and your whole body vibrates? Well, I kid you not - my clit was going to be out of

action for several weeks, judging by the power of this monster.

“Get that thing away from me,” I panted, but try as I might, there was no wriggle room for me to squirm out of its path.

“Take it like a good girl, Lois. The first one will be fun.” James’s gloved hands moved the hood of my clitoris upwards, so the wand could have better access, and he began moving it around in slow circles. He brought me to fever pitch within twenty seconds, and I was almost ashamed of myself.

“Don’t fight me, Lois. Just relax and let it happen.”

Easy for you to say, I thought, but in the end I had no choice in the matter. My orgasm ripped through my body with the force of a category five hurricane. It was so fierce I barely had time to appreciate its beauty because another one was already bubbling up inside me.

I had a moment to wonder what was wrong with me, because it usually took ages before I got myself anywhere near the land of “O,” but the insistent pressure of the wand remained, and I swear it couldn’t have been longer than another minute or so before I rocketed into my next orgasm. That was when my head began to shatter into a thousand, bright white, tiny pieces.

Coughing, spluttering, and squirming madly, I tried my best to avoid the wand’s insistent pressure, but James had other ideas. “Stay still, or I’ll turn it up, princess.”

OMG. This thing wasn’t on its highest setting? My clit was now burning in pain, and more than anything I wanted to avoid the intense vibrations that were going to be bringing me headlong into another dimension of earth-shattering convulsions. Orgasms are great, don’t get me wrong, but too many orgasms all at the same time are almost as painful as they are pleasurable.

“Breathe, Lois. Just breathe.”

And what the hell was this breathing thing? My whole body had locked up in a rigid line, and my eyes were going to pop out of my head. Be that as it may, it didn’t slow my third orgasm down in the slightest, and in its wake, my whole body started to shake uncontrollably. My legs were rattling in the stirrups, and a low, keening hum started in my throat as I pleaded with James to end my torment.

“What do you do for a living, Lois?” The bastard smiled at me, and the wand, if it were possible, began to vibrate harder. It was unbearable, and I had no option but to suffer under its cruel wrath.

It took me a minute to prise my jaws apart. “I thought you weren’t here to learn my secrets?” I whispered, and there were tears of pain in my eyes.

“I’m not. This is purely for entertainment value on my behalf. When you give me an acceptable answer, I’ll turn the wand off.” Having said that, he ground it

into my clit and I screamed. I swear if I'd had the use of my hands, I'd have ripped his head off. Unsure of how much more punishment I could take, my lips formed the words, "Fitness instructor," and I bit them out. It was another lie, but it fit with his earlier comments about my body tone, so I hoped it would appease him.

It didn't. The wand notched itself up another level, and I was seeing stars. "What do you teach?" The half smirk on his face told me that he still didn't believe me, and there was no chance of answering his question because I was too busy sobbing my way through orgasm number four. Though I hadn't considered the finer details of the female anatomy before, I was now coming to realise that there was such a thing as too much pleasure, and it equalled pain.

When the most painful waves of my climax had subsided, I yelled, "Yellow."

Thoroughly annoyed with myself, knowing I probably hadn't been in this room more than half an hour, I realised that I couldn't take too much more of this. My whole body was going into meltdown, and the shaking was so bad I could barely control my limbs.

He grinned at me for a second, one of those all-knowing smirks that said he knew exactly what he was doing, and said, "I know, sweetheart. I know." He looked at his watch. "A yellow in just under fifteen minutes. How good am I?"

He raised an eyebrow and wiggled it, and I wanted to slap him. Fifteen minutes! Seriously? The chances of me making it through this session were looking slimmer and slimmer by the second. I needed to get a hold of myself. My next assignment counted on my being able to get through this.

"However, I still think you can make it through another two orgasms before I start sticking pins into you." He pulled the wand away from my clit for a second, and I almost cried in relief, gulping in deep breaths of hiccupping sobs as my body tried to replenish its oxygen stores.

"So, what do you teach, Lois?" The brief respite was over. The wand was back on my clit and my body went into lockdown. Thankfully, I had already prepared my answer, which burst through my lips as my body tried its hardest to fight off orgasm number five.

"Brazilian Jiu Jitsu." It was a martial art requiring all-over body strength and tone, and appropriate for females. It worked on the principle of being able to teach a smaller person how to defend herself against a larger one by using leverage and skilful technique. This time there was at least some truth to my statement. I was a black belt in the art, and it had taken me a long and laborious ten years to achieve it.

"Hmm. Interesting. Where do you teach?" James moved the wand around a little, and slowly rotated the plug in my ass. I came with tears of agony rolling

down my face. Every limb in my body was now rebelling against this method of torture, and it was beginning to fatigue me. I couldn't help but wonder if that had been his plan all along.

The wand was dragged away again as he waited for my response, and I pressed my luck by making him wait for it. My clit was painfully engorged, swollen, and on fire. The thought of enduring any more of this torture was excruciating, and I wanted to put it off for as long as possible.

“Three seconds, Lois, or I'll put this baby up to its highest setting.”

He was going to do it anyway after he heard my answer, so I didn't have a lot to lose either way, but I gave myself another three seconds of breathing space before I said, “London.”

James just looked at me, his eyes sparkling with a gleam of delight, and then everything went into slow motion. I saw him blink, and I swear that moment would be forever etched into my memory with a dull knife. There was a flash of white as his teeth formed a feral smile, and then his lips moved. I didn't hear a word of what he was saying. My eyes were glued to the white plastic head of the wand as it moved forward, sinking back between my legs. I think I tried to yell something, possibly a colour, but I didn't manage to get the words out quick enough. The full fury of the wand was back, and long tendrils of lightning cracked through me. They snapped and fizzed, burning a path of white-hot heat, until I felt sure my brain had exploded. For the first time in my life, I lost complete control of my body, and it scared the shit out of me. Unsure of how long I lay there, with my eyes rolling, tongue lolling, and saliva bubbling around my lips, it was his voice that gradually brought me back to consciousness.

“Lois. Come back to me, Lois. Big, deep breaths. You can do it.” When I finally opened my eyes, it was to find a cold napkin being dabbed against my forehead and James's concerned eyes before mine. He had his hand on the carotid pulse in my neck and was looking at his watch.

“Hey,” I whispered.

“Hey yourself,” he said, smoothing the hair on my forehead away from my face. “You still with me, or do you want to call it a day?” I could tell from the look in his eyes that he was pretty sure I'd reached my limit. Little did he know, I did not give up that easily.

“How much time do we have left?” It was an important question for me. I wanted to know how much longer I would have to endure this kind of torment, to decide what the odds were on my lasting the duration.

“Doesn't work like that, sweet pea. If you're gonna call red, do it now. I won't ask again.”

“Promise me no more orgasms?” If I had that much from him, I thought I might

just make it, but I knew I was grasping at straws.

“I’m more than happy to do that, Lois, but you’ll be begging for one before the next twenty minutes is out.”

“Five hundred pounds says I won’t,” I whispered.

He shook his head, and his top teeth rolled against his bottom lip, an action I found oddly fascinating to watch.

“Oh, Lois,” he sighed. “You have far too much testosterone in you. Never make bets you haven’t a cat in hell’s chance of keeping.” He shook his head again and got to his feet. He picked up a purple plastic box on the table beside him and opened it. He then plucked out a two-inch long silver needle and examined it. The box was almost transparent, and I could see there were around another twenty of the wicked-looking things in there.

“What colour do you want, Lois?”

“Needles?” I looked at him and winced. “Not feeling too fussy on that score.” Needles had never been one of my most favourite things.

“No,” he laughed. “For the lacing of your corset. Black or red usually work well, but you can have any colour of the rainbow.”

Thinking long and hard, I finally said, “Pink.” I wondered if he might look a little effeminate and a whole lot less scary when handling pink ribbon.

“Pink it is.” While he went off to look for the ribbon, I calmed myself down. Forcibly pressing my body down into the mattress, I managed to get the shaking back under control. Thankfully, my body was in good shape and could take this kind of punishment, but I had a feeling that lasting out the full two hours was going to be a lot harder than I had anticipated.

When James returned he had a reel of coral pink ribbon in one hand and some antiseptic swabs in the other. He looked puzzled. “You intrigue me, Lois. Your pulse rate after the six orgasms should have been at least one hundred beats per minute, and I would have expected it to be a lot higher than that. It was closer to eighty. You’re the kind of fit that Olympic athletes attain, and I don’t believe for a second that you teach martial arts.”

“So why keep asking me questions if you know I’m going to lie?” He merely grunted at that and began soaping down my torso with what I guessed was antibacterial soap. After that had dried, he swabbed antiseptic solution over the area. Pulling another pair of gloves on over the ones he already wore, he then turned to face me.

“Do you want to be blindfolded?”

I considered this for a moment. Did I want to be in a world of darkness while James stuck pins into me and played with rather delicate parts of my anatomy? Hell no. I was going to keep my eyes on that man at all times.

“No, thank you,” I croaked. My voice was a little scratchy from all the orgasmic screaming, and it sounded funny, even to my ears.

“I thought you’d say that.” He held a thick piece of black cloth in his hand and came towards me.

“Now, wait a minute,” I bit back, pulling at the ring above my head as I foolishly tried to free myself. “Didn’t I just say no?”

“You did. But you’re also under the illusion that you get to call to the shots around these parts, and I’m here to tell you that you don’t.”

I fought him. It was probably going to be my last act of defiance, judging by the number of restraints I had on my person, but I wasn’t letting this go down without a fight. My head twisted from side to side as the swath of black cotton came down around my eyes, and I even made a good attempt at trying to head-butt him, but he was ready for me, pressing my body back up against the wall firmly.

“Shhh, Lois. It’ll be better this way - you’ll see.” He ran his fingers down the side of my face, and I shuddered, though it wasn’t in revulsion. I just felt helpless, and strangely enough, I was beginning to realise that this kind of thing turned me on in the worst way.

“I can still call red,” I whispered angrily, annoyed with myself for reasons I was not going to examine.

“You keep threatening to do that, but you need to put your money where your mouth is.” His hand trailed down my arm and along the length of my leg with a torturously light touch. I moaned. Fuck. I was definitely going to lose my earlier bet.

“And if I’d have said I wanted the blindfold?” It was a petulant little comment, but I needed to know the answer.

“Then you wouldn’t have worn one.” I’d figured as much.

The first needle pierced through the skin of my upper abdomen with no warning, and it made me gasp. As my body tried to arc up off the exam table, James’s hand held me steady.

“The first one’s always the worst. The next will seem like child’s play.”

“Nothing you do around my body is going to seem like that.” He chuckled, but when the next needle pierced my skin, I was ready for it, and the pain barely registered. A sharp scratch could be felt, but little more.

“I’m keeping them to the upper levels of the epidermis, so there will be a little reddening around the entry site, but no lasting effects,” he said.

“That’s reassuring.” Another needle went in, and I felt a little buzz of excitement begin to creep through me.

“I’m aiming to stimulate some minor sensory nerves. There are usually two

outcomes to this procedure. You'll either feel pain gradually begin to consume you, or your body will compensate with some hormones and you'll get a high or rush instead. I'm aiming for the latter."

"Good to know," I said, with a fair dose of irony. He didn't reply. Gradually I lost count of the needles, and my stomach became awash with sensation. It was bizarrely pleasurable. Things were circulating around my bloodstream that I had no control over, and I began to feel lightheaded and giddy.

"You okay, Lois?" James circled his fingers over my cheek to capture my attention.

"Mmm," I moaned. "Whatever you do, don't stop."

"Ah, good." He wiggled the needle that had just pierced my skin, and I mewled prettily. The pleasure of that tiny movement was intense. "I'm glad you're enjoying yourself." He patted my thigh, and I felt my clit burn in anticipation. Oh, Lord. Six orgasms. Six. There was no way I could want more, was there? "That was the last needle, Lois. I'm now going to thread the ribbon around the hubs. You'll feel it pull a little, but I think you'll like it."

I didn't like it. I loved it. Lost in my own little world of darkness, all I saw was blazing light. It lit up my body with delicious frissons of electricity, and every inch of me prickled with the need to be touched. Now that my sight had been taken away, all my other senses were compensating, and each tiny whisper of sensation was felt acutely. The satin ribbon slowly stroked my skin, its lightweight tail whispering over my sensitised flesh before it coiled itself around the hubs of the needles embedded into me. I felt the pink satin strip complete a slow weave of my stomach, and with every breath I took, the material pulled softly at my skin. I played about with deep inhalations and shallow ones, but wasn't sure which I liked best. I had a sneaking suspicion that I might be into this pain thing, but decided it was best to reserve judgement until after James had finished with me.

"How tight do you want it?"

Before I had to chance to figure out exactly what that meant, James drew the ends of the ribbon sharply upwards, and for a moment, I saw stars.

"Can you handle that?"

"Mmmm," I whimpered, not at all sure that I could. I felt him tying the knot that would hold my temporary corset in place and then he let go of the ends.

"How does it feel?" His lips were close to my ear, and I shivered.

"Hot, stingy, burning, and mighty fine," I whispered.

"I thought so. You have a higher than average tolerance for this stuff. Good. We'll continue." He patted my stomach, and I screeched. He laughed, then blew a line of hot air across the needles, as if to soothe me. I squirmed madly, the

needles jarring within me.

“You’re a bastard, you know that, right?”

“You have no idea,” he laughed. “By the end of this session, you’ll begin to understand what I’m capable of.”

That sounded ominous, and wisely I kept quiet.

The next thing I felt was his gloved finger on my clit, and it felt amazing, but damn cold.

“Just greasing you up for the pump, Lois, so I get a good seal.”

Oh, God, I’d forgotten about that. His fingers worked the lubricant over me with far more enthusiasm than necessary. Keeping a straight face took far more effort than it should have, but somehow I resisted the urge to break down and beg for orgasm number seven. I was strong. I could do this. His talented fingers said otherwise.

Although my clit was sore from its previous exertions, it was quickly coming to life. When the plastic tube covered my little nub and James began sucking the air out of the container, I gritted my teeth. My poor, bruised clitoris was now being stretched into an inch-long tube, and I grasped my hands together above my head to deal with the pain. Thankfully, it didn’t last long.

“There. All done.”

“Am I supposed to say thank you?” My fingernails were digging into my palms, and my jaw locked tight. Once again, my body was on fire. I heard the sound of his footsteps upon the wooden floor and immediately regretted my outburst.

Lacing his finger through the middle of my makeshift corset, James pulled. My eyes watered, and I yelped in pain as twenty needles burrowed into my flesh. “Watch that smart mouth, Lois. Your martial arts training won’t help you here.”

He was right about that.

“Okay, where were we? Hmm, I think we were just about to have some fun with electricity.”

My head had been swaying from side to side as waves of pleasure and pain roiled through my body, and the sensory overload was almost too much to process. Those words brought me back to the here and now.

“We were what?” My mouth had opened so wide it was threatening to dislocate my jaw.

“Yes, well, when I say ‘we,’ I mean ‘you.’” He didn’t say anything else, but I heard a ripping sound and felt a sticky wet pad being placed upon my left inner thigh. Trying to squirm further back on the bench got me absolutely nowhere, and a similar pad hit the opposite side.

“Brace yourself.” No sooner had the words left James’s mouth than a sharp

prickling sensation began to crawl up my legs. It made me jump, but it wasn't painful.

"We'll give you a minute or two at that setting, then we'll notch it up. Meanwhile, I have two electrodes to replace your vibrating plugs, so I'll go ahead and swap them over."

Of course, James didn't play fair. He twisted the plug in my pussy around and around, and then began pumping it in and out. Little squeaks and gasping noises were coming from my mouth, but I paid them no attention. Now that my clit had been encased in a hard, tiny plastic tube, I could feel it throbbing angrily with a pulse of its own. It was seeking attention and was most annoyed that it was not receiving any. When James began to play with the plug in my ass at the same time, I nearly expired on the spot.

"Stop, stop," I begged, and I rattled the chains above my head with a furious sense of helplessness.

"'Stop' isn't a word that carries any weight in this room. If you want to stop, yell red."

The vaginal plug popped out, and I moaned loudly, missing the sense of being so completely filled. Two of his fingers replaced it, slowly feeding cold lubricant inside me before they began stroking a firm path up my inner walls.

"Ever had a G-spot orgasm before, Lois?"

I gurgled. Whatever he was doing, all I knew was that he must never stop.

"A G-spot orgasm is much more intense than a clitoral one, take my word for it. If I do this properly, you might even squirt for me."

Squirting? I'd read about squirting but figured that was a myth. Did people actually do that? Was that a thing?

His fingers began stroking a little harder, and I squeezed my eyes shut tight beneath the blindfold and sobbed. I swear I could feel each of those damn little needles biting into my flesh with each breath I took, and combined with James's fingers in my pussy, I was swimming in a sea of virulent hormones that had only one goal: explosion.

James didn't stop his fingering as the plug in my ass was gently removed. I barely noticed when he replaced it with another because I was far too lost in my own little world of excitement. When the current began pulsing inside me, though, I sobbed again.

"Feels a little like fucking, doesn't it? But I guess you wouldn't know that, right?"

"Nnnghh." That was the most intelligible sound that would pass through my lips. Although I tried again, no words could be formed.

"Shhh, Lois. I'm not going to make you beg for this one. We'll save that for

later. I think we need to loosen you up a bit, so just relax. You're not going to be able to avoid this one, princess.

I had a feeling he was right. The plug in my ass was monstrous, but it felt amazing. It was his fingers that did the most damage, though. I'd thought the G-spot nonsense was the stuff of fairy tales, but James was swiftly convincing me otherwise. Those tiny movements he was making inside my body were setting off cataclysmic reactions everywhere. My legs were once again trembling, my hands were rattling inside their chains, and a pressure was building inside me that I couldn't even begin to describe, but I knew that it couldn't be contained.

"You... You..." There was no point in trying to talk, so I clamped my lips together. His fingers didn't stop their relentless progress, and a heavy feeling settled in my groin that was both heaven and hell. My hips pumped themselves up and down frantically, and there was no controlling that, try as I might. Forced towards some kind of pinnacle that I could neither see nor touch, my body was left to flounder in the dark as my head spun.

"Are amazing. I know. You can thank me later." I gritted my teeth as the infuriating man continued his tiny little strokes, but there wasn't much fight left in me. My body was tiring.

"Let it go, Lois. Let it all go."

In the end, the effort it took to hold it all in was more than I could cope with. The electricity running through me had brought me to such a fever pitch that I was sure my body was giving off sparks. When my climax finally hit, it was ferocious. Without doubt it was one of the most powerful orgasms I had ever had, and when I felt fluid begin to gush between my legs, I was instantly mortified. Had I just wet myself, or was this squirting? Oh God, oh God, oh God. Mostly glad my bright red face was now hidden behind a blindfold, I just whispered, "Sorry," over and over as my body continued to rock in the wake of its surrender.

James's hands stroked my hips and thighs. "There's nothing to be sorry about, Lois. It's just female ejaculate. That's the squirting I was talking about. You did great." My temporary hiding place was then removed and I blinked rapidly as my eyes adjusted to the light. "You look cute when you're embarrassed."

I glared at him. I didn't care that I was naked, I didn't care that I was lying on a wet sheet, and I didn't care that my legs were spread wide open. Fury overrode all of that in a heartbeat. At the moment I felt so vulnerable, I just wanted to annihilate the man. "If there was a school for assholes, you'd graduate with honours," I spat.

He had the audacity to laugh. "You're probably right, but you've forgotten something." He raised both eyebrows up, and as his ice blue eyes caught mine, I

drowned. “You’re still tied up and very much at my mercy, Ms. Reeves.” There was a twitch of his lips, and then he turned away from me. Oh God, what now? I had the distinct feeling that I was better off not knowing.

Trying to pull myself together, I took stock of the situation. Twisting my body from side to side to ease the strain on my arms, I figured I’d been in this room for perhaps an hour and a half. Thirty minutes until I’d cracked this shit, then. This wasn’t an insurmountable problem. It could be done. It could. It really could. I just had to stay focused, which was a really hard thing to do with an electrified plug pumping away in your ass.

Turning back to face me, James said, “This is called a sparkler.” Blinking rapidly, it was to find a long black piece of metal being dangled before my eyes.

“I’m guessing you don’t set light to it and shove it in a birthday cake,” I said sarcastically. My eyes narrowed on the thin piece of metal. I didn’t have a good feeling about it.

“You guess correctly. This is a urethral insert. It’s called the sparkler because one of the earliest users of this type of electrode saw sparks when he used it.”

That did not inspire me with confidence. “Did you just say urethral insert?” My knowledge of human anatomy was unfortunately quite good, and I didn’t want that thing anywhere near my bladder.

James had a devilish glint in his eye. The word “sadist” didn’t even begin to describe him. The man was pure evil.

“Yes. It’s another internal electrode, and I think you’re going to like it. It produces quite a strong sensation, I’ve been told.”

My eyes widened. “I’ll just bet it does,” I whispered.

James glanced at his watch. “Well, we’ve got just over another hour to play, so I guess we’d better move things along.”

How long? I’d been here for an eternity. There was no way I’d make it through another hour of this. The man was going to kill me.

Wires began to weave around my thighs in a serpentine manner as James completed his nefarious plot to obtain my safe-word. Judging by the amount of electrodes that were being taped to my legs, there was a very real possibility he was trying to set fire to me.

“I’m going to turn them on one by one and see how many you can handle before we try the sparkler.”

“Yes, it would be a shame if I had to ruin your reputation by telling all my friends that as far as ultimate pain goes, this session was pretty tame.” I bit the inside of my cheek to prevent myself from saying anything else.

“I suspect you don’t have all that many friends to tell, but in any case, I agree, and I certainly wouldn’t want to disappoint you, Lois.”

The very perceptive James was back, and as usual he was infuriatingly correct, although I chose not to tell him so. Holding a control box in his hands, he began fiddling with some switches. The first electrode came to life and sent a flurry of prickling heat up my leg. There was a pause before another joined it, and then another. After he'd lit up five of the things, I panted, "Yellow." There was no way I was going to deal with this.

"C'mon, where's your sense of adventure? Let's try another couple."

I debated shouting the word 'red' long and hard, but somehow managed to keep it inside me. Another two electrodes were fired up, and my internal circuits felt like they were melting. To add insult to injury, the sparkler was then waved before my face once again.

"Ready, Lois? You'll need to stay really still for this one." With no further warning, his gloved fingers popped the tube from my clitoris and I shrieked as blood began rushing back into the poor, abused little organ. Throbbing in agony as it swelled, James slowly pushed the sparkler in between my legs. I could only watch helplessly, knowing exactly where it was headed.

My whole body tensed as James gently worked the sparkler inside me. There was a burning sensation initially, which had my eyes watering, but it passed quite quickly. Taking his time, he gently worked the electrode inside my urethra until it was about two inches deep.

"Okay, we're ready to turn it on, Lois. Any last words or requests?"

My mouth hung open as I stared at him. "Fuck you," I said.

"Not today, sweetheart." He might have said something else, but when the electrode was switched on, my head snapped back, and the pain was so intense for a second, my upper body hung from the chains around my wrists.

I wanted to scream at him to take it out, but my mouth was clamped down so hard as it dealt with the pain, speaking wasn't an option. When the wand came down on my clit again, I didn't know what I wanted. An orgasm? James's head, preferably severed from his neck, or perhaps the kind of relief that I'd been searching for these last few months. I could feel it gathering close now. I was losing the tight ring of control that usually guarded every movement I made and each word I spoke. The noose was finally loosening, and I sobbed.

"Can you take a little more current?"

James was wriggling the sparkler inside me, and my head was thrashing from side to side. No, I wanted to scream. No, I can't take any more of this, but I didn't say a word. The current increased, and as the wand wriggled and danced on my clit, finally my world exploded.

I was screaming, sobbing, and hiccupping. A flood of tears was pouring down my face, and they were the first I'd seen in a very long time. I welcomed them

with open arms.

Although the blindfold had now been removed, everything went fuzzy and dark for a couple of minutes. My head was up with the fairies, floating on an intense cloud of hedonistic delight, and my body was still convulsing in gentle waves that seemed to ripple all the way through me. I was all over the place and nowhere at the same time.

Somehow, I ended up in the shower, though I have no recollection of James untying me, or of him removing all the various wires, needles, and electrodes that had covered me. I was still sobbing, and I had several months' worth of grief to get out of my system. Judging by my strangled cries and bleary, swollen eyes, I was doing a good job. I suspected he was wondering what the hell was wrong with me.

Cradled to his chest, he whispered soothing words of comfort in my ear as he gently soaped my body down. When my cries began to dry up a little, I noticed, in a kind of surreal moment, that he was still fully clothed and that his shirt and jeans were now plastered to his body. When he began to soap me between my legs, my thoughts turned once again to desire. The man looked more edible than chocolate, and if I wasn't bone tired, I'd have considered ripping his clothes off. What the hell was wrong with me? I'd just come about a million times! Was this orgasm thing catching, I wondered? The more you had, the more you wanted?

When we'd finished in the shower, he bent me double so my hands were gripping the towel rail, and covered me from head to toe in a soothing moisturiser, paying special attention to my backside, and it sure as hell needed it. He then wrapped me in a big, white fluffy bathrobe and sat me on his lap. Towelling my hair dry gently, he turned my face so I'd have no choice but to look at him.

"Are you okay?"

I smiled wanly. "Not really," I said. "But I will be, one day."

"Grief is a funny thing," he said, not unsympathetically, and I got the feeling that he understood exactly where I was in my life.

"How do you read people so well?" I whispered. My tears had dried up for now, but I knew they'd be back later. I had an ocean of emotions inside me that still needed to escape, but I wasn't going to subject James to that, even though he was a colossal bastard.

He grunted and began to run a wide-toothed comb through my hair. "I've just seen too much of life, both the good and bad parts."

When I angled my head to look up into his eyes, for a moment I saw Kiel. His eyes were a completely different colour, the hair was too short, and the face was all wrong, but somehow I saw him. He had the same kind of compassion that

Kiel had worn upon his sleeve, and in my line of work, that was as rare as being allowed a day off. I don't remember the last time I took a holiday. Well, when I was of sound mind to do so. The job requires that I'm always on call, or available for an assignment at a moment's notice, so there are no vacations. Maybe after my next job, I'd take some. Hell, they probably owed me about six months' worth. I could just see myself soaking up the rays on a small, virtually inaccessible island in Fiji. The idea had merit.

When the comb stopped, James got up and retrieved my bag for me. "In a moment, I'll give you some privacy so that you can get dressed, but then I'll be back to drive you home."

When I began to shake my head, his gaze hardened. "After the session you've had, there's no way I'm letting you take public transport. Also, you need to ring a friend and have her stay with you tonight. If you don't have one, I'll stay with you. By the looks of it, things are about to get worse before they get better, and I know how that pans out. You need company, and I won't leave until you have some."

"Are you always this infuriatingly domineering?" The tears were gone, my voice was clipped, and my eyes were cold.

He dumped my bag in my lap and put his hands on his hips. "No, usually I'm much, much worse, but I'm treading carefully around you at the moment." He bit his lip, and I had a sudden, violent urge to punch the guy. I fought my way past it.

"Out of curiosity," I said, changing the subject, "how did I do? Do you'll think I'll make it as a submissive, or am I doomed to failure?"

"Hmm." There was a pause as he digested my words, and he was obviously considering his response. "Well, you're the first woman who's ever made it past the two hour mark in one of my sessions, so that has to be a good omen."

"Ooh, you complete and utter..." I threw my bag back at him, hitting him hard in the stomach, and the inhuman beast didn't even flinch.

"That's why I took away your watch. It's called a mind-fuck. If you thought you had five minutes left, you'd have pulled yourself through no matter what. If you think you have an hour or more, then it's a whole different ballgame." He smiled. "Your stamina is amazing. I'm rarely impressed, but you did good, kiddo."

"Gee, thanks." I rolled my eyes, but felt secretly pleased with myself.

"As to whether you'll make it as a submissive, I'd hazard a guess that it won't come easy, but if you have the right incentives along the way, I think you'll do fine." He didn't expand on that one, and I didn't feel inclined to push it.

"Get dressed. I'll be back for you in ten minutes. If you're not ready for me,

then you've earned yourself another spanking, young lady." He strode toward the door and walked straight through it without looking back.

Hearing it slam, I shook my head and retrieved my satchel from the floor. Whilst I suspected the man was joking, I didn't care to push my luck. James Leverett was not someone you messed with. The man was just as dangerous as me, and disconcertingly, perhaps more so. Letting out a soft sigh, I dragged my clothes on and decided to save analysing him until a later date. He could take me home, I would call a friend as ordered, and that would be the last time I needed to set eyes on him.

Strangely enough, the idea was upsetting. Why? Because I'd just met my match and had every intention of letting him slip right through my fingers. I couldn't afford to become attached to someone, and I didn't want to have to deal with the idea of living a lie anymore. From now on, I was going to be a one-woman band. Besides, I'd be far too busy chained up in some millionaire's mansion when I began my next assignment. In a few weeks' time, I'd forget James Leverett even existed. Hell, I'd barely be able to remember his name.

Nine

Two months later, I found myself sitting behind a spotless glass desk in a prestigious London office. I was dressed in an immaculate black suit, and bored out of my mind with paperwork. Miss Sharkey (appropriately named – or should that have been Snarkey?) had decided to keep an eye on me before she agreed to clear me for field duty, and I had to admit that I was as close as I'd ever been to having my sturdy rod of control snapped in half. Filing in chronological order should have been declared a modern day torture method. Seriously, I'd take waterboarding over the past three weeks of hell I'd been forced to endure. The inactivity was killing me, the coffee sucked, and the work was mind-numbingly dull. Faxing, copying, redirecting telephone calls, typing, spreadsheets, and more of the same came my way daily. The eight-hour workday suddenly morphed into a suffocating prison sentence with seemingly no end in sight. I couldn't help but wonder if they were actively trying to court my resignation. There was no way I could take much more of this. How did people do this every day?

There was only one thing that managed to keep me sane at the moment, and interestingly enough it was driving me insane at the same time. Infuriatingly, I could not get James Leverett out of my head. Whilst work had given me a virtual lobotomy as of late, James had given my libido a kick-start that a Ducati would have been proud of. I now wanted to jump everything that moved, although I somehow managed to keep a lid on the idea. Vanilla sex probably wasn't going to cut it anymore after our session, and I seriously considered booking another appointment with the man. Neither my pride nor my willpower would allow me to do so, but the daydream stayed alive through the dreary drudge of administrative work that continued to flow my way. Finding myself reliving our afternoon over and over again, it was with a wan smile that I acknowledged Miss Sharkey's sudden presence in my office.

“Lois.” Her fake smile of greeting sent shards of permafrost through me. In her designer heels, she stood a couple of inches higher than me, but that hadn't managed to intimidate me as of yet.

Lifting her neck high, her brown eyes bore down, assessing me yet again. She played this game at least five or six times a day, and it was wearing thin. I was not going to break down, nor had I ever broken down, except after my session with James a few weeks ago, and she didn't need to know about that. I had no idea what she was waiting for, and clearly she wasn't about to tell me. Short of praying daily that she was struck down by lightning, there wasn't a lot else I

could do if I wanted to keep my job, and I needed to keep my job. Losing that would be unbearable, unless I was forced to join the ranks of admin, and if that was the case, then I'd rather she just shot me now. Even Hari Kari had to be better than enduring this on a daily basis.

Standing up, I gathered the heap of files that I'd been given that morning and reeled them off one by one for her. "I've typed up the interview for Randall vs. Lacey, twenty interview questionnaires have been sent out as per your request, the stockroom inventory has been completed, and I've found and corrected an error in your spreadsheet for employee pension contributions." I returned her fake smile with one of my own and shoved the files across my desk to her.

"My, you have been busy this morning," she said, giving me one of her favourable looks. I did not care for it.

"Not particularly. I twiddled my thumbs for at least an hour, watered all the office plants, and am now experimenting with baking." There was a definite acerbic quality to my voice.

"Baking?" Miss Sharkey looked perplexed. Score one for me.

"Apparently you can bake a chocolate cake in a cup. Who knew? I intend to have it for my lunch break, to cheer myself up." I was going to lose my job, but I didn't care. There had to be someone else in the world who'd want me and my dubious talents.

"We don't have an oven." Her frosty demeanour was replaced by confusion, and it was a better look than the pitying glances I'd been treated to as of late.

"It's a microwave experiment." Miss Sharkey had a thing about cleanliness. The office kitchen was her personal domain, and there was a rota to ensure that everything was kept squeaky-clean. I was pretty sure that baking a cake would be frowned upon, though it wasn't expressly forbidden to my knowledge.

Her eyes narrowed. "Are we boring you, Lois?" She folded her arms across her chest and I followed suit.

"Not only are you boring me senseless, you are also driving me mad. Everyone talks in hushed whispers whenever I'm around, and no one takes their eyes off me in case I'm about to rush off and slit my wrists. Well, I have news for you. The only time I've come anywhere close to committing suicide is every damn morning when you give me the office filing to complete. I am not cut out for the role of admin. Hell, I can't even be polite on the telephone anymore." The poor postman had discovered this fact earlier when he'd buzzed to come into the office a second time, as he'd forgotten an item of post. This required that I walk down five flights of stairs to let him in, *again*, because we were all being eco-friendly in the office, and trying not to use the lift. I might have used a few swear words to tell him how happy I was to see him.

Miss Sharkey looked flabbergasted for a moment, and there was a long pause that gave me time to plan my latest resume that I would most certainly need very shortly.

“Do you want me to fire you, Lois?” There was no hint of a smile now, and now that we were at the point of no return, I saw no need to dance around the issue.

“Yes. If you plan on giving me any more paperwork, I would like to be fired.” There. I’d gone and said it. I meant it, too.

There was another pause, which gave me time to shuffle my handbag towards me, and then she laughed. It was my turn to look puzzled.

“Finally. Your psychotherapist told me you would let me know when you’re ready, and I guess this is as good an indication as I’ll get. Are you ready to go back to work, Lois?”

“Hell yes,” I replied vehemently. Releasing the death grip I now had on my handbag, I breathed a sigh of relief. “Send me anywhere. I just need to get back to work.”

“Meet me upstairs in the blue room at two thirty. I’ll have your next assignment ready.”

“Yes ma’am,” I said, realising my world once again had colour in it.

Miss Sharkey turned around to leave, but tossed her head over her shoulder just before she reached the door.

“Oh, Lois?”

“Yes,” I replied warily.

“If there’s a mark upon my microwave, I will be rescinding my invitation. Do I make myself clear?”

“Crystal,” I said, openly grinning for the first time in weeks.

The blue room was actually blue - a nice shade of topaz, in fact. Cellular Operations - our cover name - also had a green room, which was green, and a yellow room, which was hideous and vomit-inducing. Thankfully, blue was my favourite colour.

I’d been twiddling my thumbs for ten minutes or so, because in my line of business you are always early. If you’re punctual, you’re late. This meant I’d had plenty of time to admire the stark décor, which comprised of a sturdy grey table that could comfortably seat ten and a large black TV screen placed prominently on the far wall. There was also an overhead projector, a laptop, and some horribly bright halogen strip lighting. A few grey linoleum tiles completed the ghastly look. Apparently they didn’t want me distracted, not that they had any worries on that score. I was desperate to get back in the ring, and I was happy to

do pretty much anything they required of me. It would be nice if the assignment was a challenge, though, because having a shot of adrenaline running through my system might help me get James out of my system once and for all.

“Lois.”

I’d heard her footsteps, so it was no surprise when the door slammed shut behind her.

“Ma’am.”

“Remember that assignment we talked about a few months ago?” She looked at me expectantly. I wanted to roll my eyes. She knew I remembered. My memory was one of the reasons they’d hired me in the first place. Controlling the instinct, I smiled brightly.

“Yes.” It was the one I had been chomping at the bit to complete. Three weeks training in the art of kinky sex, then a leisurely stay in a millionaire’s mansion. That was my kind of assignment. Unfortunately, I’d missed the boat on that one. My psych report had been all over the place and they’d grounded me.

“We gave it to Janice.” She sat down at the head of the table and shuffled her files about. Looking at me from behind lowered lashes, she waited patiently for my response.

“Did she have fun?” I couldn’t help the sour look on my face. Janice and I were not the best of friends, and the fact that she had stolen a prize assignment from under my nose was certainly not the best news I had received today.

“As a matter of fact, she didn’t.” A calculating look ran across her face. “She didn’t manage to last a week, Lois.”

That put a smile on my face. “The millionaire ditched her?” It was wrong to take a huge amount of evil glee in someone else’s downfall, but Janice was a special case. We had history.

“No, she never got that far. She didn’t last a week in training.” Miss Sharkey’s eyes devoured me as I digested that little snippet.

It certainly wiped the smile off my face.

“But Janice is one of the best operatives we have. How is that possible?”

“I have asked myself the same thing, Lois. Apparently some people just aren’t cut out for it, or so I’ve been told, which leads me to the question: would you like to have a shot at it?”

There was a pause as I digested her offer. I didn’t usually go for sloppy seconds, but this was a special case. Having been absolutely destroyed when I’d realised my return to field duty would not be as expedient as I’d hoped, I think I was more upset that I hadn’t got a chance to explore the BDSM lifestyle a bit further. There were a lot of questions floating around my head that I would have loved answers to, and three weeks training would certainly help me out with

those. I also wanted to see if James was right. *It won't come easy, but if you have the right incentives along the way, you'll do fine.*

I didn't have to think for long. This was just what I needed to put the past behind me.

"Yes." I folded my arms in my lap and tried to look cool, calm, and confident. I was anything but and couldn't wait to get started.

Sharkey looked at me long and hard. "Are you sure you're ready? I do not want to book you in for three weeks training, and have you run screaming like Janice did after just two days."

That had my attention. "Two days? What the hell did they do to her?"

"Strictly speaking, that would be confidential."

I nodded, duly chastened. I knew that. "Of course," I said.

"But that's the interesting part. She won't tell me. So I guess there's no harm in telling you that." Miss Sharkey grinned. It was a rare occurrence. I guessed her curiosity had been piqued.

"So you want me to go in there and find out, huh?"

"No." She shook her head, then looked me directly in the eye and compressed her lips. "I want you to go in there, complete the whole damn course, and then ace your assignment."

Of course she did. So did I, for that matter.

"Well, it seems like we want the same thing. When do I start?"

"I knew I could count on you, Lois. You start Monday. I trust that's acceptable?"

"Absolutely. Do I still have to come to the office tomorrow?"

"Do you want to?" Miss Sharkey was now trying hard to suppress a grin, damn the woman.

"Is that a trick question?" I really did not want to wake up at five thirty tomorrow morning, if there was any chance of avoiding it.

"Then I guess you can pick up your files from me later, and take the rest of the week off – provided my microwave is in sparkling condition."

It was my turn to grin. "You could eat your dinner from it."

"I think that's kind of the idea, Lois," she said, rolling her eyes as her left hand ushered me from the room.

I did not need to be told twice.

My files were delivered in due course. I was expected to have a medical, which was no great surprise, and then I had to fill out about a dozen questionnaires regarding my sexual history and experiences. If that weren't bad enough, finally I would have to fill out the ridiculous limits form that I denied James the

pleasure of receiving. He'd have the last laugh, if only he knew. At the back of the file there were some brief instructions for my stay, mostly regarding what I could and could not bring. By the looks of things, I would be travelling light, but I hadn't really expected anything else.

The actual location of the training camp had yet to be disclosed to me, and worryingly, I wouldn't know where I was going until I got there. The destination was to be kept secret, and I would be picked up and dropped off by a driver. The cogs in my head began to turn. Why wasn't I expected to drive there? Maybe they thought three weeks was a long time to have a parked car sitting about. Perhaps, but something didn't sit right with me. I'd have to figure that one out later.

Shoving my handbag over my shoulder, I said goodbye to my temporary office and added the term 'good riddance.' With any luck I wouldn't be asked to do any further paperwork in my long (hopefully!) and industrious career. Oh wait, I had half a ton of the stuff to do as soon as I got home. Maybe I could finish some on the train journey back. Having been about to walk out of the door, I swept back in, stole a black biro, and then made good my exit.

Over a cup of freeze dried, chemically enhanced, hot muddy water that almost smelled like coffee, I examined the contents of my file more closely. I was allowed to bring one change of clothes, a toothbrush, and any medication I would need for a three-week trip. That was it. Mobile phones and any cellular or wifi equipment were expressly prohibited, and it stated that anything I brought inside the camp over my allowance would be immediately confiscated, and I would be punished for 'disobeying the rules.' There was a good chance that I might be entering Nazi Germany in a few days' time, I thought.

It then went on to note that I would need to make sure that contraception details were taken care of - they recommended the injection. On assignment, it presented less risk, and there would be one less thing to worry about. It also mentioned the change of clothes would be for the return journey only. I wouldn't be expected to wear clothes for most of the duration of my stay, and if any were needed, they would be provided. My stomach took a nose dive, but if I was honest, what had I really expected? They were training me up as a submissive sex slave, and I'm guessing clothes weren't going to be a big thing in my world for the next few weeks. On the plus side, sex was, and if it was anything of the likes James had demonstrated, it wasn't all bad news. My vibrator and I had been having some intense workouts lately, but anyone who tells you sex toys are better than the real thing is lying. It is an almost sufficient substitute, but that's as far as it goes. Besides, my ass wanted a good paddling, and it wasn't going to

spank itself, was it?

I nearly choked on my coffee. Had I seriously been fantasising about being spanked? Yes, I had. Did that make me evil and perverted? Who cared? I was already going straight to hell, so I might as well take the fast track route. God, James, what have you done to me? I put my head in my hands. Never had I needed the distraction of work so badly. Maybe three weeks of kinky stuff would wear me out so I could put James out of my mind for good. One could only hope. Monday could not come quick enough, and it was days away. All I had to look forward to in the days in-between were a medical, several injections, and a three-minute packing spree. Oh, and a wonderful three page tick the box limits form. I was looking forward to that. Maybe I'd do it after a few glasses of wine for kicks. Then again, maybe not. I'd trusted James for some unknown reason. He'd shown me the error of my ways. If I got some completely crazy sadist and had to come home with my tail between my legs, I'd never live it down in the office. I planned to have one up on Janice, and whoever was in that training camp waiting for me had better be prepared to go to war, because I was not coming home after two days. Put it this way, they'd have to be at least twice as bad as James, and that wasn't likely, was it? I grinned. It wouldn't be after I'd crossed nearly every damn item off the limits list. Damned if I was going to make it easy for them.

My week dragged by impossibly slowly, and even my twenty-kilometre run and kick-boxing class on Friday appeared to stretch into slow motion. My heart rate might have been thumping, and my breathing was hard, but the world around me had turned into thick-set honey, and it barely moved. The wait was driving me mad. I couldn't watch TV, couldn't read, couldn't listen to music, couldn't eat... basically I couldn't do anything. Sitting numbly on my couch, I ran through a thousand and one possibilities in my head. Would I get through training? Would I enjoy it? Why couldn't I take my own car? Would I be allowed outside? What would the future assignment entail? Was there any chance my millionaire might be attractive? Would this be the one where I took a bullet?

Some of my thoughts were ridiculous. Take the 'attractive' one for instance. If they wanted me in there for wet work, what did it matter how attractive he was if I'd been sent there to kill him. Dammit. I always got like this before going on assignment. I just needed to calm myself down. Moving numbly towards the kettle, I made myself a cup of my favourite camomile tea. It wasn't going to help me get through the weekend - nothing would - but it was a familiar smell and taste, it was comforting, and it wouldn't affect my roiling stomach.

I desperately wanted to call James. I wanted to grill him on everything BDSM

and ask him what I could expect to endure over three weeks of intense training. I clutched my cell tightly, and kept flicking through my contacts, my finger hovering over 'Elite Encounters' several times, but I never let myself dial. As much as I wanted to hear his voice and talk to him, I didn't want the entanglements that might ensue. Christ. Who was I kidding? The man had women throwing themselves at him on a daily basis. Why would he be interested in me? He was a God in a realm of black, intense sexuality that I could barely comprehend, so he wasn't going to look twice at me. He'd have a woman stashed somewhere that was experienced in such matters. There was no way he'd want a novice. My cell clattered to the floor, and I didn't even bother to pick it up to see if it still worked. It had three weeks where it could sit in a repair shop if necessary, so it hardly mattered. James Leverett was out of my league, and I had no room for a relationship. The matter would end there.

When Monday eventually rolled around, it was not a moment too soon. When a sleek grey Volvo pulled up alongside my door, I virtually sprinted from the house in order to get inside it. The driver took my exceptionally light case without comment and placed it in the rear. He then got back in and handed me a black sleeping mask through the partition.

"Oh, thank you, but there's no way I can sleep right now," I said nervously.

He turned round to give me a hard look. "Then you can go straight back inside," he replied. "If you want to continue with your training course, you need to take the white tablet inside the mask, and then put it on. It's your choice."

And there it was. The reason they would not let me take my car became abundantly clear. They wanted me in the dark. If I should escape, I would be in the middle of God knows where, completely disorientated, and most likely naked.

Wondering what the hell I was letting myself in for, I sighed and placed the single white tablet in my mouth. Taking a large gulp of water from the bottle that had been placed in the seat pocket in front of me, I then put the large black rubber mask over my eyes. My world was without colour once again. Not that it had been any other way since Kiel's death.

Ten minutes later, I felt wonderfully calm and relaxed, and that confirmed what I had already guessed. I'd been given a sedative. Soon, blissful oblivion would consume me, and for that I could be grateful. Several days without sleep had begun to take its toll, and at least I would arrive well rested.

I couldn't help but wonder if this is what had rattled Janice. She was a control freak of the grandest order, and she wouldn't have thought much about being drugged and dumped into the middle of nowhere. Still, she'd made it through the

first two days, so that couldn't have been it. As she was one of our top operatives, I couldn't help but wonder what they'd done to her. She was a tough one to crack, so it must have been something good.

Having already decided that I had to make it through at least a week, I knew that I was in for a rough time of it, especially if this journey was anything to go by. My pride wouldn't let me go home before the week was out, though, and I fully intended to take everything they threw at me. The alternative was going back to Cellular Operations with my tail between my legs. Miss Sharkey would probably punish me for failure by giving me another six weeks of filing duties. I shuddered through eyelids that were so heavy they dragged themselves down my face and begged to be closed. I didn't see the point in fighting it. Let's face it - how bad could kinky sex be? The last thing I remembered was my head lolling to the side as I surrendered to the darkness.

The next thing I knew I was being roughly shaken awake. The driver had already removed my mask and unfastened my seat belt, but opening my eyes through the mire of sludge that the sedative had left proved difficult.

"Wakey, wakey, rise and shine," he said unhelpfully.

Stumbling from the car, it was to find my little red carryall had already been dumped on the gravel. I was in a circular driveway of what must have been a ten or eleven bedroom Elizabethan manor house. It was covered from top to bottom with intricate woodwork patterns, forming squares and stars for the most part. The dark timber created a startling effect against the white paintwork, and the leaded windows reflected the light in dazzling diamonds. For a moment I felt like I had been catapulted through time several hundred years. My attention was diverted from the house for a moment, distracted by the roar of an engine and the squeal of tires as my taxi driver sped down the tree-lined drive behind me. I shook my head. What was with the cloak and dagger stuff? Weren't we the good guys? Rolling my eyes, I picked up my holdall and headed up the stone steps towards the massive front door. Made of solid dark timber, there was a big, circular, cast-iron knocker to the right, and I banged upon it as loud as I could. Then I waited. Standing there like a moron, shielding my eyes against the sun as I looked around for signs of life, it was beginning to look like there was nobody home. Great. Here I was, stranded in the middle of nowhere, no cell phone, no money, no water or food, and no ride home. This was not a particularly great start. Pressing my nose up to one of the windows, I tried to peer in, but they were darkly tinted and gave me only shapes and lines of what promised to be lurking inside. Swearing, I grabbed hold of the knocker again and tried to punch a hole through the damn door. That received just as much attention as my first attempt.

Letting out the gigantic huff of breath I'd been holding, I flung my bag down and took a seat on the steps. I would just have to wait. There wasn't really another option. It was unlikely the idiots would have dropped me off at the wrong house.

Unfortunately, I hadn't been allowed to wear a watch, else I'd have set myself a certain amount of time to wait before trying to hitch hike my way back home. So my best bet was just to wait until I got bored, and then take it from there. I wasn't worried about my ability to get myself home, but the effort involved would put a damper on the proceedings.

Letting my thoughts drift to James, which is where they always went when I had some free time these days, I imagined myself back on his spanking bench with my wrists and ankles back in leather cuffs. That was one of the reasons I wasn't walking right now. I wanted to feel the bite of those cuffs restraining me once again and the thrill of being helpless and at the mercy of my tormentor. I found the role reversal it provided was refreshingly liberating. Oh, and I got off on a little bit of pain. There had been nothing James had done that I hadn't enjoyed. Yes, he'd pushed me to my limit, but everything had been a unique mixture of pain and pleasure that messed with my head.

I was going to wait here a long time, I finally admitted to myself, because I desperately wanted to complete this assignment. The fleeting glance of submission I had been given at Elite Encounters had not been enough. I wanted more, and more was a beast that usually took a lot of slaking in my world.

"Are you Lois Reeves?"

The metallic voice that came out of nowhere made me jump. Score one for them. I hadn't noticed any loudspeakers on my cursory evaluation. Turning around to stare at the door, which was still closed, I frowned, but then offered up a loud, "Yes."

"Then you'll need to get naked. After that, you can approach the door on all fours and wait." There was a distinct click.

"Are you kidding? Anyone can see me out here. There is no way I'm getting naked in public." I waited a minute or two for a response but the house was eerily silent. It appeared they wanted to play hardball.

"Can we compromise?" I yelled. "How about I get naked the moment I enter the house?" I'd decided to speak to the door in lieu of a face, and he wasn't very talkative. He, if doors were male, held his silence for far longer than I could hold mine. "This is a joke, right? Someone please tell me this is a joke." Alas, no one did. Sitting stubbornly on the steps, quietly fuming, I wondered just how much I wanted this gig, because I had a decision to make. It was either go home or get naked, and if this was the first hurdle that was facing me, the chances were it

wouldn't get any easier when I crawled through that door.

Let's go home to Miss Sharkey, my subconscious snorted. Shall we tell her we didn't even make it as far as Janice did?

Fine. I let out a huge huff of annoyed nitrogen and carbon dioxide. So they wanted me to get used to being naked, huh? I began twisting my pumps off, one by one, and then threw them down the drive. No way was I going to make it easy for these guys. Wriggling out of my jeans, I threw them into the rose bushes alongside the stone steps. My white shirt quickly followed suit. I then walked back up to the front door, figuring I'd get as close to the entrance as possible, before removing my bra and panties. The utilitarian cotton garments got to rest on the hemp rug, which had black block letters, featuring the slogan, 'You are now a doormat. The people inside this house will walk all over you.' Bloody marvellous. At least these guys had a sense of humor, I thought. Getting down on all fours, against my better judgement, I waited. Then I waited a bit more. It wasn't long before I felt my temper begin to rise.

Whoever the assholes were in this house, they'd better make damn sure I was restrained by the time they let me inside, else they'd be lucky if they retained the use of some of their more important limbs and organs. Still I waited. When my knees finally began to scream at the painful and unforgiving contact that they were getting from the stone slabs beneath me, I debated leaving. I thought long and hard about getting to my feet, turning around, putting my clothes back on, and getting the hell out of here, but I didn't. Call it a stubborn streak. I refused to be bested by whoever was in that damn house, and now that I'd been made to suffer, I needed to see who was responsible for it. If need be, I'd wait here two damn days until someone let me in. That gave me pause for thought. Had Janice been left like this for two days? Is that why she gave up so quickly? Could I endure two days of this? My face fell. If this was my first taste of submission, it was going to hurt.

Ten

When night began to fall, the air cooled considerably. I once again considered walking. It would probably take an hour or so to get some feeling back in my limbs, but after that I could disappear into the wilderness. With any luck, I wouldn't be too far away from civilisation. The UK was a pretty crowded place, so unless they'd shipped me off to the Scottish highlands, I'd probably be okay. If not, I'd get to eat berries and nuts, and be at one with nature for a while. Grimacing, I thought waiting out another day was preferable to that risk. So was the promise of kinky sex at some point in the future, although this kind of treatment didn't bode well.

My legs had long since gone numb underneath me. Goosebumps covered me from head to toe, and my naked body protested vehemently against the cold. I ignored it. I also ignored my stomach, which had begun rumbling in earnest. Typical. I'd barely eaten a thing all week, and now, when I couldn't, I was hungry. Figured. On the plus side, I was no longer worried about anyone seeing me naked. If anyone wanted to come and rescue me from this ridiculous predicament, they were more than welcome to get an eyeful. It was never going to be that easy, though. This would be a test of endurance, mind over matter, and my ability to battle exhaustion. It was the last one that would get me. How long would it be before I succumbed to sleep? Would that count against me? There were so many variables, and so much was unknown.

Gently shaking my knees out from underneath me, I squirmed a little, trying to get some circulation going, whilst imagining someone had cocooned me in a large, warm blanket. What I wouldn't give for a sleeping bag right now...

Dusk turned to darkness. The passage of time was recorded in varying shades of grey and black. Everything moved impossibly slowly, except my eyelashes. They began fluttering shut with alarming frequency. Wondering how much sleep I'd had on the drive down, I figured it hadn't been that much. If I'd had a good eight hours, I would have made it through the night fairly easily. Working with the assumption I'd had maybe three or four, that would explain why I now felt as if my eyelids were made of lead. I was going to collapse with exhaustion sooner rather than later, I suspected, but I'd put up as much of a fight as I could.

In the end, funnily enough, sleep was elusive. The cold kept me awake for far longer than my body would have liked. I began shivering, and when it started, I was unable to stop it. Tremors overtook my body, and just trying to balance on the cobbled steps became impossibly hard. It felt like my limbs were slipping

and sliding all over the place. When I finally succumbed to exhaustion, it was almost a relief.

The respite was short lived. I awoke after a short nap to find myself shivering worse than before, and the cold cut into my side where I was laying like a knife. They were certainly going to put me through the wringer with this training course, I thought. How bad could a couple of weeks with a millionaire playboy be? Seriously, this bordered on the ridiculous.

As my eyes adjusted to the dim moonlight around me, I saw that someone had been outside whilst I was sleeping. There was the outline of a sleeping bag in a clear plastic wrapper, and a bottle of water and energy bar had been left beside it. It was refreshing to know that they didn't actually want to kill me by exposing me to the elements, with a dose of starvation to boot. Looking at my gifts, I slowly worked through my options. I could accept them and have a reasonable night's sleep without my stomach trying to claw its way up through my skin, or I could refuse them. Although I desperately wanted to take the offerings, I did not want my stay outside to be any longer than absolutely necessary. Two days of trying to remain upright on cobbled stones was going to be agony. If I didn't accept the water, and developed hypothermia, someone inside was going to have to make a decision regarding my welfare, I hoped. That would get me inside sooner rather than later, which was preferable to this infernal waiting, although I would be in a sorry state. It was the easy way out, albeit in a weird and wonderful way, and although I hated to admit it, I was going to take it. My body was already half way there. Give it another five or six hours without food, water, and adequate rest, and I was going to be a mess. Did I really want to play that card, though? If someone didn't come and rescue me, I wouldn't be able to get myself out of this very easily after I'd reached a certain state of exhaustion.

Weighing up my options, I decided the smart move would be to get the hell out of here, but I'd already decided I wasn't going to do that. I knew someone was inside that house, because the sleeping bag and food hadn't appeared by magic. So I was going to tough it out. It was a calculated risk, but I was going to take it and see what happened. Besides, I kind of enjoyed the numb feeling that being cold created. It took the edge off things, and sometimes my overactive brain needed to calm down.

Several hours passed, and things were all going swimmingly well until it began to rain. It started off as a slow drizzle, which was almost bearable, although my teeth had now started chattering badly. It then progressed to a great British deluge, where the heavens opened and the water was almost thrown down at you in giant buckets. Considering it was late April, the weather was unusual, but not unheard of. I was in for a rare treat, apparently. Coiling up into a ball on my side,

I tried to protect my face and body as best as I could with my arms as the rain tried to batter me into the cobbles. We'd now gone past ridiculous and entered miserable territory. Why on earth had I agreed to do this? I must be nuts. No wonder Janice had told them where to go. It was too late for me, though. I hadn't the strength to stand up, much less the will to do so. Maybe I'd feel better in the morning. All I wanted to do right now was sleep, although I think I could have confused sleep with being unconscious. I sure hoped those fuckers were watching me. As my body hurtled into blackness, I tried to fight the pull, scrabbling up to my knees, but there was no strength left in my limbs. Little sleep, even less food, and being horribly cold had burned through all my energy stores and left me as weak as a kitten. Had I planned this all along? Did I want to die? I felt my head bang against the hard stone in response, and then there was nothing. It was weirdly comforting.

"What the fuck are you doing, Lois?"

"Mmm?"

I couldn't open my eyes, but I felt my body swaying. The voice was barking at me, but I didn't much care.

"You're supposed to play the game."

"Mmm?" My tongue was cotton wool in my mouth, and forming words was beyond me. I guessed from the jerky movements that I was being carried, and that I was probably not dead. Angels would be a damn site gentler and take a less surly tone with me – I hoped. On the other hand, this angel sounded a lot like James, and hearing his voice made me want to cry.

"Yes. The game. You wait outside. Your knees get sore. You cry, you wail, you beat your fists against the floor in defeat, and then you run. You're the fourth girl they've sent me. My set up worked perfectly well with the other three. Trust you to be an utter pain in the ass."

I was bitterly cold, confused, hungry, and so tired I could barely keep my eyes open. I didn't even try to make sense of what he was telling me.

"Sleepy," I slurred. Snuggling into his chest, I inhaled a zesty mouthful of lime and sighed. It even smelled like James.

"You can't go to sleep. You're hypothermic. We need to get you in a nice hot bath, and get some hot tea down your neck. Whilst I most certainly do not want you here, neither do I want you dead, so if you even think of going to sleep, I'll spank you.

"Mmm." I was back to not wanting to talk.

"And let me tell you, that will warm you up nicely."

The next thing I knew, I was being roughly shaken awake. "Lois. Stay with me.

The bath is running. I'm going to get in with you, and then we're going to warm you up. Don't make me slap you around."

"Unghh." I dipped in and out of consciousness several times on our way to the bathroom. Not even the thought of James could keep me awake, and considering he'd kept me awake for at least the last few weeks, that was saying something. I barely responded to his shaking or veiled threats, and quite frankly I didn't care what he did to me. My body was bone tired, and it needed rest.

I finally managed to rouse myself when I was being dunked into the bath. The warm water lapped around my legs, and life began to stab at my limbs in a very unpleasant fashion.

"Nnghh." That was a 'no, take me out of this bath and let me sleep', but he wasn't having any of it.

"Just give it a couple of minutes, Lois. I promise the pain will go away. It feels hot, but this bath is only lukewarm at best."

When my eyes fully opened, it was with horror that I realised I wasn't actually dead, and that my angel was indeed James Leveritt from Elite Encounters. *Oh, my fucking God.* I immediately spluttered about a bit, and tried my best to set a rocket-like course out of the bathtub, but my nemesis was having none of it.

"Relax into me. I've got a cup of tea and some food if you're hungry?"

I'd finally spent the last reserves of my energy. James's fully clothed body was underneath me, and it should have felt decidedly weird to have his arms around my naked body, but I didn't care. I was far too cold to care about nakedness, food, or even drink for that matter. My head lolled against James's chest as my body sank into the full tub, but he had a fierce grip around my waist, so I knew I wasn't going anywhere. After a few minutes of silence, I began to rouse from my stupor.

"What are you... doing here?" It took a considerable degree of effort to get those words past my lips, but the question had been burning at the back of my brain for a little while now.

"Rescuing you. They paged me about two hours ago to say that you were one stubborn fuck, and that I'd better get my ass down here and get you some medical attention. I broke every damn speed limit in the book to get here, but I'd have broken them all with a good degree more enthusiasm if I'd have known how bad you really were."

My shivering had started again, less severe this time, but it still made my next question extremely difficult to voice.

"Why didn't... the man who left... sleeping bag... rescue me?" I finally managed to get out through my chattering teeth.

"Because he wasn't here. Everything's on camera, Lois. He waited until you

were asleep and dropped the stuff off en route to his next job. When you refused to give in, I was the next closest alternative, and the only man left available to deal with this. Now it's time for me to ask a few questions. Why didn't you take the sleeping bag, or the food and drink? And why on earth are you still here after every instinct in your body must have been screaming to run? I know what they teach you, Lois, and it's to preserve your life at all costs. You did exactly the opposite. By rights, I should phone Sharkey right now and tell her you're not fit for the job." James's arms became a little tighter around my midriff, but I didn't care.

"But you won't." My voice was a small whisper, and my breathing began to sound really loud in the silence that followed.

He grunted. "It'll be a bit difficult explaining how I almost got you killed, although you should take a fair brunt of the responsibility for that."

"I thought there was someone in the house." I was now acutely aware of my nakedness, and that James was behind me with his arms around me. My skin was now on fire, and I wasn't sure who or what was responsible for it.

"I gathered that. I hadn't counted on exactly how stubborn you are, either. I'm undecided as to whether you're one of the craziest operatives they have, or one of the best. I'm veering towards crazy." He sighed.

There was a stainless steel travel cup on the side of the bath full of warm tea, and James made me drink it slowly, sip by sip, after propping me up in a sitting position. It was disgustingly sweet, which almost made me gag, and every time he placed the mug against my lips, I almost jumped. Damn it. I needed to get my reaction to him under control. Calming myself down with large deep breaths, I let my thoughts wander.

In less than a heartbeat, everything about our previous encounter began to make sense. He was an operative, and he'd been checking me out. That meeting had been no chance encounter. I shook my head at my own stupidity. His reactions, his questioning technique, his uncanny ability to read my mind... all of those had been developed through years of careful training. How had I missed that? I wanted to bang my head against the wall.

"Drink, Lois." The mug was at my lips again, and it was being tipped into my mouth, giving me little option but to do as I was told. When all the tea was gone, he turned the hot tap on and slowly poured more warm water into the bath. He kept doing this in increments, until I finally felt pretty toasty.

"Eat."

The energy bar that had been near my sleeping bag earlier reappeared, and as if on cue, my stomach growled in protest.

James began unwrapping it for me. "I'm sorry it's not more appetising, but

there is no food in the house. I'll have to go out for supplies first thing tomorrow." He handed the bar to me, and I took a small bite before nearly spitting the thing straight back out at him. It was like eating cardboard with a hint of chemical lemon flavouring. Oh well. I'd probably eaten worse, although I wasn't entirely sure.

"Eat it up, Lois. Don't make me force-feed you."

I rolled my eyes at James's high-handedness. "Sounds kinky," I said.

"You have no idea."

Finishing the energy bar quickly, because it was the kindest thing to do for my taste buds, I let James hoist me out of the bath. He towelled me down quickly, and I didn't have the energy to object. He'd seen me naked before, and it was unlikely he'd try to jump me this evening. Hell, I wasn't even sure I'd object if he did. Thankfully, I managed to distract my thoughts away from that sticky subject quickly. Noticing that my shivering had stopped, and the vicious prickling of my skin had now subsided, all of a sudden I was feeling a whole lot better. I turned around and gave him a hard stare. "What was in that tea?"

He grinned at me. "A couple of painkillers. I'm not usually very generous with the medication around here, so enjoy them."

I sighed. "It might have been nice if you'd told me that before I drank the tea."

James handed me an old black t-shirt - I pulled it over my head. It stopped just below the tops of my thighs, but anything was better than nothing. My case outside containing all my clothes would be soaked through by now.

"That there is your problem, Lois. You've got to learn to do as you're told. If you're heading towards the land of submission, your life is going to be dictated by someone. If they say eat this, you eat it. If they say crawl about the back yard naked, you do it, no questions asked."

"I did do that," I pointed out, brandishing a tight smile at him.

"No, you didn't," he replied. "You barked a load of questions straight back. You are not submissive material." He put his arm around my shoulder and propelled me out of the bathroom. I had to bite my lip against the protest that wanted to arise. I would not be doing myself any favours if I challenged him on every move he made.

"Tomorrow, you can gather your things and we'll see what we can do about getting you back home. I'll have a word with Sharkey for you."

"No," I said with a little more force than necessary. If the volume of my voice shocked me, James looked stunned.

"No?" The look he gave me was not friendly.

"No. I need to do this."

He stopped dead, and we came to a rather painful abrupt halt. "You *need* to

walk into a certain death trap and have sex with lots of random men?” He raised his eyebrows at me, and his icy blue irises could have given me another dose of hypothermia.

“You don’t know that,” I countered.

His voice went low and soft as he said, “Au contraire, Lois. I do know that for certain. Sharkey knows it too, but you’re just a number to her.”

That little snippet of information was not news to me, so I made no comment.

Leading me into a sterile bedroom, with four bare white walls and a double bed dressed in sheets of the same colour, he turned on the bedside lamp with a sharp click.

“Get in.”

I did as I was told. I was tired, it was a bed, and I’d had a long day. Hauling the covers up high over my neck, I offered him a timid, “Goodnight.” James had rattled me, and I needed some alone time to lick my wounds. The door closed abruptly, and my wish was granted. My face fell. You had to be careful what you wished for, I thought.

Sleep did not come as easily as I’d hoped. As soon as the lights were off, my brain went into overdrive, and I spent the next hour analysing every damn word James had ever said to me. He assumed he knew more about my assignment than me, which generally would have been correct if I played by the rules. I didn’t. Cellular Operations had trained me to snoop, dig, uncover, and leave no stone unturned. What they didn’t know was that I happily hacked through everything else they left out. I’d had a fascination with computers at an early age, and it hadn’t taken me long to learn just about every computer coding language known to man. With that knowledge, it hadn’t been a great leap towards hacking, and these days you’d have to be a technological genius to find me.

I’d known the instant Sharkey had given my assignment away, but there had been nothing I could do about it – without revealing myself, that was. Then it was reassigned again and again, and finally, through some slice of sheer luck, I managed to get a shot at it. If James thought he could talk me out of it, he was much mistaken. I was more than happy to play dumb up to a point, but if it didn’t get me what I wanted, then I’d fight dirty.

I had no doubt the man was serious when he said he’d talk to Miss Sharkey and get me back home. That wasn’t going to happen. I’d do whatever it took to put a spanner in the works, but I would be in Mr. Dumortier’s grounds before the month was out, acting as one of his personal sex slaves, or I’d die trying. It was a distinct possibility, but I’d already factored that risk in. I just needed to be trained up in order to get a shot at it, and while James wasn’t my ideal choice for

the job, I'd waited long enough. It was past time things started going my way, and if I had a cell phone now, I'd be making a few calls. As I didn't, I decided to steal James's.

I much preferred wearing a pair of trousers when going into cat burglar mode. Creeping around the house in a T-shirt that was practically indecent just didn't feel right. That was the least of my worries, though. I now had to figure out where James was sleeping, steal his cell or find a computer, and get a message out. It wasn't going to be as easy as it sounded, but I was up for a challenge.

Thankfully the floor beneath me was tiled, so I didn't have to worry about squeaky floorboards. What I did have to worry about was freezing my ass off yet again, and getting caught. Although getting caught wasn't really an option. I'd just have to make sure I was careful, or I could kiss Alain Dumortier goodbye, because I wasn't getting near the man under any guise other than a submissive.

Releasing a breath of pent up air upon finding my door didn't squeak, I managed to let myself out into the hallway with relative ease. James had left the light on, which was a pain, as it meant my night vision would deteriorate rapidly. I'd have to move as quickly as possible and try my best not to look directly at any light sources. Scanning the area quickly, I picked up five doors in my immediate line of sight.

The first door next to me was ajar and happened to be a bathroom, which was good to know. I stored that little gem for later use. The second door across the hall was locked. If I'd had my purse with me, I could have picked it, but if I wanted to do it here and now, I'd need to search for something like a hacksaw blade or hose clamp in order to prise it open. That was going to be a last resort, too, because the chances were it would wake James up, unless he slept like the dead, and I very much doubted he did.

Door number three was a lounge area. There were several worn leather sofas, a brick inglenook fireplace, and an old wooden coffee table with a couple of magazines thrown on top. It wasn't until door number four that things got considerably more interesting. For starters, it had a deadbolt on the outside, which might have suggested there was something valuable stored inside its depths. Squeezing the handle softly, I gently pushed it forward until it was far enough open that I could peer inside. On my first glance around, I had no idea what I was looking at. Everything was in darkness, and the lines and shapes were unfamiliar to me. It took a good deal of focusing and refocusing before I could make out what I was actually looking at. Then it hit me. This was a dungeon. There were benches much like the ones James had used with me in Elite Encounters, a long line of leather whips, floggers and paddles, and numerous

other strange and wonderful looking torture devices. This was where the training took place, then. I gave it one last look around before I closed the door quietly. Much as I would have loved to have turned the light on and examine everything in more detail, that was not my objective tonight. I needed to get my hands on a cell to make sure I snagged this assignment.

That gave me a moment's pause. James. Could I endure James as my trainer? I had the ideal get-out clause if the answer was no. He didn't want me, and was happy to smooth things over with my boss in order to get rid of me. Maybe Miss Sharkey would pull in a replacement Dom for me? Perhaps I could just wait this out? Having James as my trainer would be hell-on-wheels, with a Ferrari style engine, I was sure. Shaking my head, I continued on my journey through the house. Janice hadn't got a second chance at the op, and neither would I if I flunked this. At the end of the day, it didn't matter how hard I found the training or the *trainer* - all that mattered was that I got my ass inside Alain's house. Besides, so what if it was James? I'd be submissive material in a matter of weeks, and then I'd never have to see him again. I just needed to get him focused on the job at hand.

Door number five was the last I could see, but the hallway veered off to the left at the end, so it was possible he wasn't anywhere near me yet. To be on the safe side, I approached this door with considerably more caution than the other four, and that told me all I needed to know. My sixth sense had an uncanny ability to spot danger, and it was screaming all sorts of obscenities at me now.

This time, as soon as I pulled the handle down, the fucking thing squeaked. I then stopped dead in my tracks, listening for any sound that might indicate someone was alive in there. The house was eerily silent in response. If James was in there, he was an exceptionally quiet snoozer, but that wasn't unheard of. Standing there for a good minute or so, I finally gathered the courage to depress the handle degree by slow degree until I could push the door forward. As if in response to my earlier alarm bells, a big oak bed greeted me, with a large lump in the middle of it. James appeared to be completely buried under the covers. I didn't like that scenario much. If I couldn't see flesh, I wasn't entirely convinced, so looking all around me to make sure the coast was clear, I approached cautiously.

Desperately wanting to peel back the covers and check James was in there, I decided that would be foolhardy at best. The slightest movement might awake him, and I wasn't prepared to take that chance. Thankfully, this wasn't a life or death situation, so if my decision backfired on me, it wouldn't be the end of the earth. Tiptoeing further into the room, I took a cursory look around, trying to figure out where he'd leave his phone. On the bedside cabinets? No, they were

empty of everything except a glass of water and an alarm clock. The only other furniture in the room was a wardrobe, and it was feasible that his cell might be resting inside. There was also a chance it might be charging in a socket somewhere, lazing about on the floor, or in another room of the house entirely.

I was brave enough to walk around to the other side of the bed, just to make sure it wasn't on the floor, but I wasn't opening the wardrobe unless it was a last resort. I'd search the rest of the house first. Turning around to sneak back out again, I nearly died when I saw James standing in the doorway. He held a CZ 75 pistol in his hand that was currently aimed at my head. Apparently, he didn't think much of my snooping. The snick of the safety being released confirmed that he was pissed.

"Evening, Lois." He smiled at me, but the smile did not reach his eyes. He was looking at me as a predator looks at prey, and that was not a good thing. That meant I was in trouble. Standing there, in my ridiculously short nightshirt, I held on to the tremors that wanted to escape.

"James." My voice was soft.

"Did you find what you were looking for?" His tone had a hard quality, and this James was a world away from my earlier saviour. His eyes were big, black orbs, and they were soulless.

"I can explain," I whispered, even though I couldn't. What I could do was lie, but those didn't tend to work very well against this man.

Using his free hand to flick the light switch, he bathed the room in colour, and I blinked against the glare.

"You can explain slowly sneaking into every room in the house, before settling on my room to do some more intimate sneaking? This should be good. Let's have it, then." His aim didn't waver.

I let out a long, slow breath and realised that my usually sharp brain wasn't firing as quickly as it normally did. "Well..." I stalled.

"Get on your knees first, Lois. If I'm going to interrogate you, I might as well do it properly."

Swallowing hard, I raised my gaze to connect with James's, and now that his features were lit up, I felt the air rush out of my body. There was desire in his eyes, and I felt a pool of answering heat collect at the juncture of my legs. Dammit to hell, this was exactly what I didn't need right now.

Staying right where I was, I said, "You won't shoot me." It didn't come out as confidently as I hoped, but it was a reasonable effort.

Unfortunately, my words had the opposite effect I'd hoped for. He dropped his aim to my thigh and began counting. "Three... two..."

I was on my knees before he could utter number one, and my pulse rate had

just managed to hit an all-new record high. Using my hands, I steadied myself against his thighs before drawing back as if I'd been stung.

"Spoilsport," he uttered.

Replacing the safety, he tucked the pistol in the back of his jeans.

"Fold your hands behind your back, Lois." His voice was low and deadly.

"Or what?" I muttered, already furious that my knees had collided with the cold, solid travertine tiles. The contact stung, and I wasn't used to being bested by anyone.

"Or I rip that delightful little T-shirt off you, bend you over the bed, and fuck every single hole you possess several times over, whether you like it or not."

My eyes drew upwards to meet his as my mouth opened in shock. "You wouldn't," I squeaked, although I suspected he absolutely would.

"Eyes on the floor, Lois. You look up at me again and I'll make good on my threat." The biting quality to his voice had my eyes on his shoes instantly, and my arms wound themselves behind me. For some reason, the fact that I obeyed him made me furious.

"I'm not afraid of you," I whispered.

He bent over me, gripping my wrists together and tying something around them whilst he murmured in my ear, "Not yet, you aren't, but you will be." He then straightened himself up, presenting me with his bulging crotch. Fuck.

I didn't risk a glance upwards to see if his eyes had the conviction of his words. I didn't need to. We were playing a game I couldn't hope to win.

"Right, this is how it's going to work. You're going to tell me exactly what you were doing in my room. If I detect any stalling or lying, there will be a forfeit to pay, Lois. Can you guess what it might be?"

I didn't want to guess, so I remained stubbornly silent. If I were to guess, I'd say it involved sex or sucking his cock, but I wasn't about to volunteer that information willingly.

"Fair enough," he said when he'd given me more than enough time to reply. "We'll leave it as a surprise. He then threaded his fingers through the mop of my now nearly dry hair and pulled sharply at the roots, yanking my head back. Looking me squarely in the eye, he said, "What were you doing in my room, Lois?"

"I was looking for a phone. I wanted to call home." It was only half a lie, and there was no stalling. I managed to utter it without blinking, fidgeting, or stammering. He'd have to be a fucking God or mind reader to see past that.

He brushed my bottom lip with the pad of his thumb three or four times before he said, "There's your first lie." With his free hand, he slowly undid the zip of his black jeans, then pressed my nose into his crotch. There was no way I could

move. His grip on my hair was too tight to do anything. Sitting still, I concentrated on breathing. He'd release me eventually. And he did, but not before I got a massive eyeful of his crown jewels.

"Let's try that question again, Lois, and this time, if you fuck me around, you can pull my boxers down slowly with your teeth and let that naughty little tongue of yours lick its way back up my cock." Yanking my head back sharply again, so he could lavish me with a look forged in hell, he repeated, "What were you doing in my room, Lois?"

I nearly choked in my hurry to get my words out. "I was looking for your phone," I protested. "Not to call home, though. I wanted to text Sharkey."

There was a sigh, and then a long pause, before he said, "You disappoint me, Lois."

"No, I was telling the truth!" My eyes bulged in my head whilst my nervous system battered a firestorm of neurons together. It looked like I was going to have dinner after all, and I wasn't sure if I should be horrified or pleased. James continued before I could figure out which one it was.

"I'm disappointed, because whilst I now know that you're telling the truth, a true submissive would have jumped at the chance to blow someone." He released the grip he had on my hair and pulled the zipper of his fly back up.

"Go to bed, Lois. You're going home first thing in the morning." He ran his hand through his mop of dark brown hair, squeezed his eyes shut before reopening them, and then added, "Oh, and by the way, the cell is in the car, and if you can get past the well-respected Mercedes security system, you'll need to figure out my six-digit passcode and fake my fingerprint. With your hands tied behind your back, I think you're going to have a fun evening." Turning around, he switched the light off, strode out of the room, and shut the door.

Eleven

Well, that told me. Apparently, I was not sex-slave material. I didn't know whether to be flattered or annoyed. Anyway, there wasn't time to think about that now. I had to focus, because I had a busy evening ahead of me.

Jumping in the middle of James's big double bed, I did a series of rather painful contortionist moves to get my tied hands back in front of me. Thankfully, I was pretty fit. Whilst my arms would probably be sore tomorrow, the damage wouldn't last for long. When I'd got them under my backside and managed to thread my legs through them, the hard work was nearly over. Now I just had to worry the knot with my teeth and hope he hadn't been a Boy Scout.

After ten long minutes of chewing, I delivered a whole vocabulary of cuss words to James's Scoutmaster. He'd knotted the cotton cloth in several different places, and when I finally got free of the infernal thing, I could almost have offered myself up as a virgin sacrifice to any God that would have me. The fact that I wasn't actually a virgin would be a moot point, I was sure. Scowling darkly, I threw the swathe of black material on the floor. Deciding to keep the near death, or, and probably more accurately, actual death experiences for when I entered Alain's house, I had things to do, cars to break into, and iPhones to hack. The night was not young, either, so I'd better get a move on.

At least the first task of the evening would be easy. Opening up my right palm to reveal the treasure hidden within, I grinned to myself. There, nestled inside my hand, was a set of car keys. Sporting the familiar three triangle emblem, they were the keys to a Mercedes saloon. When I landed on the floor, on my knees in front of him, I didn't actually think he'd shoot me, but it wasn't worth taking the risk. It also gave me ample opportunity to land heavily against him and whip his keys out of his pocket. I'd had a feeling I might need them, and my hunch had proved correct. Opening the car was going to be a cinch. Everything after that would be a bastard, but at least the car would be relatively painless.

Pressing my ear to the door, I listened for sounds of movement outside. I gave it a minute, but in that time, I heard nothing. Maybe James had decided I wasn't much of a threat with my arms tied, and had finally gone to bed. It was time to find out.

Pulling the door lever down sharply, to minimise the resulting squeak, I paused and listened intently. It was still deathly quiet. Good. Then I pulled back and... nothing. What the hell? My jaw dropped. He'd locked me in! How had I missed that? Geez, I was slipping. No wonder there wasn't a sound to be heard. The

man had nothing to worry about. I was locked in a room with my hands tied up. How much trouble could I be?

Urrghh. Next time I came on assignment, I was going to hide my lock picking kit in an internal cavity. Honestly. Biting my lip in frustration, I did a few deep yoga breaths to get some perspective on the situation. In through the nose and out through the mouth. In through the nose... fuck that. What was I thinking? Where did I need to be? *Outside*. Were there any other exits out of the room? Yes. There was a window. Was it locked? I ran over to check. No. Fan-bloody-tastic. This could still work.

Opening the window to its widest angle, I decided it was a good job I hadn't eaten much this week. The leaded windowpanes were narrow, but they left just about enough space for me to squeeze through. Thankfully, I was on the ground floor, so the drop was a small one. That was my only plus. On the minus side, I landed straight into a rose bush, several thorns diving straight through one foot, and the other foot landed ankle deep in mud. I sighed. It was going to be one of those days. Untangling my T-shirt from the blasted plant that wanted to eat me alive, I searched slowly from left to right, looking for a car. Nothing. As it was going to be difficult to hide, I figured there must be some kind of parking space around the back. Sprinting down the stone steps and over the gravel, I winced. Still, it was too late to worry about shoes. If my feet were going to be cut to ribbons, I might as well make sure it was for a good reason.

Sure enough, behind the back of the house there was a double garage, and nestled in one of the spaces was a jet black Mercedes. As soon as I was in grabbing distance of the door handle, I depressed the central locking release button and a bright flash of the indicators greeted me. Success. From there, it didn't take me long to find his cell and charger in the glove compartment, which wasn't locked. *James, you're a total amateur*, I thought, but I couldn't help a sigh of relief. It would make my job considerably easier.

Searching the back seat of the car, I wondered if there was a laptop stashed in here somewhere. There was no question there would be one about somewhere, but was it in the car or the house? Leaning over the seat, I confirmed that it wasn't in the back, but it might be in the trunk. When he'd arrived, he'd been in a rush to get me indoors, so there was a chance he hadn't bothered to unload anything yet. Crossing my fingers that my luck would hold just a little bit longer, I got out of the car and opened the trunk. For the first time that day, I smiled. There was an Antler laptop bag, and an overnight bag, if I wasn't much mistaken. Holding my breath, I pulled out the slim case and unzipped it. An Apple Mac greeted me. Not sure if my day could get any better, I nestled myself in the back seat of the car, oblivious to the cold that was once again seeping into

my bones, and fired up the computer. From there it was all smooth sailing. All I had to do was switch it off and reboot it in recovery mode. It was simple enough to change the password and begin my second trial of the evening - the iPhone. This was a little more challenging, but where there was a will, there was indeed a way.

When I'd finally hacked my way into James's phone, managing to bypass both the code and fingerprint recognition software, I was shivering once again, though I didn't let it bother me. I sent a quick text to Miss Sharkey, having memorised her number off by heart, and that was almost it. There was just the small matter of how to get back into the main house again. I could either try to go in via the door in my room, or the front door, but both options were locked and would require some careful 'nudging' before I carried out the next part of my plan.

Shutting the car door quietly, grasping the torch I found by the driver's side door, I padded around to the garage area. I guess you'd call it a cart lodge really, because there weren't any doors to the structure. There were two wooden arches where you could drive a couple of cars through, and a couple of makeshift plywood shelves that ran around the interior. They were covered in all sorts of things, from half-used paint cans to car wax and chamois leather, but there was nothing that was going to get through a locked door for me. Urrgh, please don't let me fall at the last hurdle, I thought sourly as I searched through every last scrap available on the shelves. I wanted something thin, preferably metallic, and sturdy. A small screwdriver would have been excellent, but I didn't think my luck was going to extend that far. A ballpoint pen would have been lovely. You can just slide the ink cartridge out and use that, but none were forthcoming. My favourite place to search for picks was usually the garage, but failing that, the kitchen was a good second choice. Bamboo skewers or toothpicks worked a treat. Alas, I wasn't getting near the kitchen without a lock pick, so I needed to find something outside. As I worked around the shelves, I began to get a little despondent. Sponges, window wash, plant pots, fertiliser, a few coins, several old receipts, lots of rags, and a handheld vacuum cleaner were found and discarded. Reaching the end of the shelves and coming up empty-handed, I wanted to scream, but I didn't have time to waste.

Giving up on the garage, I went back inside the Mercedes and decided I'd search the thing from top to bottom to find a pen. There had to be one in there somewhere. I went through all the pockets and compartments, searched under the seats and mats, and even went into the trunk to look for treasure. No joy. Exhausting all my options, I finally had one last chance left. It was with bated breath that I sat the laptop case back on my lap and crossed all the fingers and

toes that I had. Could there be a pen in here?

There was a diary, but it didn't have a pen attached. I spent a couple of minutes leafing through its pages, seeing if I could unearth anything of interest, but it seemed to be work related and mostly in code. Having not the time or energy to decipher its treasures, I eventually stuffed it back in its hidey hole, mostly in despair, as it seemed that I would have to trudge back to my locked cell in defeat. It wasn't the grand finale I was hoping for, but in all fairness, I hadn't done a bad evening's work - I'd have to be content with that. Letting a large sigh escape, I shook my head and tried to stay positive. Maybe something would come to me later in my room. Far too cold to stay outside a moment longer, I decided it was time to get back indoors. As I hastily replaced the diary in its bag, my fingers caught against the edge of the pocket and I felt something small and sharp. Holding my breath, I sent out a silent prayer to the big guy above. "Oh God. Please let this be what I think it is," I whispered to myself. Upon further careful exploration, I found not one, but two safety clips nestled at the bottom of the pocket. Halle-fucking-lujah. My smile was back, and it was bigger than ever.

Putting everything back in its place, bar the cell and the paperclips, I locked the car shut and headed back to my window. Deciding that James's room would have the easiest lock to pick, I neatly avoided my thorny friends on my return visit and entered from a side angle. My bare feet thanked me. When I was back inside the room and the window was firmly shut, I contemplated taking a short nap, but then discarded the idea. There was no way I would get to sleep as hyped up as I was, so I might as well roll with plan number two. Besides, I could already smell James's scent on the bed, and as soon as that enveloped me, there'd be little sleeping involved.

Concentrate on plan number two, Lois. Yes, what was that again? Ah, yes. Strip naked, crawl across the floor wiggling my ass, attract James's attention, talk dirty, and then throw his damn cell at him and hopefully hit the asshole on the head with it. That was plan two in a nutshell. What could go wrong? And how did you talk dirty?

Jogging lightly on the spot to warm myself up, I found myself nice and toasty in under ten minutes. Next, I grabbed my two paperclips, made a tension wrench with one, and used the other as a pick. Gently wriggling it up and down, I heard a series of clicks as I triggered each of the door pins, and then the door handle finally turned. Success! Well, at least that part of the plan was easy. I gave myself a mental pat on the back. Peeling the door back slowly, I turned my head towards the left as I intended to explore new territory, so it was with a bit of a shock when a voice came out of nowhere.

"Took you long enough."

Lunging for my attacker instinctively, I found his leg and tried to take it out from under him. He was already one step ahead of me, though. Crashing into me with all of his body weight, he put me off balance, and as I stepped away to counter the effect, he had an elbow in my neck and an ankle under my knee, propelling me towards the floor. With a sickening weightless feeling, I realised that my feet were no longer on the floor and my head was about to make a rather unpleasant acquaintance with the floor. Closing my eyes tightly against the inevitable crack of my skull against tile, the sickening contact never came. What happened next, however, was much worse than a little bone crunching. Six foot, three inches of heavily muscled sinew and bone came crashing down upon me and literally knocked every ounce of breath I possessed out of my body. He did catch me, though, so I guess I could be thankful for that.

“You set me up,” I said breathlessly, and it was difficult to say whether my lack of air was from his body weight crushing my lungs, or just his general proximity to me. I sincerely hoped it was the former.

He then braced himself against the floor, allowing me to breathe once again, but the simple act of drawing air into my body appeared to be almost impossible. Great. This was the last thing I needed.

“Not exactly. I just wanted to see what you were capable of. When I send people into near certain-death situations, I like to make sure they at least have a sporting chance of coming out alive.”

Reaching my arm out to slap him, he neatly grabbed it. “Don’t even think about it. Besides, you aren’t getting into the Dumortier estate without my help.”

He had a point, but it didn’t make me feel any better. “Did I pass muster?” I muttered.

“If it was up to me, I’d send you straight back home again, but you’ve just texted your boss, telling her I’m thoroughly impressed with your talents thus far, unless I’m much mistaken?” He raised both eyebrows at me and gave me a dark look.

My jaw wanted to hang open in shock, but I refused to let it. James Leverett did not read minds. Breathe. There was a reasonable explanation for his apparent foresight, and it probably lay in computer tech. He must have had his phone rigged up to something. Either that or he’d had cameras on me the whole time. Anyway, it didn’t matter. Hopefully, I had achieved my objective.

“And are you?” As soon as the question popped out of my mouth, I wanted to scoop it back in with both hands, but, unfortunately, James had a hold of those.

“No. I think you’ll be dead within a week.” I could feel his warm breath on my cheek, and his scent was almost intoxicating when I was this close to him. All my instincts were screaming run, but that wasn’t an option.

“Why do you care whether I live or die?”

“I don’t. That’s not the issue here. What I care about is whether I’ll have to risk my ass trying to extricate yours when you fuck up.”

I was staring at his lips, thinking of mine locked around them, and the thought was making my skin prickle all over. It was also doing other things, like hardening my nipples and soaking my panties. *Lois, oh Lois, don’t go there*, I told myself. My brain was several light years away when his words finally kicked in. Scrambling to think of a reply, which was yet another thing to be annoyed about, I said, “I don’t fuck up.”

“Let me rephrase that, then. What I care about is whether I’ll have to risk my ass trying to extricate yours when you fuck up or *lie*. Richard Mullane wasn’t all that long ago, sweetheart, and I have a good memory.”

Those ice-blue eyes of his tackled mine, and the battle they fought was dirty. How was I supposed to think with those boring into my retinas? There was no hope for me.

“I didn’t expect my dinner date to interrogate the living daylight out of me, nor did I expect him to be James Bond in disguise. My bad?” I said testily. “If I’m on an op, I do my homework.”

“Do you find me attractive, Lois?”

He smiled at me, but sensibly did not let go of my wrists. Urgh. I wanted to slap the man so bad. How many weeks would we have to be together? If I had to deal with that ego for more than a couple of days, I might have to commit murder.

“No.” It was short and succinct.

“You’ve just lied to me again, Lois. Tsk, tsk, tsk. What am I going to do with you?” There was laughter dancing in his eyes, and I didn’t much like it.

“Why, you absolute bast...” I never got to utter the last syllable. His mouth came crashing down on mine and all conscious thought ran out of the window. Moaning as his lips took over mine, my eyes fluttered closed as I let him taste me. I couldn’t get enough. Couldn’t get close enough, couldn’t delve far enough, couldn’t taste deeply enough. My body was spinning out of control, happily following its own agenda, and I was simply along for the ride. Exploding with adrenaline everywhere, my head spun as I tried to get a grip on my raging hormones. When he pulled away from me, seconds later, without a hint of warning, I wondered what I had done wrong.

“I think that answers my question,” he said thoughtfully.

While I was heaving for breath, with swollen lips and a delicate blush creeping across my chest, James appeared absolutely unaffected by me. My body wanted to spontaneously combust, but he wasn’t even breathing hard. It was the last

straw. Somehow managing to free my right wrist with an impressive burst of adrenaline, I went for his windpipe, but he was ready for me. Slamming me back into the floor, he grasped both my wrists with one arm, and before I knew what was happening, there was a hand between my legs, rubbing gently at my clit.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” I snarled.

“You don’t know what I’m doing?” he said with a smug little smile upon his face.

I rolled my eyes in annoyance and growled. “Oh, I know exactly what you’re doing. What I want to know is why you’re doing it?”

“Well, you signed yourself up for the position of sex slave. I tried to talk you out of it, but not only did you not listen to me, you effectively fucked me over in order to make sure I followed through on this gig. I am curious, though. What did you think you’d be doing here? Some washing up and a spot of cleaning? That’s not how it’s going to play out over at Dumortier’s.”

His fingers became firmer and more insistent, and it was all I could do not to moan.

“Are you wet for me, Lois?”

I knew that question was a two-edged sword. If I said no, he was going to prove me wrong. The man wouldn’t think twice about getting his fingers dirty, judging by my previous experience with him. My options of retaliation were limited, but I gave it my best shot.

“Of course I’m wet. You’re a reasonably attractive male, and you’re rubbing my clit. Also, the human body is made up of around sixty percent water, and let’s face it, some parts are wetter than others.” I smiled sweetly up at him. Let that wipe the smug, patronising grin off his face.

He clamped his lips together, and I had the suspicious feeling he was trying hard not to laugh.

“Do you want an orgasm, Lois?” That wiped the fake smile off my face instantly, and even if it hadn’t, two of his fingers sliding deep inside me would have done the trick. Oh God, that felt so damn good.

“Can’t think...” I mumbled helplessly. It was true. My brain had gone on holiday while my hormones were having a party. The words I wanted to articulate would not come, and I didn’t want to answer that question.

“You need to think about whether you want an orgasm or not?” he purred thoughtfully in my ear. “Interesting. Well,” he said, thrusting away with three fingers now, so I practically dissolved on the spot, “you’d better not have one, then.” I wasn’t quite sure I understood him, because his beautifully long fingers slammed into me five or six times, making me gasp out loud, before he withdrew them and let go of my wrists. I was speechless.

“If I offer you an orgasm in future, Lois, I’d be a damn site quicker to accept it, and a lot more enthusiastic about the prospect. It’s up to you, of course. It’s your pleasure at the end of the day, but if you don’t want to enjoy yourself while you’re here, that’s perfectly fine by me.” He sucked his index finger into his mouth as he tasted me, and his eyes fairly sparkled in triumph. Repeating the gesture with his middle finger, I kind of got the impression he was telling me where to go. He then licked each finger clean, even the ones that hadn’t been inside me, and I wondered if the man knew what that action did to my insides.

“I don’t want an orgasm from you,” I said, desperately trying to wriggle out of his one handed grasp. It was infuriating that he could control me so easily, and the attraction I felt towards him was almost debilitating in itself, so I was doubly fucked.

He laughed then, a deep, beautiful chuckle that resonated around the room.

“I’m happy to play it that way if it suits you, Lois. To be honest, after the stunt you’ve just pulled, you thoroughly deserve to be denied all pleasure under my hands.” The man looked smug, and I couldn’t help but wonder what was in store for me under his roof.

“How long am I likely to be here?” I whispered. It would have been nice to have been able to voice the question at a normal volume, but the weight of his body was severely restricting my lung capacity.

“As long as it takes, Lois.” That sentence was rather chillingly presented to me, with a pair of icy blue eyes drilling the statement home. Great. I’d made an enemy before my assignment had barely begun. Way to go, Lois.

Licking my lips slowly as I felt his erection graze the cleft between my legs, I bit down on the groan that wanted to escape.

“And how long, *approximately*, do you think that will be?” I asked testily. Somehow, I’d managed to add a little weight behind my voice, although the man wasn’t making it easy for me.

“Lois, your ass isn’t making it outside this compound until I sign it off. When you begin to obey every damn word I say, almost before I’ve said it, that’s your ticket to ride.” Staring at me intently for a few seconds, he then said, “For some reason, I have a feeling it’s going to be quite a journey to get to that point.” Grazing his teeth along the other shell of my ear, for no other reason than to torment me, I shuddered in response. This man was going to be my downfall. A terrible premonition of dread began to descend over me, but I ignored it. James Leverett wasn’t the enemy. Dumortier was. I needed to remember that.

“Can you get off me now? Breathing is near impossible with you on top of me.” My mouth had hardened into a militant line, although it didn’t seem to bother James one little bit. Then I wriggled around as much as I possibly could

to make things difficult for him, but his grip on my hands never loosened.

“Are you going to continue behaving like a little kid, or can you put on some big girl shoes?” He gave me a warning look, but since when had I paid attention to one of those?

“Jury’s out on that one,” I said, batting my eyelashes provocatively. “Surely you can handle one *little kid*?” There may have been an acid slant of my tongue on the last two words.

“Oh, I can handle her alright, but I don’t want to break any of her bones on the first day. It would be rather unsporting of me, don’t you think?” To add insult to injury, he winked at me. “Now I’m going to let go of your wrists on two conditions. One, you don’t fly at me, and two, you go back to your room and try and get in a few hours’ sleep before we begin training in the morning. Do we have a deal?”

“Absolutely,” I lied. Let the bastard try to get any tells from my deadpan face this time. I was royally mad, and I intended to unleash some of my venom at the earliest opportunity.

“Failure to follow my rules will always have consequences, Lois, and you won’t like them very much.”

“They’re probably not going to be any worse than hypothermia, though, right?”

I sneered at him and thought, for one tiny moment, that there was a flicker of something close to emotion in his eyes. I blinked and, when I looked again, all traces of it had gone. The man was a robot. Where had my dinner date gone? James was more machine than human, and I didn’t know what to make of him.

Suddenly, and with no warning, my hands were released. It took me all of a second to compute that up to my brain, and then I managed to get an arm around his neck and a knee in his solar plexus in a mighty scrabble to gain the upper hand. The next thing I knew, I had a handcuff around my wrist. He then applied so much pressure to my joint, I thought my radius and ulna were about to snap in two.

“Stop,” I screamed, immediately ceasing my attempt, trying to lessen the pain in my throbbing wrist by staying as still as I possibly could.

“Do I have your attention now, Lois?”

James was up close and personal in my face, and I didn’t much like it. Unfortunately, there wasn’t a lot I could do about it.

“Yes,” I squeaked painfully.

“Good.” Clipping the other handcuff sharply to his wrist, I stared at him in horror as he said, “Brace yourself, Lois. It’s time to face your punishment.”

Twelve

James half pulled, half dragged me back to my room, and he wasn't particularly gentle about it. During that time, my mind raced. Was he going to give me a spanking? Would it be unbearable? Could he make me cry? Would he pull one of his medical stunts, like he did back at Elite Encounters? Oh shit, what had I just done? I was now handcuffed to a madman, and about to pay the price.

When we got back to my room, he picked me up and dumped me on the bed. Plucking a key out of his pocket, he then unlocked his cuff, only to refasten it to a metal headboard, which hadn't been there earlier.

"Before you even think about escaping, Lois, I've drilled the headboard into the floor with nine inch nails." He then grabbed the base of my T-shirt, and even though I knew what he was about to do before he did it, I still couldn't help my eyes wincing.

"You wouldn't," I whispered, already knowing that he would.

"Watch me." His face was grim as he ripped my shirt in two from the bottom all the way to the top.

It was bizarre, but I felt much more vulnerable like this, and considering I'd been crawling around naked earlier, that thought might need to be examined. Mind you, I hadn't been handcuffed to the bed back then.

"Right, stay there and don't get up to any trouble while I go and gather a couple of things. The cuffs have been double locked, so best of luck trying to pick them in the five minutes I'll be gone." With that, he turned his back on me and the door clicked quietly shut behind him. I was then left to sweat it out. A few ferocious tugs at the ornate metal bedpost confirmed that James had not been lying when he'd said he'd screwed it to the floor. It didn't budge an inch. Knowing that I had nothing on my person in which to pick a lock, I didn't even bother tampering with them. Picking them would take far more time than I had, in any case. *Think, Lois. Think.* But no amount of thinking could come up with a solution of how to get the better of someone a good degree stronger than I was, while I had a hand cuffed to the bed. It was possible that I could get him in some kind of hold, and in enough pain that he might release the handcuff key, but it was a long shot at best. I was trying desperately to come up with another plan that was more likely to succeed when James re-entered the room with a super-sized dildo and a bottle of what looked suspiciously like lubricant. All coherent thought flew out of my head.

"You bring that thing near me and I'll kill you," I said. I meant it, too. Whether I could carry through with that threat was anybody's guess, but my eyes shot sharp

metal daggers in his direction.

He stopped and slowly turned his head to stare at me before releasing a killer grin. “You’re welcome to try, darling, but I think the odds of me getting through this alive are pretty favourable. Besides, in a few minutes time, I give you my personal guarantee that you’ll have forgotten your own name. If I do my job properly, you might even forget to breathe.” He began unbuttoning his casual white shirt, and I think both of his premonitions came true almost instantly.

“Why are you doing that?” There might have been a sliver of fear in my voice, but there was arousal, too. James was entirely wrong for me, but in all the right ways.

“Are you scared, Lois?” His tone of voice was goading, and I knew he wanted a reaction from me.

“Just curious. Do you fuck all your trainees? Is that a perk of the job?” That fired the ball back in his court, and sure enough, his face darkened.

“You’re my first trainee, Lois, so I’m not sure yet. There’s not much call for this kind of training normally, which is a damn shame, but there you have it.” The shirt was now fully open, and he draped either side over his shoulders until it slid gently down his back. An eight pack of fully ripped abdominal muscles greeted me, and I think I nearly ruptured my spleen as a fistful of desire smacked me straight in the chest. *The ball, Lois. Where is the ball?* Oh, right.

“Well, I hope you have fun. I’ll just lie here and think of England,” I said, twiddling a lock of my hair.

He laughed out loud then. “I can see why Sharkey employed you. Even when you’re rattled, you put up a good fight. Relax, Lois. I’m not going to have sex with you.”

I wasn’t sure whether I was relieved or disappointed. Hopefully that meant James couldn’t figure it out, either.

“You’re going to have sex with lots of different people in La Carte Blanche, though. So if the thought of having sex with me is so unpalatable, are you sure you’re going to be able to cut it when you’re amongst the big guns?”

“Yes.” My response was self-assured and I meant it. James was the problem. Ninety-nine percent of the male population didn’t bother me in the slightest, and sex could be cold and clinical when I wanted it to be. This wasn’t the first time I’d been required to have sex whilst on assignment, and it usually went without a hitch.

“So what’s your problem with me?”

“Let’s not do this now,” I said, shaking my head.

“I don’t think it will be any easier doing it later, Lois, but I’m game if you are.” He held up the dildo and the bottle of liquid lubricant, and I knew exactly what he was thinking. Let’s question her when she can’t think straight. If my session at Elite Encounters was anything to go by, he was not going to play nice. Shit. I was

doomed. Get that handcuff key and get it fast, I told myself, trying to focus on where James might have hidden it.

“Oh, and Lois?” In his hand was the object of my desire. He was waving it from left to right so that it almost sparkled in the light. I had a bad feeling about this.

“Yes, darling?” I purred, determined not to let him know that he was bothering me.

That made him pause. Score one for me.

“It’s darling now, is it?” he asked with an amused sidelong glance at me.

“Well, this is the second time I’ve taken my clothes off for you, and I find the word ‘Sir’ slightly too formal for my tastes.” So what if I was signing my own death warrant. I figured I might as well go down in flames.

James made a great show of hooking the keyring over the door handle, and I wanted to scream, but somehow I managed to hold it together. There went my only escape plan. Fuck.

Meanwhile, he stared at me intently, as if waiting to see whether I would crack. It would take more than a dildo. He should have been able to figure that out by himself.

“Well, I can see I’m going to have a fun few days in store for me, Lois. Wish I could say the same for you.” The man advanced towards me slowly, as if cornering a frightened animal, carrying his instruments of torture in his right hand. When he reached the headboard, he set them down on the bedside cabinet. Hearing the squeak of the drawer, I turned around to find he had another set of handcuffs grasped in his fingers.

“Give me your other hand.”

I snorted. “So you can handcuff that one, too? You must think I’m absolutely crazy, Mr. Leveritt.”

Tilting his head to one side, James smiled. “We’ve gone from darling to Mr. Leveritt in less than two minutes. It’s an improvement. You’ll be saying Sir in no time.” I snorted again. It wasn’t a particularly pretty noise, but I didn’t care.

“Lois, you have three seconds to give me your hand or I’m going to spank that ass of yours red raw, then fuck you so hard you’ll see stars.”

“That’s funny. I’m pretty sure you said earlier that you weren’t going to fuck me, and it’s going to be really hard trying to spank me, as I’m sitting on my ass.” Apparently they were the wrong words to say, because no sooner had they left my lips than James had pounced upon me. With a knee in either side of my rib cage, he pressed his chest into my wriggling body to flatten me, but I didn’t give up without a fight. Although aware that I was scrambling around for a lost cause, I gave him all that I had, and let me tell you it wasn’t easy without the use of one arm.

The struggle was short-lived, as I knew it would be. He had my wrist in his grasp

and an iron shackle around my one free remaining hand in less than ten seconds. I couldn't help a scream of frustration.

Sitting on my waist, thankfully supporting most of his weight with his legs, he frowned at me.

"Lois. Why are you fighting me? You went to a great deal of trouble to make sure I took you on, yet here you are trying to slam your fists against my chest. You can go home any time you like, sweetheart, and it would be much better for me all round if you did."

It was clear James thought I was soft in the head, and who could blame him? Had my instructor been anyone else, I would have done exactly as I was told. That was the normal protocol. Get in, obey orders, and get the hell out as quickly as possible. The trouble was that I couldn't think straight around James. Wanting to scream again, but knowing I was in enough trouble already, I bit my lip. He tilted his head, looked me straight in the eye, and frowned again.

"Do you want to go home, Lois? I can have you out of these cuffs in a jiffy. All you have to do is say the word." He stroked my cheek with his index finger and I shuddered. The chemistry was instant, shocking, and his touch literally burned me. It was a headache I didn't want or need.

Taking a deep breath, I asked, "James, is there any chance you can get a different instructor to train me?" I said it in a nice, pleasant, friendly way, and hoped I'd get a decent response. It was about the only card left to me, so I might as well play it.

"Ah, now we're getting somewhere," he said as he began to spread my legs, settling himself in between them.

"Why do you want a different trainer, Lois? Don't you think I'm up to the task?" His hands were running up the insides of my legs, and the contact was powerful and intense, though his hands were soft and light.

"I... what... are you... doing?" His fingers were reaching for dangerously high ground, and I wasn't sure I could take another round of the magic he dealt.

James looked up at me innocently and blinked. "Performing a strip search. In order to make sure you stay where you're supposed to be, I'd better make sure you have nothing on your person which might enable you to get out of those cuffs." His fingers reached the top 'V' of my thighs, and I squeaked in panic. "Why do you want a different instructor, Lois? Last chance to answer the question before I up the stakes on my interrogation techniques."

I didn't like the sound of that. "Wait!" My voice was hoarse, and I had to swallow down the almost impossible lump that was lodged there. Thankfully the man was true to his word, and his hands stopped in their tracks.

"I'm listening." His ice-blue eyes focused on me, and if naked chests could talk, this one was saying, why the hell are you still talking? No, wait, that was what the

rest of my body was saying, and it had a point.

“We kind of have a history. I think it would be better if I started from a blank slate. Someone I don’t know, haven’t met before...” I was babbling, and it was clear by his amused expression that he knew it.

“You don’t know me, Lois. You’ve met me twice before, for a couple of hours on each occasion. I hardly think that classifies us as friends.” His fingers renewed their approach to the landing strip, and in order to avoid them, my legs flailed about on the bed. As he had his legs lodged in between them, my effort was wasted.

“Relax, Lois. You’re far too uptight. That will have to change, and I have a feeling I know just how to loosen you up. When was the last time you had an orgasm?”

My eyes nearly popped out of my head. My mouth opened and then closed again, because there was no way I was going to answer that question.

“Gone shy on me, Lois?” He chewed his bottom lip for a minute as if considering something, and then said, “No matter, I’ll be able to tell in a few minutes, anyway.” With that, he fastened his mouth on my clit whilst he worked two fingers inside me. His hypnotic eyes still stared at mine, as if daring me to object. I yanked on the cuffs and hustled my backside as far as I could up the bed, but there was nowhere to go.

“I find you far too attractive, damnit!” I yelled. As far as last ditch attempts went, it was poor, but I didn’t have anything else.

He stopped what he was doing, licked his top lip very slowly, as if knowing the act gave me heart palpitations, and then sat back up. *Good God, Lois*, my subconscious screamed. *What the hell are you doing?* I ignored it.

“Well, I guess that’s a good thing,” he said. My mouth hung agape yet again.

“It’s a what? Why on earth would it be that? I can hardly think straight with you around.” I was about to start babbling again, so I snapped my teeth together and held them tightly shut.

“It means I’m your worst case scenario. If you don’t find someone attractive, you’ll sail through your assignment without too many problems, right?” I nodded my head slowly, not trusting myself to speak. Thankfully, he seemed satisfied with that. “So, if you get inside Carte Blanche and you find Alain or one of his delightful henchmen sexy, you’re going to have a hard time focusing on what you should be doing, yes?”

What the hell had James just said? I nodded anyway and tried not to stare at the chest. “This way, you’re practising your worst case scenario before you even get there. I’m the best thing that could have happened to you, sweetheart. Now you get a chance to work out how you’re going to manage to keep a clear head with all those naked bodies, rope, chains, whips, and cuffs flying around. Just sit back and enjoy it, darling.” With that, he promptly returned to feasting between my legs.

After two minutes, I gave up all pretence of squirming. James knew what he was doing, and I was past being able to resist. My body was strung tighter than a pro tennis racket, and there was a certain part of my anatomy that was dying to have some balls thrown at it. The last time I'd been heading for an orgasm this intense had been in Elite Encounters, and I was keen to replay the feat.

His tongue was my undoing. Soft, velvety, and extremely talented, it plundered my depths over and over, but always returned to suck and nibble at my clit. At first, I tried to keep my moans and groans to myself, but it shortly became clear that wasn't going to be an option for me. As soon as my body went boneless, my mind lost all the necessary superglue that usually held it together. I've heard people say that men think with their pants, but I'm here to confirm women are just as bad. Most of my brain was resting at the tops of my thighs right now, and the miniscule part that was left was begging for James to finish what he'd started. The perverse man must have heard it, for he chose that moment to stop.

"I think I remember you telling me quite clearly that you did not want an orgasm from me. Is that correct?" His wet lips glistened, and I had the insane urge to taste myself upon them. The damn handcuffs were going to drive me crazy.

"I think you must have misheard me. I don't remember saying any such thing," I lied. In acute pain, now that his tongue had stopped, I wanted to howl, but I wasn't the one calling the shots. But oh, I so wished I was.

He shook his head at me before giving me a wicked grin. "Tsk, tsk, tsk, Lois. My memory isn't that bad. I think someone has just earned themselves a spanking, if they hadn't already, which you had." My stomach dropped. I did not want a spanking. There was only one thing I wanted right now, and it didn't involve pain - quite the opposite, in fact.

"Do you want my hand, the paddle, or the flogger?" he questioned.

"Can't we just skip the spanking? It must be about three in the morning," I whined. My clit pulsed petulantly and my lips formed a sulky pout.

"It's nearer four, and you can never skip a spanking," he said. "You'll never learn if we don't administer punishments every time you do something wrong. So far today you've been caught sneaking around, gone behind my back, and lied to me. It's something we need to address. So what's it to be, Lois? If you don't choose quickly, I'll pick for you.

"Is this going to hurt?" I whispered.

"Absolutely," he replied. "Right, we'll go with..."

"Hand," I squeaked. "Can we go with your hand?"

He gave me a dark look through eyes narrowed into slits. "Hmm. In future, you'll need to be quicker than that, but we'll go with your choice for today. Besides, now I don't need to run and get the paddle. We'll save that for tomorrow."

“Who says I’m going to be naughty tomorrow?” I said indignantly, my face creasing in annoyance.

“I do, and I’m rarely wrong,” James said. “Right, due to your trussed up nature, I’m going to have to spank you in the diaper position, and I’m afraid it’s going to hurt.”

“The what?”

James then hoisted both of my legs up in the air and put his elbow against the backs of my knees to make sure I held the position.

“You can’t do this,” I wailed, and I rattled my handcuffs a bit more for good measure. This was beyond insane at this time of the morning.

“You just have to say the word and you can go home, Lois. I don’t think you’re a good fit for this op at all, and I’m happy to tell Sharkey as much.” The look in his eye said he was more than happy to do as he said. The man had me right where he wanted me, and he knew it. Waiting for me to speak, he then gave me an almost apologetic look before beginning to rub the globes of my ass, and I could almost feel my cheeks blush in anticipation of what was to come.

“They do all of this and so much more to you in Carte Blanche, Lois. Do you know what you’re signing yourself up for?”

I didn’t trust myself to answer, so I nodded my head instead.

“I don’t think you do, but I’m going to show you in the next few days. Believe me, I’m going to show you, and in lots of detail.” There was then a short, sharp slap on my ass, and it focused me instantly. The blissful daydream that I’d been buried in had now disappeared, and my attention was focused solely on my tormentor.

“Now listen carefully, Lois. Every time you misbehave in Carte Blanche, you will be punished. That means every single time you don’t do exactly what you’re told, they’ll find a way to discipline you. Sometimes they’ll discipline you purely for their own amusement, because they get off on that kind of shit, and there’ll be nothing you can do about it. All the people in that building get turned on by suffering, and they are going to want to watch you cry. Are you prepared for that, Lois? Can you give that to them? I’ve got a week or two to try and teach you to enjoy pain, but I’m not sure it’ll be enough time. They’ll be able to spot a faker from a mile away, and if you’re found out, there’s only one way out for you – and that will be six feet underground.”

“I know the risks, James.” Humiliated as I might have been, I wanted to make it clear to James that I knew exactly what I was undertaking. Okay, I might not know the exact rules of the game, but I had a rough idea.

“You don’t. You can’t even begin to comprehend them, but why should I care? It’s your tombstone and your epitaph at the end of the day, right?”

“How do you know so much about Dumortier and his dealings anyway?”

Changing the subject, as I had no wish to dwell on my imminent demise, I waited patiently for an answer. Staring at James, I found myself rather fascinated when his mouth hardened and his eyes turned into cold blue slits. It appeared he didn't like being the object of the conversion. That was a useful little titbit to file away.

"Shut up, Lois, and start counting."

The first solid smack crashed into my ass and took my breath away.

"After each strike of my hand, you count the number of spanks and say 'Thank you, Sir.' If you lose count or fail to say Sir, then we'll begin again until you manage to remember." His hand slammed into my backside again before I managed to get my first number out.

"One. Thank you, Sir." Trying to speak through the haze of pain radiating up from my backside involved almost more concentration than I had. James did not go easy on me, and each swing of his palm left a trail of burning fire in its wake. When we got to ten, it was all I could do not to beg him to stop.

"Ten. Thank you, Sir." There were tears in my eyes, but I could handle tears. What I couldn't handle was the not knowing how many more of these I would have to endure. Another ten? No problem. Twenty? I wasn't so sure. Any more than that was going to involve me blubbering like a baby, but I guessed that was his problem. The reason I'd come here was to learn how to take everything he had to give. This would then enable me to take everything that those men inside Carte Blanche could deal out. It would only be for a few days once I was inside the house, so the hardest part would be here and now. How long would James want me here? For how long could I ignore that beautiful face and refuse to be moved by it?

"Twenty. Thank you, Sir." The pain was almost unbearable now, but I managed to hold the tears at bay. James wouldn't want to see them any more than I would.

"Lois, don't fight me." There was another heavy thud of his hand, and I choked back another sob. I couldn't for the life of me fathom what he meant.

"How can I fight?" I whispered between choked breaths. "You have me trussed up so tightly I can barely move."

"Ahh. You misunderstand me, Lois." He lowered my legs to the bed and made a clicking sound with his tongue as he thought about what to say next. Personally, I was glad of the reprieve, as it gave me a chance to catch my breath. The stinging throb his hand imparted had worked its way up and down my body. Everything prickled with pain and heat, and there was a bitter taste in my mouth as I tried not to swallow.

Rubbing his hand across his chin, he looked tired as he tried to work out what he wanted to say to me. I wondered how many hours he had put in today, and I guessed it was probably more than I had, which was saying something.

"At Carte Blanche, the men and women get off on your fear. Not all of them, but

there's a sizeable bunch of wackos who do. You need to give them what they want and quickly. The longer you take to give them a piece of yourself, the worse shape your body will be in by the end of it, because these guys won't stop until they have what they want." He frowned and brushed his hand over his chin again, letting me hear the soft scrape that his stubble made against his skin. "Do you understand what I'm saying, Lois?"

"You want screams, blubbering, and tears." I got the message loud and clear.

"To be clear, Lois, that is not what *I* want. I'm here to teach you the skills that will enable you to stay alive long enough to go in and do what you need to do. *They*, however, will want tears, but that's not all they'll want."

I sniffed, swallowed down a mouthful of unspent emotion, and gave him a sardonic look. "What do they want then? Blood?" I almost choked against the hysterical laughter that began to bubble up my throat, but one look at James silenced me. He was shaking his head, and there was a beautiful, soulful look on his face that spoke of depths of sadness that I could never begin to uncover. Something awful had happened to this man, and this was the first glimpse I'd been given past the façade that he normally wore.

Lifting up a damp tendril of hair that had been stuck to my forehead, James placed it gently behind my ear. His touch was horribly unsettling, but I managed not to jump at it.

"They might, but I think you're too pretty a morsel for them to harm in that way." My eyes flew open in shock at that, and I couldn't prevent the reaction. "Yes, Lois. There is an awful lot you've yet to learn." He blew out a long breath of hot air, which seared my skin.

"What am I missing?" I whispered.

"The whole goddamned point. But that's why you're here, Lois."

Thirteen

James didn't say a lot after that. He looked weary as he picked up my legs once more and rubbed the tender flesh of my ass, noting that I winced as he did so. He warmed the area up with his hands for a good few minutes before I felt compelled to speak. I needed to get this over with.

"Do you still want me to count?" I whispered. If he did, I was in trouble - I had no idea what number we'd ended on, and the thought of going back to the start was unbearable.

"No. This finishes when you cry. You can either look at it as a personal challenge to have the sorest backside in the UK, or you can give me what I want and then try to get some sleep. It's up to you, Lois. It's four am now, but I can and will go as long as it takes to get you to that place."

"I don't want to go there," I whispered. It wasn't the pain I was frightened of, it was the tears. Once they started, it was almost impossible to stop them.

"I know you don't, Lois, which is why I'm being upfront with you. You need to go there. Daily. It's going to hurt you, psychologically, but that's nothing compared to what's going down once you begin this op. All I can do is prepare you for it, and I'm telling you that you need to get comfortable with tears. I'm here for you. I won't let you fall. You can do this."

"Remember, you asked for this," I whispered.

"No, you asked for this, Lois, and it will probably rank as one of the craziest things you've ever done." His hand began slamming into my rear with frightening intensity, and I couldn't catch my breath. The man was serious about his threat, and if I ever wanted to sit down again, I needed to give him what he wanted and quickly.

My mind fluttered back to Kiel, against its better judgement. I'd already compartmentalised him to a back locker of my brain, and he'd been filed under 'Deceased. Do not open.' There was no other option that would give me what James wanted, though, so I had to open the box of worms and take the inevitable suffering that would accompany it. Even so, my fingers hesitated as they grasped the lid of my memories. Whilst the box wanted to be opened, the lid burned my hands. As I fought to prise it upwards, an incandescent light began to spill out everywhere, and then I was everywhere and nowhere... all at once.

The tears were almost instant. In my head, Kiel was very much alive and well. He was wrapped around my body, his legs entangled between mine, our naked skin deliciously warm under the thick double duvet that encased us lovingly in its grasp.

I felt his arms wrapped around me, one gently kneading a breast as the other reached between my legs. The divine feeling of contentment was fleeting. I tried to cling on to it as long as I could, but once the box had been awakened, it could not be stopped. There was one moment of transient pleasure, and then all the awful crap that had been violently squashed into that box exploded.

There was the cop knocking at my door who'd barely been able to get a word out edgeways without stammering. The horror on his face as he delivered his message would always stay with me. I'd almost felt sorry for the poor bastard, but at that moment in time, I had bigger things to worry about. My rug had just been yanked out from underneath me, and nothing would ever be the same again. The horrors didn't stop there, though.

It had been a fatal motorcycle accident. The death had been instant, so the officer told me, which in turn meant it had been messy. I'd always told Kiel that his bike would be the death of him. It had been a Ducati Streetfighter, and it was his pride and joy. He drove the thing around like it had rocket boosters, but the last person he'd ever listen to would have been me. He knew best. Most of the time he did, but not on that cursed day.

When I got to the coroner's office, I asked if I could see the body, but he advised me against it. Basically, they'd had to scrape Kiel up off the ground and he was virtually unrecognisable. The decision was mine at the end of the day, and he didn't make it for me, but I decided that viewing a mangled lump of flesh covered in blood wasn't going to help with closure. Besides, I'd seen enough death in my lifetime. I had no desire to stare it in the face yet again, knowing full well it would haunt my dreams.

On the day of his funeral, I was a wreck. Getting out of bed that morning required an almost inhumane effort, and my best friend ended up dragging me almost bodily to the church. I was so numb that performing even the simplest of tasks became virtually impossible. The glue that had held me together for so long had finally come unstuck, and there was no way I could piece myself back together again. I wasn't even sure I wanted to. An all-consuming, ravaging guilt ate away at me, and atonement for my sins wasn't going to be possible. He was dead, stone cold dead. Nothing was going to change that and I need to get onboard with the program. It was easier said than done. Every night I went to sleep, my arm reached for him - every morning I awoke, my body flailed around looking for its missing part. Everything in the house reminded me of him, and it got to a stage where I thought it might be almost impossible to exist without him. We had been united as a whole, and now there was just a spare part. Me.

"Lois." The voice sounded so far away I could barely hear it through my choked, hiccupping sobs. Breathing was almost impossible, and the flood of

tears prevented me from seeing a damn thing. Besides, I was lost within my own little bubble of misery, and I was quite happy there, because Kiel was back beside me, and I hadn't thought of him for so long now.

"Lois, come back to me." The voice was stronger now. Cajoling, almost threatening, but I ignored it. What did I care for a voice? There was only one voice I needed to hear, and he could only speak to me in this place. *'I love you, more than you'll ever realise, Kat. You will never lose me. I intend to get so far inside that body and mind of yours that you'll need life support if we're ever apart.'* If only he'd known how close to the truth those beautiful words had been.

"Lois! Look at me, Lois. Breathe." The volume of those words was impossible to ignore and my eyes snapped open, though the image of James towering above me was blurry at best. Realizing I hadn't sucked in a breath in quite some time, I took a huge, sucking gulp of air and tried to calm myself down.

"That's it, Lois. Nice and easy. Focus on the here and now. We got where we needed to go. The session's over and we're done for the night. I'm going to stay with you for a bit. I don't really want to leave you after all that you've been through." James's arms were now tight around my body, and I realized that he'd unfastened the cuffs at some point. My arms were now free, and although they were a little sore, they'd work well enough come morning. I'd deal with James then. Right now I was so damn tired, I thought I was melting into the bed sheets.

"I'll be okay," I mumbled sleepily, but I was already drifting off. The exhaustion of the last few hours had finally caught up with me, and my body was shutting down. I hadn't the will or energy to fight him. Tomorrow would be another day.

"Yes, you will. I'll be right next to you, Lois. Sleep well, my little lioness." I felt his hands in my hair, taking soothing strokes down its length, and I let my body relax. It felt nice to spoon with a warm, breathing body behind me, even if it wasn't the one I wanted. When sleep came for me in a few minutes time, I would neither care nor be worried about the fact. Analyzing all the implications of our rather sordid, temporary relationship could come later - much, much later, hopefully.

The nightmares that had been absent these last five years returned with a vengeance. Everyone that had ever held a knife to my throat or a gun to my back seemed to reappear in my brain, over and over again. It was bizarre, really. Now that I didn't fear death, and was almost actively trying to meet it head-on, they'd reappeared for kicks. I found myself running down dark alleyways, thrown into deep, dark holes, and covered with mud, before scrambling over rusty barbed wire fences that cut my skin to ribbons. They were just a few of my dark hours,

but thankfully I awoke, gasping for breath, before I got to my favorite one.

Trying to move my arms and tug the cover up over my body, it was with shock that I realized I was stuck solid in position, with a pair of arms wrapped around me.

“Lois? You okay?” My arms were then released gently, and I was flipped over so I came face to face with my dark tormentor. He looked concerned, which was never a good sign.

“Sorry. Nightmare. I’ll settle down now,” I whispered, trying to turn back to my previous position, but he wouldn’t let me.

“Do you have them regularly, Lois?” I didn’t mistake his question for concern. He was worried I was going to flip out on this op, and would use any excuse possible to get rid of me. He’d need to try harder.

“This is the first one I’ve had in five years. I thought I was past them. Perhaps it’s just the emotional trauma of the day making itself known.” I sighed softly, and he allowed me to turn around this time.

“We’ll keep an eye on them. There are meds I can give you, but when you enter Carte Blanche, you go in empty handed, so it’s better if you don’t rely on drugs to sleep. If you need them to get a couple night’s decent sleep, though, I’ll get some down here.”

“I’ll be fine. You needn’t worry about me,” I whispered.

I couldn’t help but wonder why the nightmares had returned. Maybe it was because James had got one over on me today. I wasn’t used to losing. Perhaps that had triggered them. He was probably the best thing that could have happened to me right now. Together we could hone my edge to a fine, sharp point, which wouldn’t do me any harm when faced with a bunch of street thugs shortly. I’d probably need all the help I could get, and I was more than willing to take it.

His arms tightened around my body, as if trying to reassure me that nothing was going to happen to me, but the sentiment was wasted. It was going to happen, and my life was a ticking time bomb until that day arrived.

When I awoke the next morning, the sun was streaming through the window. It was so bright the time must have been approaching midday. I couldn’t remember the last time I had slept in so late. What the hell was wrong with me? Bringing my hand up to shield my eyes, I was not amused to find myself back in handcuffs. My fist moved an inch and stopped abruptly with a loud clang. How the hell had he managed that while I was asleep?

“You bastard,” I yelled as loudly as I could. My words were met with silence. Great. If he’d gone shopping and left me like this, I could be here for an hour or

more. Banging the handcuffs against the bed frame in annoyance, I flailed my legs about on the bed like a two-year old. *Get a grip, Lois.*

“Nice look.” James sauntered into the room, freshly showered, wearing nothing more than a pair of jeans and a towel around his neck. It did not improve my mood.

“What the hell do you think you’re playing at?” I yelled.

He picked up the towel, rubbed at his damp hair, and took a leisurely look up and down the length and breadth of my body. It was just as well he’d used the cuffs, otherwise I’d be trying to decapitate him right now.

“Exactly what I’m supposed to be playing. Today is the day I show you who’s boss, because believe me when I say Dumortier will. You need to learn to obey immediately and without question, no matter what the command. There is no room for questions at Carte Blanche. You need to focus, Lois. By the way, you omitted the word ‘Sir,’ and that will need to be addressed later.”

“Yes, Sir,” I said through gritted teeth. He was right. What on earth was I doing? I could not think straight around this man, and it was frightening. He had my body on edge and my hormones clamoring for attention.

“You’ll need to work on that, too. You have to say it like you mean it, Lois. You say the word ‘Sir’ like it’s about as attractive as venereal disease. It’s a term of respect. If you can’t whisper it like a lover, at least try and make it sound respectful.”

“Why are you making this so difficult?” I got out through gritted teeth.

He looked at me, narrowed his eyes, and shot back, “And what do you think it’s going to be like with Dumortier? A walk in the park? You’ll have some fun, sever his jugular, and be home in time for tea and cakes?” He gave me a sardonic look.

“That’s not what I meant.”

“Then it should be. I’m going to make this as difficult as possible for you, and if you cave along the way, so much the better. I wouldn’t put anyone inside that building with more than a twenty percent chance of coming out alive. That twenty percent would be some of the best operatives I’ve worked with, and you don’t feature anywhere on that list, Lois. So listen to what I have to tell you and pay attention. Whilst we’re at it, you need to shut up. You have two ears and one mouth, and you’re going to need to remember that. Listen and learn, Lois.”

“Yes, Sir.” Having been duly chastised, with a keg of paraffin liberally doused over my ego before it was set on fire, I tried to remember my objective. He was the boss. I needed to remember that.

“I’m going shopping. I’ll be back in an hour.”

“Can you untie me first?”

“Absolutely not. And I’m doing a thorough strip search before you go, so I don’t walk back in here to find a gun at the back of my head. The only way you’re escaping that setup is if you have something on your person that can pick locks, and I’m about to make sure that you don’t.”

“Is there a gun in here?” I asked innocently.

“No, but even if there was, you wouldn’t be able to kill me with it. I’m fucking immortal. Haven’t you heard?”

“You’re hilarious. Go do your shopping. I like my bacon crisp and my eggs over easy, by the way.” I winked at him, and in hindsight, that was probably the wrong thing to do.

The man was between my legs in a heartbeat, and before I knew what was happening, he’d sucked my entire clit into his mouth. My mouth opened, but all that came out was a whimper. What rare and unusual punishment was I to face this time?

“Stop that,” I managed to whisper, but either he didn’t hear me or he didn’t care. His fingers began to dip inside me, and I was mortified to find I was already wet. The man had only been in the room ten seconds. My body had no shame. Immediately tensing up, he began to soothe me with his fingers and hands. They were running up my legs, over my stomach, kneading the flesh of my breasts, and I couldn’t think. If you’d asked me what day of the week it was, I would have been lost.

“Relax,” he whispered, stopping for a moment to look at me. His lips were glistening and his eyes were dark. It seemed I wasn’t the only one aroused. Closing my eyes to block out the image he presented, I squeaked, “Found anything down there yet?”

The question was met with a deep, throaty chuckle, damn the man to hell and back. “No, but I intend to do a very, very thorough investigation.”

Oh God.

“There are so many delicious hiding places on a human body, and I am going to explore them all.” His wet fingers began a trail up to my ass, and I knew exactly what was coming next.”

“You’d better have some decent life insurance in place when you decide to untie me.” My words were rough and uneven. They didn’t sound quite as I’d intended them to, unfortunately.

“That’s why I’m going to *feed* you breakfast, Lois. I might even leave you like this all day. Having you tied up and at my mercy has its advantages, I think.”

As a finger shot inside my ass, I groaned loudly, unable to help my hips from rising up off the bed.

“You’re enjoying this, aren’t you?” I got out through a set of tightly gritted

teeth.

“You have no idea,” he replied, with a great big smile across his face. Oh, if I had hands to slap him with. Forget that, I just wanted to break his neck.

“You said you weren’t going to fuck me,” I pointed out. “So what do you call this?”

He sank his teeth into my clit for a painful second, and I screamed out loud. There was no preventing the sound, and my whole body throbbed painfully while I waited for his answer.

“This is foreplay, Lois. My cock isn’t ever going to go here,” three fingers thrust into my pussy, “or here.” His thumb pressed into my ass in order to drive his point home. The feeling was halfway between heaven and hell, with a little more emphasis on heaven. “I’ll need to take your mouth, because you won’t want to be a novice at deep-throating, but that’s all you’re getting from me. It’s all I’m prepared to give you, quite frankly. Now pay attention to my fingers, lips, and tongue, because you’ll need to demonstrate what you’ve learned upon me later. Then you can get your own back. Let that drive you, my little lioness. I have a feeling the word ‘revenge’ is not new to you.”

James didn’t utter another word. It would have been pointless, in any case. I began screaming my way through my first orgasm, and he made me suffer through another five agonizing climaxes before he’d finished with me. I’m not sure I stopped screaming throughout the entire experience, other than to beg him to stop. My legs were now shaking so badly, the bed rattled, and the rest of my body felt like liquid. It was almost as if I’d dissolved into the bed, and my head was swimming as if to confirm it.

When James sat up and wiped his mouth along his forearm, he looked so damn sexy that I almost wanted to return the favor. If I’d had an ounce of energy left in my body and wasn’t handcuffed to bed frame, I might have, but my options were currently limited.

“I don’t think you’ve managed to conceal anything on your person,” he said, nodding his head smugly.

My oral sex thoughts of reciprocation disappeared instantly. “If I had managed to hide a lock pick inside my ass, I might find it a little tricky to get to in my current state,” I murmured silkily.

“Oh, I wouldn’t put anything past you, Lois. You’re a very talented, not to mention responsive, young lady.” He began pulling a black T-shirt over his head, and I wanted to weep as the abs disappeared from view.

“But still one of the worst operatives you’ve ever come across. It’s probably because I’m a girl, right?” My sarcasm gene was in full force.

“Probably, but there’s not much we can do about that.” He winked at me, and

then slapped my thigh, before turning around and walking straight through the door.

If I could have thrown something at his retreating back, I would have. Alas, I had to settle for glowering at him as he left me to my own devices to sweat it out for another hour or so. When the time came to kill him, I promised myself it would be a very long and extremely painful ordeal.

“Hi honey, I’m home.” Those were the words that announced my hour of purgatory was up. I was not amused.

“I’m just going to put some croissants in the oven, and I’ll be right up. I’m enjoying the thought of feeding you, by the way. I like getting my fingers messy.” James’s overly cheerful voice was nearly my undoing.

Kicking the bed again in a fit of pique, I growled to myself. Staring at the plain ceiling shade above me, and focusing on the incandescent bulb within, I had a nasty feeling that my spell in purgatory was only just beginning. It wasn’t that I was stupid. I was well aware that I was actively trying to annoy the man at every possibility, but I couldn’t seem to stop myself. James didn’t even have to be in the same room as me for my hands to want to curl into fists. Yes, I found him attractive. Yes, I knew that the feeling wasn’t reciprocated in any real way. Yes, I was extremely annoyed that I’d been daydreaming about him non-stop these last few weeks. Perhaps this was a crush? Love was basically a disease, anyway. Research had proven that people falling in love had a marked drop in serotonin levels, similar to those with OCD’s. So I probably needed therapy, and let me tell you, there was no way I was going for any more of that.

Find a different approach to the problem, Lois, I told myself. Perhaps if I took his advice and did everything he said, I could be out of this house much quicker than anticipated. It was certainly worth a try.

“Ah, there you are. I was wondering where I left you.” James strode into the room, looking superbly sexy in the well-worn jeans that hugged his delectable ass and the tight black tee that fondled each and every one of his muscles with considerable affection. It took me some time to notice he was carrying a plastic tray that was filled with a steaming mug of coffee, a glass of orange juice, and several pastries. I think it was the smell that finally alerted me to their presence, and once I’d got a taste for breakfast, my stomach began noisily telling me that I was ravenous, and had been for the past two hours or so.

“You are not funny, *Sir*.”

He looked at me oddly. “So it’s *Sir* now, is it? What’s gotten into you?” He looked at me quizzically.

I gave him a rueful smile. “Fighting you every step of the way is

counterproductive to our goal. You were right. I signed up for this. The least I can do is try to follow your instructions.”

“It would be easier if you did, though I assure you you’re not going to like them very much.” The expression he bore confirmed as much.

Setting the tray down on the bedside table, James picked up a croissant and began to break a small corner off. “Open wide.”

Though it pained me to do so, I did as he instructed and let him place a piece of the buttery, flaky pastry inside my mouth, resisting the temptation to bite him as I did so.

“Eat.” I didn’t need to be told twice. The little morsel was nearly swallowed whole, and it was followed by, “Please can I have some more, Sir?”

“You learn pretty fast for a beginner,” he chuckled. When the next mouthful came my way, I let my tongue entangle with his fingers, sucking them gently before he pulled them swiftly from my lips.

“Ah, is that the game we’re playing now, Lois? Are you going to try and see if you can arouse me?” He brushed another tantalizing morsel of croissant across my lips, but when I reached out for it, he snatched it back out of my reach.

“No fair,” I complained. “If you get to tease me, I think I should be able to tease you.” The pastry came near my lips again, close enough that I could smell it, but nowhere near close enough for me to reach it. Then, with a wicked grin, James placed it inside his mouth, and to add insult to injury, he licked his fingers slowly.

“Too bad,” I pouted. “But I guess you’re doing my waistline a favor.” My stomach noisily disagreed.

James shook his head, and before I knew what was happening, another, rather large piece of pastry was heading my way. I almost opened my mouth in panic. “About that. You’re far too thin.”

It took me a minute to finish my massive mouthful, but then I managed, “Says who?” I don’t know why I gave a damn what James thought of my personal body shape, but somehow the comment annoyed me.

“If you want to get into to Alain’s little gang, then you’re going to need to fill out a little. You need to disguise the six pack, for starters.”

“Oh.” I held onto the single syllable for a little longer than necessary. I guess I hadn’t considered that.

“The man has distinctive tastes. He likes long-haired brunettes, around a size eight or ten, and he doesn’t like them with too much up top. Alain’s a wily bastard, though. If he spots that six pack, he’ll immediately think you’re a threat. There aren’t too many subs that train that hard, and he won’t take the risk that you might be an operative.”

“That’s easily solved. It’s also great news that I won’t have to have a boob job,” I said sarcastically.

“If he liked them with a fully stocked rack, believe me, you’d go under the knife. Sharkey has a vested interest in this, and the firm will stop at nothing to get what they want.”

“Which is?” It sounded like James knew a hell of a lot more than me, and all of a sudden I wanted some answers.

“I’ll leave that for you to figure out in your own sweet time... if you can,” he added. I shouldn’t think you’ll last more than a week in there. That’s why I don’t want anyone in Alain’s house. There’s a big risk you’ll come out irreparably damaged at best, or at worst, dead, Lois, and I’m not trying to scare you. If you thought the little stunt I pulled at Elite Encounters was bad, you haven’t seen anything yet. Alain’s a kinky fucker with a monstrous side, and he’ll put you through the works. I might have agreed to train you, but I intend to do everything I can in the next few weeks to make sure you run back to Mommy. Are we clear?”

I pretended to consider that before looking him square in the eye. “If you’re fattening me up, is there any chance you can get donuts tomorrow?” I asked innocently.

Fourteen

“Okay, here’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to unlock those handcuffs, and you’re going to crawl to the bathroom to take a shower. Whilst under my instruction, you will crawl everywhere unless I give you orders to the contrary. Alain’s girls work under the same principle, so it will be good practise. When you’ve finished, you can come join me in the kitchen, where we’ll go over your limits form. It’s a bit soggy, but it’s been on the radiator for the past couple of hours, so hopefully we’ll be able to piece it back together. Any questions?” There was an annoying twinkle in James’s eye that I didn’t much like. As he leaned over me to release the cuffs, I had to resist the urge to gouge his eyeballs out. He was well aware of my struggle. His lips didn’t stop twitching the whole time that he was bent down over me.

“Do I get a cup of coffee, Sir?” The instructions didn’t seem like much fun, but I hadn’t expected anything less. I also knew that things around here were very tame at the moment. He was going to open my eyes to a whole new world shortly, and the choice I faced was sink or swim. Sinking wasn’t an option I could live with.

“Only if you wiggle your ass on the way out.”

“I can do that.” I hit the floor rather hard in my scramble to get away from him, but I wiggled my booty to the best of my ability. If he was so anxious to get an eyeful of my backside, he could take his fill.

“You didn’t say Sir, Lois,” he called after me.

“That’s because you’re an asshole,” I replied sweetly, thankful I was already out of the room and well on my way to the bathroom. The loud sigh I heard made me smile, even though I knew I’d pay for my outburst later. Still, I was here to learn all about submission, and I was going to get spanked whether I liked it or not. Giving him the occasional reason to chastise me would serve me well for the future, I was sure. On the plus side, I hadn’t killed him for leaving me chained to the bed, even though the temptation to do so had certainly been there. Well, maybe not kill him. It would be a shame to destroy something that beautiful. Maybe I’d just mess him up a little one of these days. I had a feeling I’d happily endure a few hours of torture just to see him lose that mantle of rigid control that he always wore. There would be a man underneath the beast, unless I was much mistaken. Whether I’d like the man any more than the beast was questionable, though.

Shutting the door to the bathroom, I searched around for a lock, but found there

was none. Why was I not surprised? If James wanted a touchy-feely session, he probably didn't need to accost me in the bathroom, so I wasn't going to worry too much about it. Thankfully there was a shower and a couple of big, white fluffy towels, so life wasn't all bad. Stepping inside the plastic shower door, I turned the faucet all the way over to the hot and steamy side, and gave it a minute or so to warm up. Then I stepped inside... and nearly froze. The water was still stone cold. Fiddling about with the faucet from one side to the other got me nowhere, and there were no visible switches for hot water in the bathroom that I could see. I was just about to wrap a towel around me and go hunting for James when he stepped inside the bathroom. Being incredibly naked with an incredibly hot man in close proximity was a weird conundrum. I didn't know whether I wanted to find a third hand to cover all of my exposed assets, or whether I just wanted to drag his hands all over them. The jury was out.

"There's no hot water," I squeaked as, thankfully, my indecision got the better of me.

"There was. There isn't now. Just so you know, Lois, there are consequences to all of your actions around here. So you will step in that cold shower, and you will get clean. I'm not leaving here until you do so."

I pouted at him with my best Disney princess eyes and said, "Couldn't you just not feed me for the rest of the day, instead?" I battered my eyelashes a couple of times for good measure. Belle had nothing on me.

"No. We've already had that conversation, and if you're not inside that shower within ten seconds, I will be joining you. Let me assure you that I can't wait to give you a very, *very* thorough wash, which should take at least twenty or thirty minutes, I think."

"You'd endure a freezing cold shower for that long just to chastise me?" Unsure whether I was horrified or impressed with his devotion to the cause, I managed to eyeball him for an answer.

"Nine, eight, seven..."

"I'm going, I'm going," I muttered, although I dearly wanted to test his resolve. I wondered how he'd fare under arctic water conditions.

Slamming the shower door behind me so hard it rocked on its hinges, I nearly screamed as the cold water hit me full force. Gathering up the soap as I started shivering, I had the world's fastest wash as James stood in the corner glowering at me. If I thought hell was going to start the minute I walked through Carte Blanche's door, I was much mistaken.

"It's really nice in here, you know," I said through chattering teeth. "I bet there are few penguins who would kill to be in my place right now. Are you sure you don't want to join me?"

The next thing I knew, James was tearing off his tee, and I think my tongue was stuck the shower door. Then his jeans followed suit, and I just about managed to compute that the man wasn't wearing any underwear. That was the last thought in my head, because he then started heading my way, and he looked mad. I backed myself right up against the far wall of the shower and wondered if I should start praying. When would I ever get a grip on my smart mouth?

When the door opened, the bulk of his figure blocked out all the light and everything went dark for a moment. If there had been any possible means of escape out of that shower cubicle, I would have taken it, but there was no way I was going through James in the process.

"You wanted me here, Lois. Now what are you going to do with me?" The smile he wore was brutal. It said, 'I have you cornered and exactly where I want you.' I took an unsteady breath as I tried to unglue my jaw. I had it tightly closed at the moment, and I was afraid if I opened it, I might never get it back. There must have been one hundred and eighty pounds of hard, solid muscle within touching distance of my fingers, and I was struggling to rein them in. It took a bit of work, but eventually I managed it.

"Is this where I get my own back?" I asked breathlessly.

"Absolutely," he replied. "Though don't expect me to keep my hands to myself."

Standing there, rooted to the spot, panic consumed me for a second. Where did I start? What should I do? Considering I'd been thinking of little else but jumping the man for days, now that the chance had presented itself, I was almost catatonic. Unfortunately, I wasn't the only one who'd noticed the fact.

"Earth to Lois, do you read me?" James placed an arm either side of my head and brought his face up to the spray. Shaking the water out of his eyes, he then said, "You're going to need to react quicker than that if you're going to keep the gentlemen happy down at CB." He gave me a patronising look, and it rankled. I had to get my head back in the game.

Pressing my body up close and personal with his chest, I nuzzled my face into his neck and slowly bit down on the tender flesh there, before my hands reached between his legs and dragged themselves gently up his upper thighs.

"I bet they don't make me take cold showers, though," I whispered in his ear as my teeth grabbed his earlobe. Meanwhile, my nails bit into tight, corded muscle, and I silently admired the construction beneath them. The man was solidly beautiful.

"I wouldn't count on it, and that will be the least of your worries, Lois." His fingers were then around my neck, gently caressing my throat before his teeth began returning the favour. Although my head rolled back in pleasure, I kept my

focus on my objective. My nails softened as they slowly crept higher, tracing a delicate line upon his flesh. When they reached his balls, I gently cupped them in my hand and rolled them between my fingers. I didn't get so much as a moan, but to be fair, I hadn't expected one. I had a feeling James Leveritt would be extremely hard to please, but I was going to pull out all the stops trying to figure him out.

Pulling away from his grip on my neck, I looked up at him with eyes that were black with lust. He still looked perfectly calm and in control, but I hadn't finished with him yet.

"Hey, vampire, can you put those teeth to good use anywhere else?" I whispered as my fingernails took a leisurely walk up the silken flesh of his cock. "Where do you want them?" He grinned.

"Is my mouth off limits, *Sir*, or are you prepared to sacrifice a small part of yourself in this training plan?" My fist started gently curling around his cock, and I was happy to stand there, perfectly still, whilst it pulsed firmly beneath my fingers.

"Are you asking me whether I'm worried I'll fall in love with you?" James lifted my face until I was inches away from his lips, and there was an amused look on his face.

"Isn't that the reason you won't fuck me?" It was a fair enough question, I thought.

"No. I've fucked a lot of women in my time, Lois. I don't worry too much about falling for them."

My face wanted to pull back as if stung, but I managed to hold myself still. Well, that smarted a little. I guess I was forgetting that James Leveritt owned Elite Encounters, among other things, and he had women pretty much on tap. The man was probably as cold as the damn shower we were standing in, so a little lip-locking wasn't going to move the iceberg.

"So why do you have that rule in place?" I whispered, annoyed that my curiosity was getting the better of me.

There was no space for an answer, though. His lips crashed down on mine, and it felt like the man had shoved a Molotov cocktail down my throat. My head entered a swirling vortex of colours and light, and the chronic need I felt for the man in front of me was as scary as it was arousing. I'd never been hit this hard before, and he'd barely laid a hand upon me. He was that perfect line, where the sky meets the sea, and I was happy to drown in what he was offering. *It's not enough*, my subconscious whispered, but what did I care? I might not be alive for too much longer, so that was good enough reason to let myself go and live for the moment. It had been a long time since I'd indulged myself so completely,

and damned if I wasn't going to enjoy myself. A lot.

It took a few moments for my hands to remember what they were doing, but when they did, I made sure they picked up their pace. Placing a vice-like fist around his cock, I began to work him up and down with renewed vigour. Who cared if the water was scalding hot or freezing cold? All I cared about was scratching an itch – and it was the stuff of fantasies. Feeling James harden in my hand, I began to lower myself to my knees, but his hand fisting in my hair stopped me.

“Uh, uh, uh. You have to beg for those kind of privileges, Lois.”

The freezing cold spray rained down into my eyes, but I no longer felt its bitter, biting shards. His comment didn't faze me in the least.

“Please let me suck your cock, *Sir*.” I even added a lascivious sweep of my tongue around my bottom lip for good measure. James was only human after all, and I needed this, needed him under my spell. Hell, I just needed sex.

“No.” His voice was soft, barely discernible above the sound of the spray, but there was no mistaking the conviction of his words. He meant what he said. What game were we playing now?

“No? Are you frightened you might not be able to control yourself, *Sir*?” The smirk that came to my lips was planned, and by my reckoning it would waive the red flag loud and clear. His grip in my hair tightened.

“Hardly. If I don't want to let myself go, you could suck on me all day long and I guarantee I'd never come.” He gave me an answering smirk all of his own. Looking thoughtful for a moment, he then said, “Tell you what, you have two minutes to make me climax. If you manage to accomplish your task, I'll reward you with whatever you want... within reason.”

“And if I lose?” I had no intention of losing, but knowing what the stakes were upfront was always a sensible plan.

“If you lose, you give up on this fool's errand and get your ass back home.”

Weighing up my options, I had a feeling I was being played, and I was rarely wrong. Two minutes wasn't all that long, and whilst I was reasonably confident of my talents, I wasn't prepared to put my ass on the line. There was too much at stake.

“No deal.” I chewed on my bottom lip a little, showing him what he would be missing should he be stupid enough to deny me.

“You're just not that good, huh?” The look he gave me was goading, but I wasn't falling for that trick. I hadn't forgotten the man back at Elite Encounters, whom I had a great deal of respect for, and, if anything, that respect had only grown. There was no way I was going to let myself be that easily manoeuvred, though. He'd need to try harder.

“I’m terrible, but you’ll find that out for yourself in your own sweet time, apparently.” Smacking my lips together, I blew him an insouciant kiss. It got me yanked out of the shower with my nose forced into the floor, but the realisation that I’d made him angry was a sweet enough reward. It almost made up for the fact that my body was burning more brightly than a meteor.

“Get your ass in the kitchen immediately, Lois.”

I felt a whoosh of air as the shower door slammed shut behind me, but I didn’t wait to hear it close. I shot through the open door in front of me and crawled down that corridor as fast as my ass would take me, with the idea of putting as much distance as possible between James and myself. Obviously it was a futile endeavour, but I needed to burn some tension off, and crawling was the only way I was going to be allowed to achieve that, apparently.

Before I’d managed to get even half way down the seriously and most ridiculously long corridor, I felt something ferociously sharp swat my backside. Turning around, it was to see James in all his naked glory, wielding a riding crop with a near perfect aim.

“Ow,” I said, wincing at the resulting sting. “That hurts.”

“It’s supposed to, and it’s just one of the many things you can begin to look forward to once you get inside Carte Blanche. Alain has a fondness for the crop.” He arced the black leather strip in the air once more, and the whooshing sound it made as it came down was almost worse than its bite. Almost.

“Jesus.” My eyes started to water, and even though I didn’t think I could crawl much faster, somehow I did.

“What do you think the odds are of Jesus coming down to save you right now?” Although my face was pointing forwards, I could hear the sound of the crop being tapped against flesh - his, not mine - and I was very glad of the brief reprieve.

“Probably better than my chances of making you orgasm in less than two minutes?”

Reaching the end of the corridor, my head swivelled around madly, trying to find out which room I should aim for. There was a sitting room to my right with lots of low, easy leather chairs, and an Aga to my left. I scrambled madly into the kitchen with the sound of his laughter following behind me. Taking refuge under the big oak table that resided there, I wondered if I was going to get into trouble for my little display of defiance.

“It’s probably a close run thing.” As I sat there panting, the sound of the crop crashing into the table top above scared the living daylight out of me. Holy shit. I’d signed up for an indeterminable stint of kinky sex training with a madman. This might have been the stupidest thing I had ever done, and I had done some

stupid things in my time.

There was a long pause of painful silence as I waited to see what would happen next. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up, and that was as good an indication as any that it wasn't going to be good.

Slowly, the pair of legs in front of me bent down, and it was almost in slow motion that I met the pair of ice-blue eyes that always beat me into submission long before his words did. As my eyes blinked and my mind swirled in drugged-like stupor, I felt each individual beat of my heart that seemed to explode in my chest, and still he made me wait for the sound of his voice. When it finally came, it was soft and deadly.

"Lois, Mr. Nice Guy has to end here. I'm doing you a disservice if I don't train you properly, and Alain won't play nice. He has only one set of rules, and you're not going to like them." His expression was sympathetic, but I didn't take that for weakness on his part. James might have had a conscience, but if he was in my line of work, he'd know how to contain it by now.

"What are they?" I whispered. Though the room wasn't cold, I started to shiver as the water began to evaporate from my body. Trying to hide it, trained not to show weakness, I struggled to keep my body under control. It wasn't something that happened very often, and I found myself annoyed that James could reduce me to this so easily.

"Alain is a sadist. He enjoys watching people suffer, very much."

James's voice became even quieter, and I caught my breath as my ears strained to hear him. When the silence stretched out again, I felt the need to fill in the gap.

"Isn't that the pot calling the kettle black? You're a sadist. Alain is a sadist. What's the difference?" A tremble escaped me, and I closed my eyes, regrouping my senses as I tried to focus.

James tilted his head to one side as he thought about his answer, before saying, "I respect safe words. Alain doesn't. I also use sadism primarily as a means to increase pleasure. Alain gets his kicks in a different way."

"And what's that?" My voice had more of an edge now. My fighting spirit was back, thank God.

He shook his head at me. "You'll find out soon enough, Lois, but let me give you a piece of advice. Never, *ever* run." The look James wore was serious enough to make me question it.

"Why?" I didn't normally run from anything, but it might be useful to know why I shouldn't.

"Because he'll hunt you down. He loves the chase. When he's found you, he'll torture you, and believe me when I say you'll wish you were dead. So don't give

him the satisfaction. You get in, you take what he doles out, and you sob where necessary, to the very best of your acting abilities. You do what you've got to do, and then you get out. You won't get a second chance, Lois. You'll be dead."

"I know the risks," I said, biting down on my lower lip and rolling it between my teeth.

"You don't. You don't know what he'll take from you, and once he's taken it, you might never be able to get it back."

"No one man can destroy me," I said, and if there was fire in my eyes, so be it.

James held his right arm out to me, palm up, and I hesitated for a moment before taking his hand.

Pulling me up gently, he said, "You have no idea." Placing me in one of the hard wooden seats that surrounded the oak table, he then said, "Wait here. I'm going to get dressed and then we'll begin. The hard way. Prepare yourself."

Having no clue what that meant, I watched his naked ass disappearing out of the doorway before putting my head in my hands. Rubbing my eyes vigorously, I decided that the hard way couldn't be all that bad. Certainly not where James was concerned, in any case. It seemed I'd completely lost my appetite for anything except sex, and that focusing on anything other than him was almost impossible. Still, when I got inside Carte Blanche and found Alain - an ugly old toad - my life would realign itself. It was distinctly off kilter at the moment.

With nothing better to do, I decided to take my time and have a look around the kitchen. The view was a lot more impressive from my new vantage point, and the lack of table and chair legs made for a much more pleasant outlook.

There was the Aga that I'd previously noticed, in charcoal black, nestled neatly in a brick archway. Two twin hoods stood covering the cooking plates, and they were a bright, shiny silver colour. Clearly someone took good care of this place. There was also matching accessories in the form of a black toaster, coffee machine, and kettle, all with similar silver accents to match. How very... stylish. A few pictures graced the walls, mostly still life paintings of fruits and flowers, but none of them appeared to be worth very much. There was an array of oak cupboards and drawers, and the work surfaces were a pale cream marble. Other than the appliances already mentioned, there was a fully stocked knife block, a twelve bottle wine rack filled with red wine, a stand mixer, and a microwave. It looked decidedly incongruous with the old-fashioned surroundings. Over by the windowsill there were a few wooden utensils, and a stainless steel bin was hidden around an inconspicuous corner. Entertainingly enough, even though I wasn't in any danger, I was already looking for weapons. It was a force of habit, I guessed, and being naked certainly increased my feeling of vulnerability. Still, thankfully, there was a nice array of knives should I need them, though I

suspected they'd be blunt.

Tapping my fingers against the table impatiently, I tried to envision what was going to happen next. Limits? James had said something about discussing my limits form, so hopefully my next session with him wouldn't be too taxing. I wouldn't count on it, though. Speaking of the devil, my ears strained to hear the soft sound of footsteps approaching, and I knew that my brief stint of solitude was about to come to an end.

Watching him, as he strode confidently through the door, I lapped up the sight of him in his tight black tee and jeans again. Clearly it wasn't about what you wore, but how you wore it. Lucky him. I was still completely naked, although a little less self-conscious about it now. It was time I got used to it.

Pulling up a chair, he sat across the table from me and slowly spread a rather familiar form out on the table in front of him. Thankfully, I'd used biro, because judging by the crumpled look of the form, anything else would have melted off the page after its long stint outside.

Studying the form for a moment, James pursed his lips together and frowned. Looking up at me, his eyes caught mine as his thumb dragged itself back and forth against his lower lip. That was such an unfair tactic. I didn't know where to look.

"Lois." The word was left hanging, and with no question to answer, I was forced to respond. This I did using my eyebrows - I had a feeling there'd be a tremor in my voice should I need to use it. Thankfully, my eyebrows proved worthy enough.

"Why did you come here?" The sexy, far too quiet voice was back. It made me feel like I was under a one hundred watt spotlight whilst the rest of the room was pitch black. Oh well. Eyebrows wouldn't be enough this time. *Breathe, open wide, speak*, I instructed myself.

"To be trained." It was succinct but sufficient. It was also all I could manage.

James cleared his throat, then re-examined the paper in front of him. Returning his gaze to me, letting me face the icy-blue invaders yet again, he said, "It doesn't appear that way to me. You've answered 'no' to nearly every question on this limits form." He gave me a stare that would have had a mass murderer begging for mercy.

Clutching the bottom of my seat in order to stop myself squirming, I swore. Fuck it. I was going to have to talk. Throwing my head back and gulping in a lungful of air, I said, "Last time I let you off the leash, I got into trouble. I'm just doing what you told me to." I even managed to add a smile. *En garde, thrust, parry, and wait for the riposte*. There was no doubt it would come.

He bit down on the thumb that had been playing with his lip. I had half a mind

that it was to control a smile, but I couldn't be sure.

"Well, judging by this form, there's no way I'll be able to get you trained up to the standard required to get you into Carte Blanche, so you might as well go home now, Ms. Reeves."

We were back to Ms. Reeves again. How interesting. "I'm not going home. I think we've ascertained that much, Mr. Leveritt." I returned the dark stare he was lavishing upon me with interest.

"Well, if I can't train you, we are at an impasse, Lois. I can't put you inside CB without instructing you in the basics. To do so would guarantee your death, and I have enough deaths on my conscience."

Everything seemed to happen in slow motion when I was around James. I swore I saw the flutter of each individual eyelash as he tilted his face to stare me down. There was an instant of pain in his eyes before the emotion was quickly concealed. The average eye wouldn't have spotted it, but I'd been trained to notice these things. He was hiding something, but then I hadn't expected anything less. It was part of the job description in this line of work.

"Can't you just tell me about them?" There were several items on that list that I did not want to get up close and personal with. The cane, for example, was something that was *not* going to happen. Ever.

"No." He folded his arms across his chest and looked supremely amused. "Would you really have wanted to try anal sex for the first time under Alain's hand?" He sighed. "These fingers are gentle." He flexed them, one by one, in mid-air for my benefit. "Alain's will not be. He'll expect you to be experienced. You won't get in there without him testing you in several different *disciplines*, Lois. You know this."

I did know that, but it didn't make it any easier to swallow. "Fine. I'll fight you for each item on that form. If you win, you can tick the box and do the training. If I win, I get to cross the box off and you get to *explain* it to me." I waited with bated breath for his answer. When it came, it was not what I was expecting. The man laughed at me. He actually laughed! Obviously he'd not had the pleasure of me in combat before, but seriously... there weren't many people who laughed about my skills and lived to tell the tale. Inwardly, I crushed his skull between my two bare hands. It made me feel slightly better.

"We can do it that way if it makes you feel better, Lois, but you'll be sore. On top of everything else you'll have to contend with, I'd say that was taking it to the edge, but it's your call." His arms were crossed again, and he wore a deadpan expression as he waited for my response.

"It's not just me who'll be sore, James. I suspect it's a lot harder to wield a whip if your right arm has had my leg thrust through it." It was my turn to smile

smugly. So what if I was naked?

“You’re that good, huh?” By the tone of his voice, it was clear he didn’t believe me. That wasn’t my problem. He’d find out soon enough.

“You’re about to find out, *Sir*. Which item are we fighting for?” If there was an enthusiastic gleam in my eye about the prospect of battle, that was too bad.

Sighing again, James rolled his eyes. “They told me you’d be difficult.”

“You have no idea,” I said, flexing my limbs, already preparing myself for the onslaught to come.

“Fine. The first item we’ll be considering is the ball gag, and to be honest, I could do with some peace and quiet.”

I wanted to kick him. “Are you so confident you’ll win?” I didn’t care a hoot for all of his bravado. I knew what I was capable of, and I’d taken down bigger men than James in the past.

“Talk is cheap, Lois, but silence is golden. Now get up and put your money where your mouth is.” His chair scraped sharply across the floor as he said it, and I watched as he began to flex his fingers.

The fight was on.

Fifteen

I wasted no time in pulling my chair out from under me. Not for one minute did I think James would go easy on me, though I hoped he would probably stop short of killing me. At the moment, he had a point to prove, and several other advantages to boot. He was bigger, heavier, had a longer reach, and by the ripped state of his abs, he most certainly worked out.

Assuming he was in the same line of work I was, and that wasn't certain, I figured he'd have some martial arts training under his belt. Depending on which ones he'd studied, I might have an easy day or an unpleasant one. There was no doubt I'd come out of this experience with bruises, and I didn't expect to win against him every time we fought, but I figured the law of averages would at least give me a shot at crossing a few of the more unpleasant things off that list without actually having to experience them first hand. The other side of the coin was that it would give me exercise, and a way to burn off the unpleasant nervous energy that was constantly bubbling through my veins as soon as he came near me. It would also hone my fighting skills, so it had to be a win-win, whichever way I looked at it.

"Are we picking fighting styles, or does anything go?" I asked as I made my way around the table warily. James had already adopted a crouching stance, with his hands held out loosely in front of him, so it was clear my initial assessment was correct.

"Anything goes, sweetheart. I wouldn't want to limit your creativity."

"When it comes to the idea of your head connecting with the floor, you won't." I smiled sweetly.

He merely grinned in response, but I might as well have saved my breath. There was no way I was going to ruffle any of his feathers with words.

"Ah, so now the boundaries have been set. I'll take off the kid gloves, then." James looked annoyingly calm and unruffled, but I'd come to expect that.

"Please do." Giving him no further time to think about things, I dodged one way and then rushed forward in the other direction. If I was to have any chance of winning this fight, I needed to take it to the floor. That was where I'd get the better of him. Unfortunately, somehow, he'd already estimated exactly what I was going to do, and simply sidestepped out of my way. Spinning around to face him again, I decided play the same tactic again from a different angle. I dodged and barrelled on through from the opposite direction, but James took my feet out from under me, and I was the one who went sprawling, face first, making a very

indelicate landing.

“What technique was that?” I asked, a little chagrined as I hauled myself up off the floor boards.

“That was the smack ‘em down technique. I have many more just like it.” He rubbed his hands together as if to accentuate his point, then used his fingers to usher me forward.

“You’re not funny.”

“You’re going to think I’m even less funny by the time I’ve finished with you, Lois, but you’ll learn. I’m beginning to realise you like doing everything the hard way.”

“Not everything,” I whispered, circling him warily. I had no intention of greeting the floor face first again.

“Oh?”

“I prefer making love the easy way.” I dived for his shins, and though I caught hold of one, I didn’t manage to knock him off balance as I’d anticipated, and was it me, or did James have really hard legs? What the hell was wrong with me today?

“That’s too bad. I don’t see any love-making in your immediate future. Perhaps the hard way is better after all.”

Trying my best to get a solid grip on James, I went for a lower body take down, trying to keep top position, but before I knew it, it was me on my back, with James pressed tightly into me, whilst his hand had my arm in a wrist-lock. As he began to bend it backwards in a way it most certainly wasn’t designed for, he raised his eyebrows and stared at me.

“Do you want to call it yet, Lois? Or would you prefer I make it hurt?” The flat, blue eyes in front of me were almost goading, although he appeared to take no pleasure in the victory. It infuriated me, nevertheless. Squirming and wriggling for all I was worth, I did my best to wrap my legs around him and shake him off, but he was always one step ahead of me. I began to wonder if he’d studied my favourite martial art, which was Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and if he had, I was going to need to change tactics for the next round.

“Fine, let’s make it hurt.”

I gave one last futile kick with my legs, trying to free them from his crushing weight, whilst using my free hand to grapple with him, but I knew without doubt that I’d lost this round. There were no rooms for error with James. I either had to get in early and finish the job first time around, or be prepared to accept disappointment.

It suddenly came to my attention that my wrist was being forcibly bent double, and unless I said something pretty sharply, I’d be lucky if I had much of a wrist

left.

“I concede,” I screamed. When the pressure didn’t automatically subside, I yelled, “Let me go. You win. You win. Please let me go.” Thankfully, it had the desired effect. He released his grip on me, and I cradled my poor wrist to my chest.

“Was that really necessary?” I griped as my eyes narrowed in his direction.

“You tell me. You started this nonsense, I believe. It would be far easier for me to train you without these silly interruptions.”

I folded my arms across my chest mutinously. Bizarrely, I’d all but forgotten I was completely naked. That had to be a good thing. I was getting back to my old self.

“You got lucky. I’ll beat you next time.”

“I love your optimism.” The hard stare was back, but I ignored it. Thankfully, I didn’t have to endure it for long. James turned on his heel and headed towards one of the oak cupboards just under the kettle. He pulled it open, rustled around for a minute, and then pulled out a large, red rubber ball, complete with black leather straps on either side. He wasn’t going to waste any time making sure I kept my end of the bargain, it seemed.

“You keep ball gags in kitchen cupboards?” I figured I might as well get as many words out of my mouth as possible before the privilege was removed from me. Seriously, though, the setup around these parts was beyond weird. The bad news was, in the next few weeks it was only going to get worse.

“This is just the tip of the iceberg, precious. You should see what we keep upstairs.” Moving towards me, he dangled the gag in front of my eyes to let me know what I was in for, as if I hadn’t been tormented enough already.

The thought of being gagged was not a pleasant one, but it was one that I had endured before, so at least it didn’t have the element of the unknown. The previous time it had been a strip of dirty cloth, a drug dealer, and a sixty-foot yacht. Sharkey had seriously underestimated the man count for that op, and my team and I had found ourselves up against fifty armed men. Three of us didn’t make it, three did. The three who were spared were all women, and there was a reason they’d decided to keep us, though I wasn’t going to think about that now.

“Are you okay, Lois?”

I gave my head a visible shake to snap myself out of it. What was wrong with me? James had already proven himself a worthy adversary, and I needed to concentrate.

“Yes. Let’s get this over with.” I walked towards him and held my head up high. Aware this was going to be one of the easier trials I was going to face, I decided to put a brave face on situation, though my confidence had been dented.

“Have you been gagged before, Lois?” I could see the wheels turning in his eyes, and I wanted to swear. This was not something I wanted to talk about.

“No.” The answer I gave was firm, and the look I wore was steely. My body language was perfect. There was not a blink, twitch, or tremor out of place. He wasn’t going to see through me this time.

“You’re lying.”

Goddamn the man! He was going to drive me crazy.

“Are you going to gag me, or are we going to stand here chatting?” I could hardly believe it, but I was almost looking forward to being mute. If James could have read my mind, it was saying something along the lines of, ‘hurry up and get on with it, you bastard.’

“If you don’t want to talk about it, that’s all you have to say, Lois, but you need to be honest with me. If you’re going to have a meltdown when I put this in your mouth, I want to know about it beforehand, so I’m prepared. If there’s anything that you’re uncertain or afraid of, I’ll walk you through it and hold your hand. I’ll also make sure I stay with you the whole time. If you have a panic attack and I’m not around, that won’t end well. Do you understand what I’m saying, Lois?”

“Yes. Okay, I have been gagged before, and no, I do not want to talk about it. You don’t need to worry about me, though, I’ll be fine.” I traced a small line down the centre of the red ball and was surprised at how smooth it was.

“We both know you’re not fine, Lois, but we’ll talk about that later. Right now, let’s get you through this, and we can tick it off our list.” He held the ball gag between the two leather straps and looked at me. “Kneel for me and open wide, sweetheart.”

I decided to be graceful in defeat. Besides, there weren’t really any other options. If I didn’t do as I was told, we’d go back to the original method of training, and making a run for it really wasn’t in my best interests if I wanted to get inside CB. Bending down on one knee, the other swiftly joined it, and I looked up at James and opened my mouth. It wasn’t one of the hardest things I’d had to do, but I didn’t enjoy it. I was someone who had to win, and here I was, having just lost.

James didn’t prolong the agony, though, and I guess I could be thankful for that small mercy. The red ball came at me with surprising swiftness, and all it took was a few deft moves with the buckle before the gag was locked firmly in place.

Getting to my feet immediately, I took a few hesitant steps backward, mainly to put some distance between James and myself. For a moment, I teetered, my balance madly off kilter, and then I got back down on my knees.

No longer in the here and now, all I could think about was my dirty cell on the yacht *Eclipse*, the smell of diesel, and the sound of screaming. The screaming

was always the first thing that came back to me, along with the vicious swaying of the boat, which had been caught in a rip tide. The nausea was nearly unbearable, but I had far worse things to contend with on that day. They'd cuffed my hands around the back of the bilge pipe on the bottom deck, and I'd nearly sawed my wrists off in order to escape the wonderful delights they had planned for me. I think I got lucky that day. I'd been the one they'd left until last, which meant I had to sit and watch whilst fifty odd men had their fun with the two women before me. Looking back, my fear probably turned them on, and they'd been happy to play with me. Those guys could smell fear from two hundred paces, and their enjoyment of my predicament had been obvious. I had no doubt that all of us would have been killed that day, but for one small factor. My hands clawed at the floor helplessly as my memories ran wild.

"Lois. Stay with me, Lois." My head suddenly jumped all over the place and the yacht disappeared. James was shaking me with both hands, probably wondering what on earth I was doing. My head snapped up and I blinked. Transferring myself into a sitting position, I took a few deep breaths, in and out, through my nose.

It wasn't so bad. My mouth felt painfully full, and the taste of rubber flooded my saliva, but it was just a gag - James wasn't a monster. Well, not of the usual variety, in any case.

"Lois, look at me." He took my hands in his, and I had little choice but to follow his directive, though his eyes were beginning to haunt me. Thankfully, his voice was low, calm and soothing. Somehow it managed to banish my dark thoughts, and that could only be a good thing.

"If you're okay, make the 'O' signal with your index finger and thumb. If you're not, blink three times." He squeezed my fingers in his hands, just to make sure he had my attention, before letting them go. Nodding my head, I made the required signal and tried not to let myself think about anything but James. It probably wasn't a great idea to let my imagination run away in that direction, but it was better than the alternative.

"You're doing great, Lois, and I promise not to keep it in any longer than necessary, but I'm afraid I do need you to get used to the feel of it, and there's really only one way to do that properly."

I wasn't sure I wanted to hear this. Looking up at him, I braced myself for the worst. He gave me a rueful grin.

I shook my head and rolled my eyes. Now I definitely knew I wasn't going to like this. Waving my hand at him to continue, I urged him to hurry on up and spit it out. We didn't have time for games.

James looked to either side of me, as if searching for available objects that I

might throw at him and, satisfied there was nothing that posed a threat, he said, “I need you to masturbate in front of me.”

Counting to ten, I just managed to convince myself that poking out his eyeballs with my fingernails would not be in my best interests, but I shook my head vehemently. No way. I was *not* doing that.

“It’s on the list of mandatory things you have to do, and I suspect they’ll require it of you at the auction, so we might as well get the first time over with. You’re going to be doing it daily, so it’ll look good by the time you actually have to do it with an audience. If it makes you feel better, I’ll close my eyes the first time, but you need to get used to people watching you. In CB, you’re going to be surrounded by men and women who will not only feast upon you with their eyes, but they’ll be using their hands and fingers, too. By accepting this assignment, you’ve just given up all your rights to privacy, and you’ll need to learn to beg for the most ridiculous things. As a slave, you enter CB at the bottom of the food chain, and working your way up takes time and a good degree of skill. So, Lois, I’m going to trust you and shut my eyes. I’ll open them again after you orgasm, and if I can’t figure out that point all by myself, tap your hand repeatedly on the floor for me. Okay?”

James didn’t wait for me to respond to the question. He just closed his eyes and sat there quietly on the floor. *Gah*. How on earth was I supposed to make myself climax in front of an audience? Repeatedly! Letting out a small, frustrated moan, I considered just sitting there and doing nothing. Would I get away with it? Unlikely. James had eyes in the back of his head, and knowing my luck, he’d probably check to see if I’d done the job properly. Besides, what good would that do me? When the time came, I’d be so nervous I’d barely be able to move, and everyone would spot me for the fraudster that I was. There was no getting away from this. I needed to get with the programme.

“Don’t even think of cheating, Lois. I can tell whether you’ve orgasmed or not, and if you defy me on this, our little ‘jousting’ sessions will be null and void.”

Thankfully, James didn’t say another word, but I got the message loud and clear. *Do not mess with me*. Inwardly, I pouted, because I wasn’t prepared to risk our arrangement. At the moment, it was the only thing keeping me sane. So, I needed to breathe, or try to breathe with a great big red ball in my mouth, and get busy with some fingers.

Shaking my head, I began to rue the day I’d set foot in this house. I’d thought kneeling on my knees, naked, on the front porch was the worst thing that could happen to me. How wrong was I? Staring at James’s face directly in front of me, paying particular attention to his closed eyelids, I splayed my knees a little wider and slid my right hand down between my legs.

There was no question that I would be wet. If James was sitting less than three feet from me, that wasn't going to be an issue. My fingers slid inside my pussy easily, and I used them to slowly lubricate my clit. My first instinct was to rush this little interlude and get my task over and done with as fast as was humanly possible, but I managed to hold myself back from that thought. If I was going to be doing this in front of people eventually, that tactic wasn't going to work. The guys at CB would want a good show, and I intended to deliver one. I decided I might as well give it all I had now and practise as if there was a captive audience in front of me.

Taking my time, I let my fingers delve inside me, a little deeper with each thrust, before I smeared the resulting wetness all over my sex. Using my fingers to squeeze and flick my clit, I wished I didn't have a great big ball inside my mouth. Saliva came in handy when you wanted lots of slippery and wet, but I could probably make do with what I had.

“Put your fingers in my mouth.”

My stomach hit the ceiling at the sound of his low, raspy voice penetrating the silence, but it quickly recovered. How did he do that? Was the guy possessed with extra sensory perception, or did he just get lucky nearly every damn time? Had I not been gagged, I would have muttered a swear word or two, but as it happened, the idea was a good one, so I hesitantly reached my fingers up towards his lips. Why I'd decided to do as he said was anybody's guess, and when I came within an inch of his face, the urge to drag my fingers back was upon me, but it was too late. He must have sensed me there, because he lunged forward and, catching my index and middle finger together in his teeth, he sucked them into his mouth hard.

The gasp I made around the gag was soft, but I knew he heard it. Instinctively pulling on my fingers, wanting them back, his hand snapped forward and grabbed my wrist. How he pulled that stunt with his eyes closed was beyond me, but he was dead on target.

“Don't you dare move.”

Although his voice was nothing more than a whisper, it sounded deafening in my ears, echoing over and over. I made a strangled sound in my throat, but then felt his lips softly caressing the length of my fingertips as he fed them in and out of his mouth. He did this over and over again until he had me writhing on the floor. How did the man do it? If someone had told me I could be left panting with nothing more than a few licks to my fingers, I'd have called them insane. I was not the easiest person to please in bed at the best of times, but if there was a secret formula with which to unlock my body, James had found it.

His soft, short licks turned to long slow coils of his tongue. He picked out each

of my fingers in turn and lavished them with attention. Each single tug felt like the man had a direct line between my fingers and my clit, and my moans became louder and louder. Without conscious thought, I began playing with myself again, using my left hand. It wasn't as easy as using my right, but I didn't need a lot of additional incentive to get where I wanted to go. My whole body was beginning to throb and burn uncomfortably, and the blood flow inside my groin had begun to bubble and boil. I needed release so bad, and this was one of those times where it was going to fly effortlessly up to greet me, or so I thought.

A pair of ice-blue eyes fluttered open, and if his fingers hadn't already done the job, those beasts managed to set me aflame. How could someone feel like they were drowning and on fire at the same time? The things this man did to my body, effortlessly, and with nothing more than his eyes. He made me euphoric in one moment, and furious in the next.

I wanted to tell him he'd promised to keep them closed. I wanted to call him a liar and a bastard, and then smack my fist into his face. I also wanted to kiss him. Unable to do just about all of the above, I sat there frozen to the spot, wondering what my next move should be. Could I move my fingers with his eyes on mine? Could I come apart under his watchful eyes and not pay the price that would surely follow?

"Fly apart for me, little bird." My fingers were back in his mouth, and his free hand was tracing a path around my swollen lips, scooping up the rivulets of saliva that were dripping from my mouth. His eyes almost hugged mine with their intensity, and I could do little but return his stare. When I was caught between his headlights, there was no room for manoeuvre.

"Let me watch." James's voice was smooth and seductive. I shook my head pleadingly, but in the back of my mind I already knew the game was lost. "It'll be easier if we get it over and done with, Lois." His lips feasted upon my neck, and my world, which had been spinning uncontrollably for a while now, suddenly tilted off its axis and went supernova. My hands clenched into claws, and for a moment I was almost paralysed.

"You can do this, Lois. It'll be so easy once you start." James picked up my lifeless hand and gripped it in his warm one. He spread my fingers out, one by one, and massaged them gently. His eyes were fucking with me. No, you misunderstand me. It was as if he were actually fucking me. They had just the right amount of liquid warmth and fire in them. That perfect blend of lust and desire was there, but I knew that everything they promised was not to be mine. I would not have the pleasure of James's body, and there was a part of me that was utterly furious with this knowledge, though it should have been grateful.

James guided my hand back between my legs, straightening my fingers and

slowly sliding two of them inside me. At least I think they were my fingers, because my neural circuits were being fried. He placed a thumb - I didn't care if it was mine or his - against my clit, and as soon as the friction started, my body figured out the rest. It appeared that was the catalyst I'd been looking for, because no further encouragement was needed. My fingers took over from his guiding hands, and they began rubbing furiously. At this moment in time, I couldn't have cared less if the Dalai Lama had been watching - all I could focus on was my raging need for relief.

Swimming in a perfect, turquoise ocean of calm water, he refused to let me lower my eyes, though I tried on several occasions. Each time he would simply bring his hand up to my chin and raise my face until our gaze was once again level. In order to fight this, I tried closing them, but I was swiftly coming to realise that James would not be beaten.

“Stay with me, Lois. If you close those eyes, we will we replay this little scene again and again until you manage to keep them open.”

He was deadly serious. Closing my eyes would only prolong the agony. So, fixing him with the full weight of my stare, my steely grey irises got ready to reveal some of their secrets. It wasn't so bad, really. Just a few flicks of my greedy little fingers, each a little harder and faster than the last, and all the tension that had been tightly tangled up inside me suddenly began to unwind. An enticing warmth began to spread all through my body, and though James's face was only inches away from mine, I barely saw it now. Oblivious to everything around me, I stared straight ahead and hoped that would placate him. There were more important things to worry about. Setting a demanding rhythm with my fingertips, it wasn't long before my neck was arching upwards and my legs were splaying themselves as wide as they were able.

I'm not sure how you know when you're about to be hit with a monster orgasm, but somehow you do. For a few minutes, just before I came, breathing was almost impossible, especially as I was gagged. It didn't deter me in the slightest, but the pressure building up inside me was staggering. Screaming my head off around the red ball, I was almost thankful for its presence, because I don't think I'd ever made that kind of noise before, except with James, of course. Oh, James... the things you do to me. What I wouldn't do to that body of yours, given half a chance.

Trembling like a leaf as soon as I'd finished, it felt like someone had taken all the air out of me. Instantly deflating, I rocked backwards and forwards, before James must have taken pity on me, swiftly unbuckling the gag and lowering me to the floor.

“You did great, Lois. Take a few big gulps of air and you'll feel much better in

a minute.” His hand stroked my arm gently, in a lazy motion, and it was incredibly strange how comfortable I felt with this man. *Those are dangerous thoughts, Lois*, I told myself. Although possibly not as dangerous as they could be, considering what I was about to do in a few weeks’ time. I wondered what it would take for James to drop that rigid mantle of control he possessed. I also wondered what it would be like to sleep with him, and I had a feeling it would be really, really, *really* good.

“That’s one of the strongest orgasms I’ve had... by myself,” I added awkwardly, wanting the floor to open up and swallow me whole.

“When your oxygen intake is limited, you tend to have more intense orgasms. This is a nice way to test that theory. Alain has his own versions, and I hope you never get to experience them.”

“I’ll be okay.” My voice had more confidence than I actually felt, but I guess I wanted to prove to James that I was a big girl who could handle herself. He was one of the first men I’d ever wanted or needed to prove that to, which was interesting enough in itself.

“You won’t, but as you’re so damn stubborn, it looks like you’re going to do it anyway.” Getting up from his sitting position on the floor, James looked mad for a moment, but quickly masked his expression. Walking silently out of the door, he left me to mull over my thoughts and lick my wounds.

Sixteen

After a few minutes I crawled back to my room. It felt bizarre being alone in the kitchen naked, and I needed a soft place to lay my weary bones. The past twenty-four hours had been gruelling, and there was some sleep I needed to catch up on. Drawing the curtains and pulling the plain white duvet on top of me, I wrapped it around me so snugly it was nearly as good as being clothed. Thankfully, sleep came upon me almost instantly and I fell into its deep, comforting embrace with open arms.

Kiel was there waiting for me. One minute I felt like I was falling, and in the next I was cradled in his arms.

“I’ve missed you,” I whispered, snuggling in close to his chest. In response, he hugged me tight to his body.

“I’ve missed you, too.”

“How could you do that to me? Just walk out of my life without even so much as a goodbye?” There were tears of accusation in my eyes as he lowered me to the ground and cradled my face in his hands.

“Be fair, Kat. I didn’t exactly have much say in the matter.” He gave me the eyebrow.

That was typical of Kiel, always making light of every situation. I thumped him.

“I want you back here,” I whimpered.

“I know, but it’s kind of nice here, what with the harps and cherubs and everything.” His Irish accent hit me right where it was supposed to – smack between my legs. It took me a couple of seconds to get my voice back, and when I had, I was semi-outraged.

“If you even think of entering heaven, you are in so much trouble, Mr. O’Sullivan.” I thumped him again for good measure. As per usual, he barely noticed. It may have had something to do with the fact that he’d been built somewhat similar to a brick.

“And why’s that, Kat?”

Bringing my lips up to his, I sank into him, running my hands over the planes of his back, seeking familiar territory, stroking beautifully honed muscles.

“Because I’ll never get an entry pass through those gates. If you want to see me again, you’d better head on over to the dark side.”

My hands ran themselves through his thick black hair, and I caressed his cheek over and over again. I greedily drank him in and hoped that I remained wherever

I was forever. The real world was too dirty, too messed-up, and way too painful. I'd quite happily never return.

His head swooped in and his lips nuzzled my neck. The feeling was exquisite.

"Ahh, don't be so hard on yourself, Kat. You'll make it through the pearly gates."

I shook my head sadly at him. "I won't, Kiel. Dammit. You were such a good person. What did you ever see in me?" There were tears in my eyes as I said it, and as one dribbled down my cheek, he picked it up on his index finger. It hovered there for a moment, one perfect sphere of emotion, glistening with light, and then everything began to waver.

"Don't leave me again, Kiel," I whispered through a choked sob.

"You'll see me again sooner than you think," he said, giving me his trademark wink, and as I reached for his body, my fingers went through him, and he disintegrated in my hands.

"No," I screamed. "No, don't do this to me!" A draft of air whispered around my body and, once again, I was all alone, facing a world that was mean, cruel, and excruciatingly painful.

"Lois. Lois, wake up." There was a rattling noise, and I realised that was the sound of my teeth banging rapidly against each other. As far as rude awakenings went, it was X-rated.

"Stop. The. Damn. Shaking." I got the words out where I could, but it was difficult when my body felt like it had been fed through a paper shredder.

"You were having a bad dream." James gave me a concerned look, which was quite comical when I came to think of it.

"So you're worried when I have a bad dream, but think nothing of it when you beat the shit out of me?" I gave him a sideways glance at that one.

Frowning at me, he condescendingly said, "Lois, you asked for that. I warned you of the consequences. It's not my fault you're unreasonable."

"And nuts," I added for good measure. It was mostly true. These days, the pieces didn't fit together quite like they used to.

"I didn't say that." The look he gave me was sardonical now.

"You didn't have to." I smiled up at him and grabbed his cheek. "I'm hungry. What's for lunch?"

Sitting down on the side of the bed, he was undeterred by my comment as he said, "The dream, Lois. Want to talk about it?" He grabbed my hand, and although I'd pulled it away as soon as I saw him reach for me, he was way too fast. Rubbing the skin across my knuckles gently, he said, "You need to talk."

"I don't." I furnished him with a stubborn, mutinous gaze, and we both sat

there for a good couple of minutes trying to stare each other out.

“Fine,” he said resignedly, after I’d sat there unwavering for the better part of five minutes. “Let’s eat.”

Considering I’d had to work really hard for that victory, you’d have thought I’d have been more cheerful at the outcome of our very stilted chat. Unfortunately, James had that unpleasant sparkle in his eye that said things were probably not going to go well for me if I continued being difficult. Crossing my fingers together, I hoped I was wrong, but didn’t hold out much hope for my immediate future.

As I’d suspected, my afternoon proved to be more than just a little ‘difficult.’ Eating lunch was an experience all in itself. Firstly, I was not allowed to sit at the table. My place was on the floor beside my Master, where I was to be fed scraps. I took umbrage to this, of course, but I was given ‘the look,’ which I’d now learnt meant do as you’re told or go home. Sighing under my breath, I cursed the fact that the floor was hard and cold, and that James couldn’t feed me anywhere near quick enough to satisfy my appetite. It also might have had something to do with the fact that he’d made me pasta al forno for lunch, which I was particularly partial to. As sun-dried tomatoes, mozzarella, chilli peppers, olives, and parmesan cheese danced on my tongue, all I could do was groan, silently enjoying my own little slice of heaven. Being fed by James’s fingers might have been messy and decidedly unsanitary, but I decided I wasn’t going to care. The food tasted good, and I was hungry. *Really* hungry. All this crawling around I was doing must have worked up an appetite.

“Getting full yet, kitten?” James gave me the raised eyebrow and held a piece of pasta just above my nose, near enough that I could smell it, but too far away to bite, unless I was going to stand up. Doing that incurred a punishment, or so I’d been told, so I was forced to sit there and pout.

“No, I am not full, and don’t tease me, Sir. This is the first time I’ve had an appetite in forever. Don’t forget that you’re the one who wants me to put on weight.” I nodded at him, and my stomach rumbled as if on cue. He laughed.

“Fine. But you’ll need to beg for it. You might as well start practising.”

“You want me to beg for food, Sir?”

“I do.”

“Please Sir, can I have some pasta?” Although I had reservations about begging for sex, I was more than prepared to beg for food. Call me weird.

The fork that had been hovering just above my nose then backtracked into his mouth. I gave him a horrified look and moaned.

“You’ll have to do better than that, Lois. Use some adjectives. Make me know

you want it.”

Was it me, or were double-entendres floating around here? As it happened, I did want it, and I knew I wasn't going to get it. Actually, I lie. The challenge was out there, and I intended to try my hardest to ensure that I got what I wanted before I was shoved out the door. My womanly wiles needed a bit of dusting down, but I was sure that before our training session was over I would have managed to agitate the cool, calm Mr. Leveritt in some way. Whether it would be in the way that I wanted remained to be seen, but one could hope.

“Please Sir, can I have a morsel of the mouth-wateringly tasty pasta al forno, which you are greedily keeping all to yourself over there. I want to taste an explosion of ...”

“Don't overcook it, Lois. Makes you appear slutty and desperate.”

I sighed and rolled my eyes. It was very easy to make fun of someone when you were the one holding all the aces. Shifting from one knee to the other, to ease their soreness, I purred, “Feed me, oh gorgeous one.” I added a look that said he'd better do it, else I was going to do him bodily harm. Thankfully, it seemed to do the trick.

“I suppose that'll have to do.” Several more mouthfuls of pasta were gently forked into my mouth before a generous helping of Torta Caprese followed. The man really was trying to fatten me up. This time he fed me by hand, and as decadent chocolate and almonds melted on my tongue, I decided there were worse places to be in the world. As my tongue tangled with his fingers, tormenting them slowly, I couldn't help but wonder if my body or actions had any effect on him.

“So, what are we going to cross off the limits list after lunch? Any preferences?” I immediately stiffened. The simple pleasure I had taken in eating instantly disappeared, and I was once again on the defensive. As I still hadn't fully discerned James's fighting style, it would make sense to pick something rather tame off the list, so I wracked my brain trying to remember exactly what was on there. It wasn't as easy as you'd have thought, considering I had poured over that sheet just a few days ago. For some reason, my mind was blank. This probably had a lot do with the fact that my stomach was comfortably full, I was still naked, and James was sitting mere inches away from me. In the end, I had to hum out loud, which is one of my little quirks to aid concentration, and then I had it. Why not pick something that would torment him for a change? Every now and again this deal had to have an upside, right?

“Oral sex. Let's tackle that one.” I gave him a bright smile, and to be honest, I wasn't even sure I'd be upset if I lost this one.

“You still want to fight?” James asked.

“Yes.” He looked rather put out by my answer, but that was too bad.

“Most girls have to beg to suck my cock.” He stuck out his bottom lip and frowned. It was almost adorable, until I decided to consider just how many people might have sucked his cock in the past. If my fighting skills didn’t improve, I was probably going to get an unpleasant critique of my oral ability. Oh well. I’d just have to be brave and take it on the chin.

Standing up, he carried the plain white china plate that we’d managed to wipe clean between us to the sink, and then he set it down gently on the drainer. Filling a clear glass with water, he handed it to me and said, “Drink.”

Having not realised how thirsty I was until the water was straight in front of me, I accepted his offer greedily, gulping it down in one. “Thank you, Sir,” I whispered.

“If you ever need something to drink, just ask. Food will be entirely up to my discretion, but drink is your responsibility. I can’t have you fainting on me. If I’m not around, help yourself to a glass whenever you need to, okay?”

I nodded in response. He wasn’t a complete asshole, then.

“Right, it’s time for round two. I hope you’ve changed your game plan since last time.” Interlacing the fingers between his right and left hand, he stretched them sharply and released. Then he took up his familiar crouching position, and I was on the alert.

“Out of curiosity, which martial arts have you trained in?” It might have been an unfair question, but I needed all the advantages I could get. James was taller, stronger, and weighed a good deal more than me, and all of these combined gave him a distinct edge. If I could narrow that ‘edge’ down, then I might stand a chance.

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.” He made the ‘come-get-me’ gesture with his hands, but I wasn’t to be deterred.

“Come on, James. Let’s make this game a little more fun,” I whined. “You’re a guy and I’m a girl - the least you can do is help me out here.” I stretched my hands out wide in a gesture of helplessness. *Let’s see what he does with that*, I thought.

“You started this, Lois. You can pull out anytime you like. Contrary to popular belief, I take no pleasure from hurting you. For the record, I’m still mightily offended that you’re trying to get out of the immense honour of blowing me.”

How James managed to keep a straight face after that line, I had no idea. Either his ego was immense or his sense of humour was a little dry, but which one?

“James, help me out here.” Staring those ice-blue eyes down, I crouched into a similar stance and hovered on the spot. Damned if I was making the first move.

“On a scale of one to ten, how abhorrent is the idea of sucking my cock? One

being fucking awful, and ten being fucking incredible, by the way.”

I grinned. Men and their egos. “Like I’m going to tell you that,” I said, diving for his thigh, but he disappeared into thin air, and I was left clutching at straws.

“You move fast,” I grumbled, as he side-stepped lightly away on his feet.

“You need to move faster.” Before I knew what was happening, he looped his leg under my knee and I went sprawling across the floor. It didn’t take me long to get up again, but I was not happy about the prospect.

“Tell you what, you answer my question and I’ll tell you what style of martial art I’ll use to bring you down. It has to be an honest answer, though, Lois.”

“Always the optimist. Fine. I’m not against the idea of fellatio. If I’m scoring, I’ll go with an eight.”

“Huh.” James looked mightily put out for a moment, and I had to bite my lip to keep from laughing out loud. “It seems I have more work to do than I thought,” he said, scratching his chin. Recovering his composure quickly, he simply said, “Tae Kwan Do.”

Having a split second in which to register that comment before a flying tornado kick to my chest sent me sprawling towards the floor, I wanted to scream. The man could kick box as well? Was there no end to his bloody talents?

When I landed, rather brutally on a solid floor, the jarring impact was nasty. Not bothering to get up, as the wind had been completely knocked out of me, I concentrated on trying to breathe. Swearing was going to be the next thing on my list, but air was more important at the moment.

Ever the solicitous teacher, James carefully brought me up to a sitting position and bent me over. “It’ll be easier to breathe this way. Just take your time and stay still.” He stroked my back gently, as we waited for my lungs to fill.

“I hate you,” I finally spat, adding several of the swear words that had been dying to leave my lips for the past minute or so.

“Yet you want to suck my cock. This is a conundrum, Lois. Methinks you do protest too much.”

“I hate you, I hate you, I hate you!” Adding another several hundred cuss words, I was surprised to find that I actually felt better. This venting stuff was obviously good for my health.

“Did you honestly mean an eight?”

“You aren’t that hot,” I lied, glaring at him.

“Is that so?” His look was calculating, and that should have been enough of a warning, but did I heed it? Hell no.

“Yes.” Rather proud of the confident tone I’d used to answer his question, I nodded my head.

“Then I don’t think you *should* suck my cock.” He looked just as confident as

me, if not more so. Where was this heading?

“You don’t?” My voice may have wavered slightly, because it was something I’d be looking forward to doing, and it now looked like it might be taken away. My plan had just backfired, and spectacularly so. You know that ‘taking candy away from a baby’ expression – well my face must have looked a picture, but thankfully he seemed oblivious to my obvious torment.

“But we have a problem, Lois.” He sat with his face in his hands and looked deep in concentration. It was almost amusing, considering the subject of his thoughts, but I was not to be consoled in any which way, shape, or form.

“What’s that?” I asked resignedly. This was probably going to be yet another thing I was not going to like.

“We need to cross oral sex off the list, or we’ll need to fight for it again. You’re two down to nothing, and I need you in some kind of useful state for training, so... how about I practise on you.” The downward lilt to the end of his sentence suggested it was not a question, and that bothered me.

“I’m not sure I like that idea.” My face wrinkled up as I remembered the last series of orgasms he had given me, all in quick succession. Could my body take any more of that? Doubtful.

“It wasn’t a question, Lois.” And there it was. I bit my lip and tilted my head from side to side for a couple of seconds. I may have looked like an idiot, but at least I didn’t swear and try to lump him one.

“Follow me.” James strode out of the room with a sprightly step, and I swore silently at his back. I ached all over, and whilst I might have brought this upon myself, blaming Mr. Leveritt was a whole lot more fun.

“I almost heard that, Lois.”

Ooh, you fucking didn’t, I mouthed to myself.

“I almost heard that, too.”

I could envisage the bastard smiling as he said it, and that enraged me more. Calm down, Lois, and get some perspective on the situation. Yeah, like that was possible. Somehow, my body managed to find some energy, fuelled mostly by anger, and though crawling was now pretty painful, we were in my bedroom again before I knew it.

“On the bed.” James gave a flick of his fingers, and this time I did as he said without question. I wasn’t going to contemplate another round of sparring today, and it was beginning to dawn on me that I was no match for James. He was in another category entirely, and I would have dearly loved to know where he learnt to fight like that.

“Spread your legs.”

“I love it when you talk dirty, Sir,” I purred.

“What have we said about that sassy mouth of yours, Lois? It’s going to land you in trouble. The question is, what kind of trouble? Shall we say ten edging sessions followed by an orgasm if you’re good?”

“What does ‘edging’ mean?” I asked suspiciously, slowly widening my legs upon the crisp white sheets of my double bed.

“It’s when you’re taken to the edge of orgasm, but not allowed to come. Basically, it’s a vicious form of teasing, but it does have its benefits.”

Raising an eyebrow, I waited for him to continue.

He took his own sweet time in replying, settling himself between my thighs whilst happily blowing warm little breaths of air upon my sex and watching me quiver in delight. Honestly, I couldn’t help it. There was a hot man between my legs, who was amazing at just about everything he did between the sheets (or outside of them, for that matter) and my body was singing his praises, even if my mind still rebelled.

“When you’re finally allowed to come, things get a little more interesting than usual.” There was a heavier breath of air, and I jumped.

“Damn it, James.”

“Damn it, Sir. Actually, that should be, ‘Whatever you say, Sir.’”

“Yes, Sir. Define interesting? Unless the idea is just to torment me silly, which you seem to excel at, by the way.” I shuffled up the bed, trying to escape the heat of his mouth. It was a fruitless endeavour, because he just moved higher up the bed himself.

“It isn’t a whole lot of fun for you, no. Well, not until the end.” He smirked.

“What aren’t you telling me?” My body did another involuntary shuffle and I hit the headboard. Damn it.

“You’ll find out soon enough. Okay, Lois, the rules of the game are thus. If you play nicely and lie there perfectly still, I won’t cuff you. As an added incentive to lie still, I’ll also let you come at the end of the session, which you’ll want to do.”

“Says who?” I glowered at him.

“Trust me.” His tongue snaked out and caught my clit in a single, deep stroke. I was immediately in a whirlwind of oestrogen and progesterone, and whether I trusted him or not, I already wanted an orgasm, so things were not looking good. He then used his tongue to gently tickle my sex for a minute or two, which also drove me crazy, before pulling out the big guns and suckling at me for all he was worth. Stopping dead about three seconds before I was about to scream the walls down, he looked up at me, almost apologetically as I lay there panting, in a reasonable degree of discomfort. Thankfully, it was nothing that I couldn’t handle.

“Will they do this to me in CB?” I asked breathlessly.

James began fondling my thigh with his fingers, and I felt the current shoot sharply upwards. Hopefully Alain would be hideously ugly, or I would be done for. A sharp bite on my thigh knocked that thought straight out of my head, and I squealed, though it hadn't really hurt that much.

“Yes and no.”

“That's not an answer.” The ‘r’ sound hung on for a lot longer than necessary, because he attached his mouth between the centre of my legs once more. After what seemed like an eternity of licking, sucking, and biting torture, he came up for air to answer my question.

“It's the truth, and it's the only answer I'm prepared to give.” I then had a brief respite from his mouth whilst he used his fingers to flick, press, and dive deeply into me. What I wouldn't have done for release at this moment in time was anyone's guess, but let me tell you it could have involved a hacksaw and James's head.

“Explain.” My voice was a good deal higher pitched than usual, but there was little I could do about it.

“Yes, they'll do this to you in CB, but no, it's unlikely that they'll let you come at the end. They like keeping you on edge.”

Another deft sweep of his tongue and I was there again, body stiffening, and limbs hardening into painful lines whilst my breath came in short little pants. When he stopped, I howled.

“So I might as well get used to this?” The thought was abhorrent.

“Yes. That's what you're here for.” James traced a figure of eight around my sex, and it didn't improve my mood in the least. Not for the first time, I wondered what the hell I was doing here. How long could a person endure this rubbish? Sighing, and gritting my teeth as he began again, I decided I could endure it for long enough to get the job done. After that, nothing else would matter.

Clutching the headboard above my head with all the strength I had left, my hands were shaking as James brought me to the eighth ‘edge.’ My body felt as limp as a rag doll and my energy had dwindled down to nothing. The effort of keeping my hands from either a) pushing him as far away from me as far as possible, or b) knocking him unconscious, was almost too much to bear. Being tortured by pain was one thing - being tortured by pleasure was another entirely.

“Stop, stop, stop,” I whispered, unable to help myself. Almost certain that I couldn't manage to suffer through yet another second of this miserable torment, he came at me again.

Spluttering and groaning, my clitoris so sensitive it could barely be touched without pain, he took no mercy on me, diving in for yet another round. I think I began screaming uncontrollably, though I couldn't be entirely sure, as my head was spinning around in circles and my body was tied up in knots. Never having wanted to come so badly, I would have sold my soul to the devil in order for this round to be the last. Clamping my mouth shut to stop the awful noise that was filling the room, I tried to lay as still and as silent as I was able, in the hopes that James might misjudge the exact moment to stop. Of course, he knew my body almost better than I knew it myself, and I was screaming out my frustrations at the top of my lungs yet again, wondering if anyone but myself actually heard me.

"Just one more to go, Lois. You're doing great," James said with what I thought was a genuinely pleased look. I had news for him. I was not doing great, not by a long shot. There was a raging fever storming through my body that demanded to be sated, but I wasn't entirely sure I'd be able to see the next session through to the end in order to enjoy it. On the other hand, the thought of not being able to quench the fire that had been so cruelly stoked within me was impossible to contemplate. For the love of God, Lois, you've been in far worse situations than this. Woman up to the challenge! The trouble was, normally I'd be able to distance myself from the guy I was with, but this time it wasn't possible. Trying desperately to keep a clear head, my body was driving me crazy. It was almost as if James had turned it into a weapon to be used against me, and right now, I'd rather be in anyone's body but my own.

Tears were pouring down my cheeks when he began the tenth and final increment of my torture. I couldn't tell you how many times I wished I hadn't fought him for oral sex. I could have deep-throated him a couple of times and been lying fast asleep on my bed by now. Instead, I'd undergone what was pleasure's version of pain's waterboarding, and the monster above me was still going strong.

"Stop, stop, stop, stop," I mumbled, as my legs quivered like spring flowers in the breeze. I couldn't take any more. Even one more second was going to send me insane.

"Now you don't really mean that." Captain Smug paused for a gulp air, then continued his pursuits below deck. Wisely, I didn't answer his question. It was entirely possible that he wouldn't lavish me with the orgasm he'd promised, and as much as I hated the thought, I also wanted it so badly I was prepared to do anything he asked of me, should it be necessary. That was the stage where I was at, and I wasn't particularly proud of the fact.

"Beg me, Lois. Beg me for that release you so desperately need." His fingers

kneaded my legs as his teeth nipped a way up my thigh. Tiny flicks of his tongue along my sex sent paroxysms all the way through my body, from the tips of my toes to the top of my hair roots.

“Do you enjoy humiliating people?” I moaned. My thumbs gripped on to the iron headboard like a lifeline, and if I’d have let go of my anchor point, I was sure I would fall to pieces.

“Yes, but this is nothing compared to what they’ll do to you in CB, Lois. Am I getting through to you yet? This is the kind of torment you’ll be expected to endure on a regular basis. Are you strong enough for that, kitten?”

My legs twitched madly as he worked his way up and down them, his fingers in my pussy working the wetness back over my sex in order to use it as lubrication, so he could torment me a little bit more. The man was an animal.

“Yes. I’ll take whatever they throw at me.”

“Then you’d better be prepared to take whatever I throw at you. Beg, Lois. Prettily. You can do it.”

“Please, Sir, please can I come?” I wailed.

“No.”

“Why, you colossal ass...” A heavy hand over my mouth stopped me from saying anything further, but the temptation to bite it was great.

“You even think of finishing that sentence and I’ll make sure you don’t come for the rest of your stay here.” That was enough to have me tucking my canines back in where they belonged.

“You said that you’d let me,” I whined.

“Yes, and they’ll say that, too. Lesson one is that everyone behind closed doors at CB is an asshole.”

“How come you get to say things like that, but I’m not allowed to,” I grumbled.

“I’m not the sub.”

Deciding I had every reason to smack the living daylights out of the man, I tried to raise my hand from the bedpost, only to find that it was rather permanently secured by means of a cuff. Turning to the other side, I found that my other arm wore a matching steel bracelet.

“How in hell did you manage that?”

“You were preoccupied.” James flicked my nipple with a fingernail and I almost sobbed out loud.

“Are you just going to leave me here like this?”

“Yes. You need to get used to the feeling.”

Pulling at the handcuffs madly, and realising there was little point fighting with solid steel, I said, “For the love of God, James, please will you let me have an orgasm just like you promised, and in return I promise not to kill you when you

release me.” I was deadly serious.

“You promise not to *try* and kill me when I release you. There’s a difference.”

“Release me this instant, James Leverett,” I screamed, making about as much noise as the average rock band, “Or I’ll fucking castrate you.”

He laughed. The bastard actually laughed out loud. “You are going to get into so much trouble, Lois. I’ll be amazed if you aren’t dead within a week. I think we need to work on curbing that acerbic tongue of yours.” Sucking his index finger into his mouth, he sighed, and my pulsing clit sighed with him. “Tell you what, Lois. If we can do the next thing off the limits list without having to fight each other, I’ll let you come.” He licked his lips, in case I was in any doubt to his meaning.

“But that’s cheating,” I howled, incensed that he would pull this stunt on me.

“It is, but you’re the one who’s tied up and wants an orgasm, so the ball is firmly in my court.”

“One day, Mr. Leveritt, I am going to cut off...”

“Your deal expires in three seconds. One, two...”

“I’ll take it. I’ll take it,” I yelled. He didn’t give me a chance to say that there were certain conditions I wanted to add to his offer, because his mouth was already where I wanted it, and I thought it prudent not to distract him.

“Oh my God, oh my God,” I began mewling within seconds.

“I don’t think I can do this, James. It hurts too much, it...” There was a flurry of flailing limbs as I tried to launch the man off me, but he was far too strong and my arms were going nowhere. Thankfully, he knew what I wanted, far better than I did myself. In less than thirty seconds, I was screaming uncontrollably and almost wished I had the ball gag back. There wasn’t going to be any containing this beast. This wasn’t any old orgasm, oh no. It wasn’t even a pretty damn decent orgasm. This was the mother of all orgasms, and my body didn’t know what to do with it.

“Gah, gah, gah.” See? I couldn’t even speak. My mouth made those little round ‘O’ style movements that fishes were fond of, but I couldn’t have cared less. My hips were bucking up off the bed in fantastic abandon, and you’d have thought I was performing one of the most enthusiastic legs, bums, and tums workouts you’d ever laid eyes on. I was a mess. All movements were instinctive, and I had no choice but to let myself go. The pleasure, on the other hand, was intense, powerful, and earth shattering. This was probably the closest I’d come to heaven in my lifetime, and now that I’d had a taste of what it could offer, I just wanted more.

“Oh my God, can you do that again?” I finally managed to whisper, still slightly awestruck

“What, right now?”

I think James was only half joking with that comment.

“No, not right now. Later. Could you do it again, though? Or was that a one off, fluke kind of thing?” Staring at him intently, as my body still rippled with sharp contractions, I basked in the afterglow of perfection.

“It can be repeated, Lois.” James sat up on the bed and produced a padlock key.

“Can I unlock you now, or are you going to try and castrate me? If you are, you can stay there until I’ve had a shower and made my peace with God.”

It was my turn to grin. “You’re of no use to me castrated. You’re safe for now.”

James shook his head, but there was an amused gleam in his eyes. “That’s a relief.” Leaning over me, he made short work of removing the handcuffs, and then helped me rub a little life back into my numb wrists and arms. “When they tie you up at CB, you’ll have to do this part yourself when they’ve finished with you. If you find moving difficult at first, just remember to move around as much as you can and, slowly, your circulation will come back.”

I nodded. Every time we spoke about CB, my stomach dropped a mile or so underground, but it was not to be helped. I was doing this, and no matter what stunts they pulled on me, I was taking Dumortier down. “Yes, Sir.”

“You’re learning. Right, while I go take a shower, you can put dinner on. It’s in the fridge - all you need to do is put it in the oven. Try not to kill yourself, okay?”

“You’ve heard about my culinary skills, huh?” It was no secret that I was an appallingly bad cook. James had probably managed to find that somewhere in my resume, if he’d done a bit of digging, and the man looked like he enjoyed a bit of shovel work.

“Actually, I think you’d handle a set of kitchen knives expertly. Not in the traditional sense, perhaps, but I’ve heard your work is pretty good.”

“Piss me off and I might show you just how good, Mr. Leveritt.” I blew him a kiss as his delicious ass disappeared from view. I pouted at the loss.

“You just earned another spanking for foul language, Lois.”

“Can I suck your cock after dinner? Pretty please?” I had no idea where that had come from, but I meant it. It was probably the overload of oxytocin floating around my bloodstream. Somehow I was going to have to get these hormones under control!

“You’re learning, Lois. You’re learning.” The slam of a bathroom door indicated our conversation time was over, but it was a good few minutes before I managed to get my extremely happy and prettily glowing butt off the bed.

Seventeen

It was at least ten minutes before I finally managed to drag myself back to the kitchen. Edging was exhausting stuff. How did James do this on a daily basis? I mean, I thought I was tough, but life as a sex slave was going to compare favourably to one of my monster gym workouts if *that* was the kind of thing I could expect. So, even if they didn't let me orgasm over at CB, at the very least I wouldn't be putting on too much weight. Rolling my eyes at the ridiculous train of thought, I decided to focus on food. Getting his Majesty's dinner in the oven was probably pretty important if I wanted to have a chance at a reasonably nice evening.

"Aren't you supposed to be crawling?"

A familiar female voice nearly shocked the living daylights out of me, and I immediately tried to cover up all of my various naked parts, which was a problem, as I only had two hands. Quickly running for cover behind the dining table, I used one of the solid wood chairs as a shield while I tried to figure out why in hell Miss Sharkey would come and visit me here.

"You're going to have to work on that. The gentlemen at CB will expect you to be pretty comfortable with nakedness. I thought James would have managed to train you a little better by now." She eyed me imperiously, and I think my internal organs began to wither and die.

"I've only been here a day, and you're my boss," I managed to squeak. "There are some people who shouldn't see you naked, and you are most definitely one of them."

"I've seen plenty of naked bodies before, Lois. If it makes you feel any better, you're going to be seeing mine later."

"I'm going to *what*?" Castrating was once again firmly back on the cards, and James was going to rue the day he met me. Did the man not think it sensible to run this kind of scenario by me first? *Shit, shit, shit.*

"Right now you're probably thinking this is the worst thing that could ever happen to you, but it isn't, Lois." Sharkey then proceeded to turn her back to me whilst she headed over towards the oven. Fiddling with the dials, a light suddenly flared on and a low drone emitted from its direction. Opening the fridge door, she then pulled out a large casserole dish. Folding a tea towel over in two to grab the dish, it was inside the oven before I could blink.

"We're having Ratatouille, in case you were wondering," she said.

I wasn't, but I kept that to myself.

“James is a marvelous cook. You’ll be getting a little slice of heaven whilst you’re under his roof. He was professionally trained in France. Food still means something over there, I hear.” The oven door slammed shut smartly.

“Where did he learn all his other *professional* skills?” My voice might have held a teensy bit of sarcasm. Seriously, how did a person go from Masterchef to assassin?

“They came later, after someone tried to disembowel him, or so I heard.” Miss Sharkey then went back to the refrigerator, pulled out a bottle of white wine, and busied herself with opening it.

“It wasn’t my intestines they were after.” James sauntered into the kitchen looking perfectly calm, cool, and collected in his trademark black tee and blue jeans. Was there any other version of the man? I gritted my teeth. Of course he had known Sharkey would be here. I was the only one kept in the dark around these parts.

“Lois, you should be on the floor. You’ve already earned so many swats this evening, I can barely keep count.” Motioning with his index finger in a downward movement, I sighed and did as I was bid. There was two against one. I was doomed.

Meanwhile, Miss Sharkey poured out a large glass of wine and handed it to James. “What *were* they after?”

He smiled at her. “Something a little lower.”

“Ahh. Dipping it about in the wrong place, were we?” She raised an eyebrow and smirked at him.

“I was dipping it about in the right place at the wrong time.” His smile was rueful. James then took a generous swig of his wine and grimaced. “What the hell is that?”

“Pino Grigio.” She twirled her own wine round and sniffed at it dubiously.

“It’s vile. There’s a bottle of Pully Fumé on the door. I think that was meant for cooking.”

Miss Sharkey took a small sip and frowned. “It is vile, but I enjoy watching a man suffer. Drink it up and be a good boy.”

James stiffened, and his demeanour suddenly hardened. “You’re Lois’s superior, not mine. Remember that I’m doing you a favour here, not the other way around.”

“Relax, darling. I’m just teasing you. However, I didn’t come here just for the fun part, I’m afraid.” She looked pointedly at me.

James walked quietly over to the stainless steel sink and tipped the contents of his wine glass down the plughole. His head dropped for a second, as if he was bracing himself for the worst. “Give me the bad news.” Although his voice was

calm and devoid of inflection, there was an undercurrent of something there. For the tenth time, I wondered just how much it would take to ruffle this man's feathers.

"Dumortier is up to his old tricks and we need to up your schedule a little. You had three weeks, you now have one." Sharkey then downed the contents of her glass in one foul swoop. It was almost as if she was expecting what was about to come next.

Cowering behind my chair, I watched the storm begin to brew in James's face. Everything started with his eyes, which were now black, but then there were a dozen lines on his face, a stiffening of his back, and a straightening of his shoulders. The wine glass stem he had been gently gripping was now being crushed beneath his fingers, and I wondered, for a brief moment, if it would stand up under the strain.

"I can't send her in there with a week's training. The mission is already suicide. That would be utter madness."

James had perfected his glower, but Miss Sharkey didn't seem overly affected by it. There was a slight tapping of her French manicured nails upon her crystal glass, but nothing more to indicate that she gave two hoots as to his concerns.

"Tell you what, why don't you throw in a tombstone as an advance purchase, and we just send her in green?" James sneered at her and began walking forward. His body language was threatening and I, for one, was glad I was hiding behind the dining table.

"He's going for two hundred girls this time, James. We can't let that happen." Miss Sharkey carefully set her wine glass down on the kitchen counter and crossed her arms against her chest. This was something I understood. A display of power. Good for her. I didn't think it would be of much use against James, though.

"You haven't been at all worried by his business ventures before, Sharkey. What's got your panties in a twist?"

"You'll just have to untangle them later and find out, James."

Raising his head slowly, he shook his head. "She won't be ready in a week. My decision is final. You want to train her up, be my guest." James indicated my cowering body with a flourish of his wrist.

"Let's ask Lois and see what she says," said Sharkey.

Great. They were dragging me into their argument now. This was just what I needed.

"Let's not." James's tone was clipped. "Lois wants to get herself killed, and you're actively encouraging her."

"I do not," I said, almost outraged.

“Shut up,” they both replied in unison, without either of them looking at me. Great. I was officially a nobody.

James then yanked open the fridge door and pulled out another bottle of wine. The good one, I assumed. He then proceeded to open it, and the room was painfully silent as he concentrated on his task. There was me hiding behind my chair, careful to keep my gaze pointing downwards, and then there was Sharkey, with her folded arms and bored expression. This should be interesting.

Taking a generous gulp of his freshly poured wine, this time he sighed appreciatively. “So what aren’t you telling me, Elizabeth?”

There was a long pause as Sharkey considered her answer, which gave me a chance to try and figure out how they were on a first name basis.

“Why don’t you try and fuck it out of me, James? We both know you’re good at that.”

“I don’t fuck these days, or haven’t you heard?” His voice was terse, his back to her as he refilled her wine glass. My eyes were now up off the floor, and they would dearly have loved to have caught a glimpse of his face, but he was not playing ball. How annoying. Still, I gathered she was here for a while, judging by her earlier comment, so by the end of the evening I’d have a rough idea of whether they’d been together or not. Although it was difficult to admit, if they had been ‘a thing,’ it was going to bother me. There would be no point examining the ‘whys’ and ‘wherefores’ right now, mostly because I knew I wouldn’t like them.

“What a shame. It was one of your best talents, darling. Let’s hope someone can change your mind.” Sharkey began unbuttoning her black, sheer silk blouse then, and I wanted the floor to explode upwards and suck me ten miles underground. Actually, make that twenty.

“Two weeks. I can work with two weeks.” James didn’t look at her chest, which was now fully on display, revealing a sexy black lace bra that must have borne an expensive designer tag.

“Lois, can you pay really careful attention and listen to everything James tells you? If you can, you can take the intensive James Leveritt course and be out of here in a week. Does that work for you?” Again, she didn’t look at me. Her voice was aimed over her shoulder in my direction, but her eyes were firmly on James.

“Say no, Lois.” This time, he did look at me, and his eyes were pleading. Why? Why did the man care whether I lived or died? Most of the people in my business were hardened to such things. Casualties were an unfortunate but regular consequence in the little games we played. If James had been one of Sharkey’s trainees, he’d have patted me on the head, pointed me in the direction of Carte Blanche, and his conscience could then rest easy. This didn’t appear to

be the case, and I couldn't understand why.

Sharkey then took his face in her hands and pulled his gaze downwards, letting them centre on her breasts. Pulling apart her black silk blouse, she grabbed his hands in hers and drew them around her waist.

"You said you'd be able to do this, James. Don't make me regret my earlier leniency."

Her earlier what? Now I was utterly confused.

"I can do this, but I need the amount of time we agreed on in order to do it properly." There was a distinct snick of a bra strap being released, and I closed my eyes, unable to watch.

"Lois." Miss Sharkey's voice was sharp. "We aren't doing this for us. This is a show, purely for your benefit. You need to get used to watching people getting naked and having sex. Whilst your embarrassment is awfully cute, it will have no place at CB. They will expect you to be very comfortable around naked bodies, no matter what they might be doing." The emphasis on 'doing' left me under no illusions as to what she meant. *No, no, no*, I whispered to myself.

"Don't I get a chance to fight you for it?" I asked miserably, and although I knew such an attempt would be futile, it would put off the inevitable for a few more minutes.

"You let her fight you? What madness is this, James? For a start, she can't possibly hope to best you, and you're supposed to be showing her who's boss. Your job is to cross off each damn thing on that list as fast as you possibly can. We aren't in kindergarten, for fuck's sake."

"Say one more word and I'll walk away, Elizabeth. I've had just about enough. We both know that Lois is not really cut out to be a submissive, and if she was, you wouldn't have employed her in the first place. So I'll help her get through that transition in any way I can, and as we both know she can't win against me, it's not really a problem, is it?"

"Perhaps we could send you instead, James? That might get the job done a little quicker." Sharkey pouted at him, and then winked.

James responded by sucking a nipple into his mouth, and judging by the sharp intake of Sharkey's breath, he bit her, before caressing the poor little nub better with his tongue.

"I can't go in, and we both know why, so stop talking crap," he growled.

"Pity. Dumortier would carve you up so prettily."

"Shut the fuck up." He then bent her backwards as his mouth took the other nipple and suckled upon it. She arched gracefully against him and moaned.

I wanted to rip her throat out. Almost frozen into place behind my chair, my body was attacked by an emotion it didn't recognise. Unfortunately, Sharkey did.

“Looks like your little pet is green with envy, James. I hope you warned her not to fall for you.” Sharkey looked over at me, her eyes gleaming with predatory prowess.

“Oh, I credit Lois with far more intelligence than you, Sharkey. She knows better than to fall for a bad boy. You, on the other hand, barely know your left elbow from your right...”

“Thank you, James. Let’s stick with the plan, okay? I don’t really want to air our dirty laundry here. It was a long time ago, so let’s keep it that way.”

“Oh, I intend to,” he replied, which probably didn’t have the effect it was supposed to, as his hands were all over her.

My hands held the tough oak chair in a crushing grip, and I took out what little frustrations I could upon it. Control this, Lois. They’re making you watch them for a reason, and all will be explained in a moment. Hopefully.

“Lois, get your ass over here.” James’s command had my attention instantly, though I was reluctant to obey it. It would mean displaying my naked body to Sharkey, and office meetings were going to be a little bit strained after this encounter, to say the least. Actually, strike that comment. Everyone here was ninety-nine percent sure I was going to die, so maybe it didn’t really matter after all. Besides, my boss was rather preoccupied at the minute. A herd of pink elephants could storm through the kitchen and she probably wouldn’t bat an eyelid.

Getting down on my hands and knees, I slowly crawled over to the pair who were now busily getting naked right in front of my eyes. What new form of torture was this? And why did I suspect this would be the least of my woes this evening?

James pulled his head up for air in order to address me once more. I tried to keep my expression bland, but it wasn’t easy.

“You need to see a demonstration of what Dumortier is likely to try whilst you’re under his roof. So you need to watch and take this all in. If you’re still here at the end of the session, all of this and more will be happening to you, because I’ll need to prep you for it. Whilst I realise that this will be an uncomfortable experience as a voyeur, there were no other female agents available that were prepared to go through this with an audience, and that should tell you something. If you want to walk out at any time, feel free, but that’s where it will all end. You either stay the duration or you go home. Do I make myself clear?”

I nodded. James was scaring me a little, but I guess that had been his plan all along. Sharkey obviously thought I could handle it, else she wouldn’t be here, so whatever it was, it couldn’t be that bad.

“Be a good girl and run to the bathroom, Lois. In the bathroom cabinet you’ll find a black container. Bring it straight back here, and don’t open it. Think you can do that?” James was panting heavily as he said it, and I could see that he was as aroused as she was. It might have been a dark thought, but the need to claw Sharkey’s eyes out was strong. I nodded my head, my eyes purposely glazing over the both of them, although the moans still penetrated my consciousness with the finesse of claw hammers. As long as I didn’t see their faces, I’d be okay. As far as new and inventive forms of torture went, this one was quite impressive, and we’d barely started by all accounts.

“Lois, get moving.” James voice was now ragged and breathless, and Sharkey’s hand was inside his pants. Oh God. Scurrying forward on my hands and knees, I couldn’t get out of the room quickly enough. The walls around me began closing in, and I suddenly felt sick to my stomach.

“You can walk, Lois. You’ll need to be on your feet to reach the cabinet.”

Although I caught his last sentence clearly, I didn’t pay it any heed. My body had turned to jelly, and it would take a moment or two to get it back under control. *The bathroom, Lois. You can do this.*

Reaching the bathroom cabinet took no more than thirty seconds. I needed more time, but conversely, I didn’t think I could bear to leave them alone for more than a couple of minutes. Would it be worse watching or being left in the dark? Besides, I didn’t have a choice. It was either watch or go home.

Reaching for the bathroom cabinet door with shaking fingers, I located the black plastic container easily. Bar a couple of toothbrushes and some floss, it was all that was in there. Now, did I obey orders, or did I open the box? The temptation to disobey was great. It was probably better to be prepared for what was going to come next, or was it? There was a good chance that even if I opened the box, I’d have no idea of its contents. Hovering with indecision for a moment, in the end I decided to err on the side of caution. If James did have this place rigged out with cameras everywhere, I was going to pay at some point in the near future, and I could take a surprise. Hopefully.

Back on two legs, I raced back through the corridor to make up for my earlier dithering. I needn’t have bothered. When I entered the kitchen once again, the two of them were rolling about on the floor in a state of impressive dishabille. My first thought was to deliver a swift kick into any ribcage I could find, but I contained the impulse. There were bigger things at stake here than a little bout of jealousy.

Moving forward reluctantly, I had to cough several times before I made my presence known.

“Thank you, Lois,” James said, plucking the case out of my hands. His lips

were swollen and there was a glazed look in his eyes. If that wasn't bad enough, Sharkey's hair was all over the place, and a bright rosy flush crept from her neck upwards. "Sit on the floor over by the dining table, and don't say a word, no matter what. You might want to remember that anything that happens here in this room will be tame by CB standards, so we'll have to see if you have the stomach for it."

"Yes, Sir." My voice was a whisper. It was all I could manage. I knew something bad was about to happen and I was mentally preparing myself for it. Stumbling backwards, my butt hit the floor in a less than graceful move, but I barely noticed. My eyes were glued to the pair in front of me.

"You needn't worry about Lois, James. She's one of the toughest girls we have."

In response, James wrapped his very large hand around Sharkey's neck and caressed the hollow of her throat.

"How many times has she been caught and interrogated?"

Sharkey's hands reached up and fanned her blonde hair out in halo around her head. She appeared to consider his question, but I knew better. She was already trying to work out where this conversation was going in order to be one step ahead. The woman knew exactly how many times I'd been captured, and it wasn't a hard number to remember.

"Three times was it, Lois?" Sharkey turned her head slowly to look at me, which was probably wise with James's hands all over her throat. He looked like he wanted to squeeze the life out of her at the moment, and I couldn't help but wonder why.

In response to her question, I nodded. Three times. It had been three times too many, in my opinion, but you couldn't win them all.

"And how many times has she been fucked up?" James looked over towards me as he said it, and I realised he wanted both of us to answer the question.

"Just once," Sharkey said, her eyes flickering back to mine, making sure I hadn't been telling her fibs all these years in the many debriefings we'd shared.

"Just the once," I lied, without a blink, tremor, or even the slightest inflection on any of those small three words. Looking straight at James, I almost dared him to challenge me. Thankfully, he didn't.

"What happened?"

"Oh, I think she got..." Sharkey was cut off before she'd barely begun.

"Shut up. I want Lois to answer." James pressed against the hollow of her throat in case she was in any doubt as to his seriousness.

Loath to answer, I did so anyway, because I knew this was something James would already have read in my file. "They didn't feed me, didn't let me sleep,

left me handcuffed to a chair for the whole time, and played about with some waterboarding.”

James nodded, as if satisfied with my response. “Did they drug you?”

“Not to my knowledge, but the last couple of days were hazy.”

“I’ll bet. Well, I have bad news for you. Dumortier likes drugs. If you’re not exceptionally lucky, he’s going to shoot you up with all sorts of things for his own personal amusement, and I’m going to give you a heads up on what you might expect if you decide to play naughty.

“Oh, I fully intend to do everything he tells me to.”

James pressed his lips together and shook his head, then gave Sharkey a filthy look. “You haven’t told her anything.”

Sharkey shrugged. “We need her. There isn’t anyone else, and what’s the point of scaring her off before she has an idea of what she’s in for?”

“Always looking out for your best interests, aren’t you, Elizabeth?”

Flicking the latches of the little black case open, he then raised the lid, and I had to crane my neck in order to see what was inside it. Swallowing tightly when I saw a box full of vials and needles, I sat back on my heels in shock. It was nothing less than I’d expected, but the thought of witnessing a real life torture session right before my eyes was not a pleasant one.

“You’re going to pump her full of drugs?” My voice was small and far, far away. I wasn’t sure I wanted to see this.

“Yes. I’m going to pump her full of drugs and then humiliate the shit out of her. You have a problem with that?” James looked at me very carefully.

“Am I allowed to have a problem with that?” It was a rhetorical question.

“You already know the answer to that. Feel free to stop this before it begins, Lois. I’m sure Sharkey will thank you for your kindness later.”

“She won’t, and stop stalling, James.” Sharkey tried to raise her head up, but James pushed her back down again, putting pressure upon her windpipe.

“Shut the fuck up. You’re here for decoration from this moment forth, and you know *exactly* what you signed up for.” James’s head snapped back to mine, and his eyes bored into my head. “Well?”

“No. I don’t have a problem with that, Sir.” I had to force myself to look at him. This was a side of James that I was not going to like, but I guess that was the point. He was trying to show me what Carte Blanche might have in store for me. It was a valid training session, and I was going to have to sit back, shut up, and take it.

“You will soon enough.” He ran his finger over the selection of glass bottles in front of him, as if deciding what to use first.

“Did you know Dumortier’s nickname is ‘The Chemist?’” James didn’t wait

for my reply, because he already knew the answer. Sharkey had deliberately kept me out of the loop. Scrap that. She'd kept me in the dark, down the bottom of a very deep cellar, with a blindfold, earplugs, and my hands tied behind my back for good measure. Elite Encounters was beginning to look like child's play compared to what CB had in store for me.

"Alain likes to play with minds as much as he plays with bodies, Lois. He'll knock away all your inhibitions with a single shot, and then manipulate you in any way he sees fit, generally with an entourage in tow. He likes to play to an audience. Can you tolerate being humiliated on a regular basis?" Plucking a syringe from the case, James then chose a vial and carefully pulled it free from its plastic casing before setting it down on the floor. He then grabbed a ziplock bag out of another compartment and took out a sterile wipe. I stared at him in sick fascination. What the hell was he going to do next?

Using the wipe to stroke a wet line across Sharkey's wrist, he looked at me. "Interrogators, also known as torturers for the purpose of this exercise, have used a wide variety of drugs to get their subjects to sing over the decades. Have you had any experience with them, Lois?"

"No." It was loud and firm. I was quite proud of myself, considering.

"Then you've been pretty lucky so far." He threw away the wipe and picked up the vial.

"I'm good at what I do, James. There is no 'luck' involved." How this man had the power to annoy me to the point of fury, and in no more than ten words, was almost impressive. I kept a lid on my temper, though. There wasn't enough space to lose it in this room.

"You can tell me all about luck after you've finished your next assignment, Lois, because you'll need to be the luckiest woman alive in order to do what you're planning and get out alive." Removing the soft metal cap of the vial, he fished out another wipe to clean the top of the bottle. He then grabbed the syringe and tugged the cap of the needle away with his teeth. Punching the tip of the needle into the top of the vial, he depressed the plunger completely before slowly extracting a few cc's of clear liquid.

"Well, I guess I'd better give you the whistle-stop tour," he said, slowly withdrawing the needle from the vial. Unable to tear my gaze away, I wasn't really sure I wanted to hear this, but that didn't concern him in the least.

"There's Sodium Pentothal, which is a barbiturate, and in light doses it can be used as a truth serum. You've got to be careful with that one, though, because if you give your subject too much, you'll send them to sleep."

If only, I thought.

"Alain will use that if he feels you're a bit uptight during 'play' sessions. He's

also fond of Sodium Amytal, which will have you squawking out your life history in no time at all, and the particularly nasty Scopolamine. That's the one you have to watch, by the way. As far as truth serums go, it's about as good as it gets. One slip of the tongue is all it will take for Dumortier to find out why you're really under his roof, and when that happens, we might as well forget you ever existed. If that doesn't scare you, it will also rob you of your own free will, so you will be helpless beneath his hands. You will do anything he says without a moment's thought. Oh, and one other thing: whatever you do, don't let any of Alain's goons administer the drugs. Some are less careful than others, and a relatively tiny overdose of Scopolamine will kill you. So whatever you do, try not to make any enemies in that place."

James paused after his verbal tirade, as if expecting me to run. I have to say that whilst the idea was tempting, I was made of sterner stuff.

"I knew it wasn't going to be a walk in the park when I signed up for this, Sir. I'm prepared to take some risks in order to eliminate him."

At the moment, Dumortier's death was only thing driving me, and it was a constant fire burning deep within my gut. I would not rest until that man was eliminated from the face of the earth. If he wanted to take me with him, I was prepared for that, too.

"Then you're an idiot."

Sharkey decided to pipe up at that point. "James, whose side are you on? You've wanted to take out Alain for years. No one to this date has been able to get closer to him than you, and even you couldn't manage to wrap your hands around his neck. Now that we have a valid chance of ending his life, and a willing participant to do so, can we stop trying to scare her off?" She gave him an indignant look, but he paid her little heed.

"I'm extremely reluctant for anyone to go in there because I have first-hand knowledge of how hard the man is to kill." James pointed the needle towards the ceiling, tapping the syringe a couple of times to move any air bubbles to the top. He then squirted a tiny arc of liquid out in order to remove them. "I also don't want her to go in there because he's a complete and utter conscienceless bastard."

"That's the reason I am going in there," I whispered quietly to myself, but as the room was silent, everyone heard me.

"No, that's the reason you think you're going in there. Sharkey's reasons for sending you in are quite different from what she's told you. Trust me."

Sharkey grabbed James's cheek, stroked it a couple of times, and let his eyes focus on hers. "James, can we get with the plan? Whatever the reasons, Dumortier needs to be put down. Let's concentrate on that." She gave him a

quick pinch to let him know she meant business.

“Fine.” Though by the tone of his voice, James was anything but fine. “You ready?”

“Yes,” Sharkey said in a very calm tone. There was a sparkle in her eye that made me wonder if she was almost looking forward to what was to come. Surely not? When it was my turn to go under the needle, I didn’t think I’d be wearing a smile upon my face. I had far too many secrets to hide.

Gently pressing the plunger of the syringe, James delivered the drug into Sharkey’s wrist. He then removed the used needle and placed it into a plastic sharps box ready for disposal. At least the man was a professional, if nothing else.

Turning to me once more, James said, “Whilst we’re waiting for that to take effect, I might as well fill you in on a few other drugs that you might have the pleasure of experiencing over at CB.”

I nodded. I’d rather go in forewarned and forearmed. It sounded like I was going to need all the help I could get, so I might as well hear all the gory details.

“I’m listening,” I whispered.

“Good. Right, the first piece of advice I’m going to give you is never try to escape. Alain feeds off that kind of fear. He’ll also use your disobedience against you. You try to flee, he’ll get you hooked on some kind of recreational drug so you’re virtually beholden to him. If you don’t want to get high on LSD or something even worse, make sure that your loyalty is never in question. After he’s bought you, and he’ll cough up an awful lot of money to do so, he will consider you his ‘property.’ Your free will, for all intents and purposes, disappears the moment you walk through his door. Remember that. You will not be in control, you will be in for one hell of a bumpy ride, and if there’s any chance of getting yourself out alive, you’ll need to be able to think on your feet. If you’re high, that’s going to make things a little more difficult than they need to be, you feel me?”

Oh, I felt him all right. My eyes widened in shock. This was something I hadn’t taken into consideration. Shit, could I deal with this on top of everything else?

“Are you telling me there’s a very real possibility I could be a junkie when I get out of CB?” My jaw hung open yet again, and this time I didn’t even care.

“Not if you keep your wits about you, Lois. Just remember what I’ve said. Right, where was I?”

“LSD,” I said, whilst thinking that my life had gotten particularly surreal these last couple of days. It would be nothing compared to what it was shortly going to get, so I guessed I’d better buckle up and settle in for the ride.

“Ahh, yes, LSD. Well, next I’d better give Amphetamines a quick mention. An

encounter with those beasts will have you spilling your guts out, whilst your heart tries to escape out of your chest. You'd confess to death penalty execution without a second thought with some of that shit in your system. You'll be dealing with twitching limbs, severe restlessness, inability to sleep, blurred vision, and perhaps the odd tic. They're just the nice side effects, by the way. Alain's also been known to give traitors the 'Twilight Zone' treatment. That's when one of your arms is full of amphetamines, and the other has been shot up with barbiturates. You're stuck in a constant dream world and there is no escape. Take it from me, that one's not at all pleasant." Looking down at Sharkey, he raised her eyelids fully and examined her right, and then her left eye. "Pupils are dilating. This is good. Okay, the other two worth mentioning are Versed, which will give no relief from pain during a torture session, but it will wipe all your memories of the encounter afterwards. The obvious risk is that if you do spill the beans, you won't remember. You cannot dance with that one and expect to live, so be a good girl and do what you're told. Chlorpromazine is another one you should know about, because if you've been naughty, he'll threaten to pump you full of the stuff. Side effects range greatly from the mild to the severe, but you might experience bouts of fainting, seizures, nausea, mental confusion, and anxiety. Have I scared you enough this evening?"

"Absolutely." Although I knew this wouldn't be the end of the conversation, I had no wish to get in any deeper this evening if it could possibly be avoided.

"Good. Now you're starting to get an idea of what Alain is capable of. If I'm going to let you go inside there, you need to be able to lie confidently under the influence of several substances. If you can't, you don't get to go. Full stop." James crossed his hands in front of him as if his decision was final.

"You can't stop me," I said mutinously, but that was a lie. I was beginning to realise that James could be a very impressive adversary, and it would be much better to have him on my side.

"I think we both know I can." He smiled at me. "Now are you ready to see how difficult things get under the influence of drugs?" He indicated Sharkey, who was lying calmly on the floor,

"Yes." No. How was I going to cope with all of this? Don't get me wrong, I knew that getting close to Dumortier was never going to be easy, but I hadn't figured on it being this hard. Was I up to the task? Steeling my thoughts, I figured out that if I wasn't, I'd better up my game quickly. That man was going down, and I was going to be the one to do it.

Eighteen

“What is your name?” James and Sharkey now sat facing each other, across the dining room table. There was no such luxury for me. I was still on the cold, hard floor, craning my neck up to look at the pair.

There was a pause as Sharkey deliberated her answer. It might have been amusing in different circumstances.

“Sandra Blakely.” She giggled.

James turned towards me and sighed. “Does that sound convincing to you?”

I shook my head. “She’s only been under the influence of the stuff once or twice, so I can’t expect a lot from her. Although she’s been instructed to lie in response to everything I ask her, when I up her dose in ten minutes time, she’ll find it nearly impossible to do so. That’s because ‘so-called’ truth serums slow down your body’s reactions. It will take a lot longer for messages to be sent to the brain, and performing high-functioning tasks will become increasingly difficult. Her concentration span can now be likened to that of a toddler.”

Sharkey giggled again, and though this version of my boss seemed far more preferable to the normal one, I couldn’t help but wince.

“What do you do for a living?” There was another pause. It was almost painful to watch her fight for an answer. Eventually she came up with one.

“I’m a teacher.” There was another giggle. No one in their right mind would believe anything this woman was trying to tell them. I couldn’t help but wonder what would happen when I got to try my luck at it. Would I do any better than my boss? Hell, I hoped so. I had secrets to hide, and James was far too astute not to know that.

“What do you teach?” Whilst his face was kind and he posed the questions gently, James wasn’t about to go easy on her. When one question was answered, another immediately arose.

“Mm...maths,” she finally managed to get out, with yet another peal of laughter.

James turned to me again and quietly said, “If you were questioning her right now, what would you think?”

“That she was either drunk or high,” I said immediately.

“That’s exactly how she’s feeling. It takes less than a minute after the drug’s been administered before you get that light-headed buzz that you associate with being drunk. At the moment, she’s got a warm, fuzzy feeling bubbling through her veins, and it doesn’t help that she likes me. If I asked her to take her clothes

off and open her legs for me, she'd do it almost immediately."

"I'm not sure the drug is that good," I said sceptically. "And how do you know she likes you?" Unfortunately, it was almost obvious Sharkey liked James, but no one needed to inflate his ego, so I felt honour bound to throw some doubt around.

"I'll prove it to you in a few minutes time." He looked supremely confident with his statement. "How do you think *you'll* respond when I ask you the same question tomorrow?" Giving me a wolfish grin, he winked at me. James appeared to be enjoying his work far too much for my liking.

"You'll just have to wait and see," I said sweetly, refusing to rise to the bait. If my reaction was anything like the one he managed to elicit from me whilst I was sober, I didn't stand a chance. Still, that wasn't likely to be a factor with Dumortier.

James directed his attention towards Sharkey again and asked, "What are your favourite parts of the new maths curriculum?"

There were no giggles this time. Sharkey looked utterly confused for a moment, as if foraging around the darkest recesses of her brain for any plausible answer. She was obviously struggling to come up with something. If it had been me at the table, I might have said algebra or trigonometry, but I'd had no experience of what the drug could do yet. My boss was normally as sharp as a tack, and if a small dose could reduce her to this, what was a larger dose going to do? Quite honestly, it was frightening.

"Umm," she said after a long pause, nervously fidgeting with her hands, "I think I like all of it." Unable to look James in the eye, she stared at the table, her head wavering slightly from side to side. Her eyes were slightly glazed, and it was clear that try as she might, that was the best answer she was able to give.

"Oh, come on, Elizabeth, you must have a favourite subject you like to teach?" James pressed her for an answer, and when he saw her struggling, he pressed her again. "Probability, perhaps?"

"Yes, yes, probability," Sharkey confirmed, and the look on her face suggested she was relieved to have been given a get-out.

James pulled his chair back and got down on all fours to talk to me. "Patients under the influence of these types of drugs are very susceptible to influence. You'll happily tell them your Mother's married to the Pope if they put the idea in your head. See where I'm going?"

He was so close to me I could smell him, and the level of desire I felt for the man in front of me was unprecedented. Why me? If I had to withstand a cocktail of drugs and then lie about my attraction to the man, I was doomed. Wet heat pooling between my legs, I had an awful moment where I could feel a dribble of

arousal travel down my thigh. What was wrong with me? Here was James doing awful things with my boss, and my body seemed to desire him all the more. Wanting desperately to tear my hair out, but realising that might give the game away, I smiled weakly at him.

“It’s rather obvious, and I’m not sure that you need to demonstrate it in black and white for me. Did she agree to everything you’re about to do to her?” I looked him straight in the eye as I said it, almost daring him to lie to me. I couldn’t believe Sharkey would let herself be used in this way.

He gave me his trademark arrogant grin and let me stew for a second. Then he ran his fingers through his hair and eyeballed me back. “I told her that if she didn’t show you exactly what was in store for you at CB, then I wouldn’t go through with it. You need to see this, and Sharkey agreed it was a small price to pay for the service that you are about to perform.”

“No way did she agree that easily,” I countered. I knew my boss, and she was not easily persuaded into anything.

“You’d be surprised at what Elizabeth will do in order to get her own way. Besides, the woman likes me, and having my hands rove all over her body won’t be such a terrible burden for her to bear, trust me.”

That was something I didn’t want to hear, so I simply ignored it. There was enough on my plate right now. “Do you enjoy tormenting women?” It was a bit of a backlash, as I had things that I needed to get off my chest, but at least I was venting in a sensible way.

“Do you enjoy tormenting women, Sir?” He placed a great deal of emphasis on ‘Sir,’ and I would have dearly loved to ram the word down his throat. He then proceeded to stare at me and wait, and I knew that I would have to repeat the bloody line before I got an answer to my question.

“Do you enjoy tormenting women, Sir?” I finally responded with sugary sweetness. Anyone would think I was interviewing him for *Cosmopolitan* magazine. One way or another, I would get my answer.

“Yes. Yes, I do. Any more questions?” The dark look on James’s face warned me against voicing my curiosity, but as per normal, I couldn’t help myself.

“Why do you enjoy tormenting them, Sir?”

“Because in my line of work, a little bit of pain can bring some very intense pleasure. Oh, and I’m a sick fuck. Any other burning questions, Lois?” His face came within inches of mine, scaring the shit out of me, before he then slid his hand up the inside of my thigh. His eyes held me completely still as his fingers examined the dampness they found there. Heat scorched my face.

“It appears you enjoy watching me torment women, Lois. So what does that make you?” He rubbed the sticky fluid together between his thumb and middle

finger, and then sucked them into his mouth. Sighing appreciatively, as if he had taken a sip of a fine wine, he then withdrew them slowly, as if savouring my taste. Part of me knew the obnoxious man was fucking with me, but the other part of my brain that I couldn't control short-circuited instantly. Without warning, he then inserted his middle finger deep inside me, and I was lost. Rocking backwards for a second in shock, his other hand held me steady, but it wasn't long before desire took over. Unable to stop myself, my back arched, and I let out a low mewl of pleasure. He then tweaked my nipple sharply, and I was brought swiftly back down to earth. "You enjoy the games just as much as I do, Lois, you just don't know it yet." Closing the gap between our faces, he then claimed my lips with a fierce abandon, and now I was sunbathing in another dimension.

The thought of pushing him away didn't enter my head, although that would have been my best option. Instead, I sat there dumbstruck and lapped him up with everything I had available. Lips, tongue, hands, fingertips... they all clamoured for soft heat and smooth skin. The fact that I couldn't have him only made me want him all the more, but that was half the point. If the man wasn't so unobtainable, would I still want him? That question would eat away at me for a few days, I was sure.

"Lois, you should be pushing me away, not trying to eat my face off." James's lips twitched as he pulled away, and I wanted to bury my face in my hands. The expression on my face revealed everything, and I knew he'd been watching. What was wrong with me? I needed to get past this attraction. Why was James pushing me like this? What was I missing?

"How do I fight this?" I whispered.

"How do you fight what?" he asked. Shaking my head, wondering if he was being deliberately obtuse, I gritted my teeth for a moment, debating upon whether we should have this conversation.

"Lois?" he pressed. Grabbing hold of both of my arms, he squeezed them to get my attention. "I need to know exactly what it is you want to fight. Then I'll help you as best I'm able."

Those bright blue eyes of his pleaded with me for an answer, and I realised that in his own messed-up way, James did care for me. He cared enough to pull out all the stops in his training, not only to give me the best possible chance of succeeding, but also with a view to getting my ass out alive. Why he should care was beyond me, but I got the feeling he did, and my instincts had served me well thus far. Deciding to trust him with my answer, and hoping his ego wouldn't spontaneously combust, I said, "I want to fight this attraction."

"Ah, that." His grip on my arms lessened and he looked thoughtful for a

moment. "I'm not sure attraction is something you can fight," he said eventually, and my heart dropped. That wasn't the answer I wanted to hear.

"Attraction is chemicals, hormones, pulse rates, and heartbeats. It's a pretty face and a sexy voice, a quick wit and a beautiful body. It can be any of things, or none of them. It's unique to each individual. How do you fight yourself?"

"You're not much help," I whispered miserably, already drawing away from him.

"I haven't finished." Holding me firm, he lifted my chin up to meet his eyes. "Your body can't fight it, but you can do battle with your mind." He tapped my forehead several times to make sure I'd got the point. "If you find yourself in a situation where you're falling in love with your kidnapper, what would you do?"

"Try and remind myself of who and what he was, and look at the bigger picture." James wasn't exactly my kidnapper, but it was close enough when things came down to the crunch.

"Exactly. You're intelligent enough to dissect the lies and lines of deceit. Deep down your body will know what to do when the time comes, so just trust your instincts." He released me then, and I instantly felt bereft.

"We weren't talking about the same things, were we?" My fingertips fluttered up to the line of his jaw, and although my touch barely contacted with his skin, I felt the static shoot down my veins.

James grabbed my fingers, pressed them into my hand, and then kissed my wrist. "Apparently not. If you're talking about fighting the attraction you have to me, there is no cure. You're just going to have to suffer, like millions of women before you."

Deciding not to slap him, I said, "Thank you. I think I'm officially cured for at least the next hour or so. Let's get on with the show, Sir." Inclining his head, he then got to feet and did just that.

Picking Sharkey up in his arms as if she weighed no more than a child, he called over his shoulder, "We're moving things to my bedroom. After I give her another dose, we'll have a few minutes of fun with her before she crashes out, and she'll be easier for me to monitor if she's horizontal."

"I bet you've said that to millions of women before." I rolled my eyes and got down on my hands and knees, ready to follow like the obedient little lap dog I was.

"Actually, Lois, can you grab my case and the open vial I've left there? I'll allow you to walk just this once." Giving me a quick wink, he left me to it.

Sighing, I did as instructed. Carefully placing the wipes back into the case, I snapped the catches closed before retrieving the vial. Turning the little plastic bottle around in my hand, I noted that the white label it bore was blank. Leveritt

was intent on keeping me in the dark, it appeared. I sighed again and closed my eyes. Still, it would be no different with Alain. Might as well get used to my lot in life sooner rather than later.

When I got to his bedroom, James had already stripped off the duvet and placed Sharkey upon his sheets. She looked a little worse for wear, her clothes still in a state of disarray and her hair all mussed up, but there was still a sparkle in her eyes.

That rang a little red flag in my brain. Truth serums were barbiturates, as far as I was aware, and her pupils should be heavily dilated by now. Perhaps that was due to the very light dose that James had given her. Things would shortly change if James decided to pump some more into her.

Carefully placing the black case down on the bedside table, I laid the vial down gently beside it. “Do you have any safety precautions?” I blurted the words out before I could stop them, but it was a valid question. Should he be messing around with all these drugs? What happened if something went wrong? The emergency personnel weren’t going to be too impressed with us if we managed to kill someone, and that was a very real possibility when playing about with drugs like these.

“It’s a bit late in the day to be asking questions like that, isn’t it, Lois? If you were concerned about her health, you probably needed to speak up about half an hour ago.” James raised his eyebrows at me before opening his little black case and retrieving another needle.

Shuddering at the sight, I said, “I’m serious. If you accidentally give her an overdose, what’s your next move?”

James set the needle down gently and reached into his pocket. He slowly pulled out the ball gag that I had worn earlier, and I found myself instantly scuttling backwards. Like a rat seeking to escape a burning building, I looked all around me for exits before I managed to get my breathing under control. Then I locked my frame in place and concentrated on staying still.

“I think that’s progress, Lois. So the rules are thus: you utter another word and I’ll gag you. Right now, I need to concentrate. Do you understand?” He lifted the needle and vial again, as if I was in any doubt to his sincerity.

Nodding, I sat back on my heels and willed my pounding heart to subside.

As James concentrated on drawing another dose out of the vial, he unexpectedly began talking again.

“Whatever you do, don’t play the curious kitten over at CB. It will get you into more trouble than you can handle, and I’m aware you can handle a lot. As to your earlier question, there’s a reason why I have this black case with so many

different drugs in it. If I shoot her up with too much of one, I can counteract it with another. Is it risky? Yes. But it's nothing I can't handle. Cellular Operations also has a team of medics just ten minutes away in case something goes wrong, so Elizabeth really has pulled out all the stops on this one, but I guarantee you we won't need them. I know what I'm doing, and I've done it before. Does that answer satisfy you, Lois?"

It didn't, but I nodded anyway. I had no wish to be gagged again. The bright red ball of the gag spun around in circles inside my head, reminding me of the consequences of my actions.

"Don't worry, Lois. I won't let you die on my watch."

That was all very well for him to say, but did I trust him?

Grabbing Sharkey's wrist in his left hand, he then delivered the next dose straight into her bloodstream. The needle went in smoothly and the plunger was depressed. I'm not sure what I expected, but it wasn't the sudden silence that permeated the room.

James looked at me, and nervously, I returned his gaze.

"Now we play, Lois."

Nineteen

“What is your name?” James’ voice was softer than usual, and it had a kinder lilt. I guessed he figured he didn’t have to try so hard after the poor woman was pumped full of drugs.

“Elizabeth, Margaret, Sharkey.” Although Sharkey’s speech was still slow, there was no pause this time, and more importantly, no giggling.

“What do you do for a living?” The second question came as smoothly as the first, and she answered it without hesitation.

“I work for Cellular Operations. It’s nothing to do with mobile phones - it’s more of a front for undercover operations.”

My eyes bulged as Sharkey began revealing all the pertinent details of our business. If this happened to me while under Alain’s roof, my life would be toast - very burnt, black, and un-recoverable toast.

“What’s your role in the business?” The question seemed benign from James’s lips, but that one little question could do a whole world of damage in the wrong person’s hands.

“I oversee day to day operations. My role involves a bit of accounting, plenty of meetings, and lots of reading. I always have my nose buried in an operative’s file.” Sharkey smiled up at him as she revealed all of her deepest, darkest secrets, and I believe she’d have happily told him her life’s tale had there been time.

“What sort of operatives do you have at Cellular Operations?” James smiled and held her hand in his, gently rubbing it. I almost wanted to be her, until I realised that I would be her, very shortly, and I probably wouldn’t much like it.

“Oh, all sorts. Some are assassins who take care of the wet work, then we have some who are good with computers, others with special areas of expertise, and some are just brilliant all-rounders.”

“How about that one there. Is she one of your operatives?” He pointed at me on the floor, and Sharkey had to struggle upwards to see me, until James flicked his hand upwards, indicating that I should stand. I did so immediately. She’d already seen me naked, and I wasn’t about to waste time on embarrassment all over again.

“Oh, that’s Lois. She’s one of our best operatives. If we can’t get the job done, we generally send Lois in and she’ll sort it out for us.” Praise indeed, I thought sourly.

“How’s her performance been this year?”

I opened my mouth, wanting to object, but James was ready for me. Waving the ball gag about just behind his shoulder, so Sharkey wouldn't see, I found myself at an impasse. My jaw closed with an audible snap, as that seemed to be the only way I could vent my frustration.

"Well, pretty good, up until her boyfriend died, of course. Understandably, her head hasn't been much in the game since then."

"And what makes you think it is now?" James's expression had turned serious, but Sharkey wasn't looking at him. She was looking at me. I wondered if she was trying to figure out why I was naked, but she didn't seem at all perturbed by the fact.

"I'm not sure that it is, but I know that even if she isn't at her best, she'll still be one hundred percent above the rest. Her latest psyche evaluation came out clean, but Lois is smart. She'll have already figured out how to get round a psychiatrist."

James paused in his questioning then, and turned on the bedside lamp.

"Lois, would you turn out the lights please?" Walking over to the light switch, I couldn't help but wonder what James was up to now. Was he trying to send us all to sleep? Obeying orders, I flipped the switch, plunging the room into semi-darkness. The lamp spread soft amber light across the room and gave everything a soothing, warm tone.

"Elizabeth, do you find Lois attractive?"

Letting out a shocked gasp, I had a dreadful suspicion that I knew where this line of questioning was going. James wouldn't do that to me, would he? But I think I already knew the answer to that. Oh God, oh God, oh God.

Elizabeth looked at me for a moment, and when I say looked, I mean *really* looked. When she finally cleared her throat to answer, I prayed for the answer to be 'no.' Yes would come with serious consequences, and no would be a blissful relief. What were the chances of my boss finding me attractive, anyway? Infinitesimal, I was sure. It would be wrong on so many levels, and I didn't want to visit any of them.

"Yes." The softly spoken word came crashing down in my brain. It set off a few more alarm bells, and the headache that had been simmering just above my left eye suddenly exploded with full force.

"She's a very beautiful women," Sharkey added as an afterthought, with a slow smile.

Desperately wanting to place my head in my hands, I just about managed to keep them by my sides.

"You'd noticed, huh?" The sarcasm rolled off James's tongue, but Sharkey was oblivious to it. She was still staring at me, and it had almost gotten to the stage

where I wondered if I had horns. Finally, James broke the tension in the room.

“Would you like to kiss her?”

“James!” I bleated. “Unfair! That’s suggestion and you know it.” The man had been deliberately provoking her. Whilst I had no idea what kind of drug he’d given her, she’d better hope it was the one that knocked your memory out dead. Otherwise, she was going to have a very interesting lesbian interlude to add to her already impressive resume.

“Tut, tut, tut.” James repeated each of those three short words very slowly, and then pulled the gag out of his pocket with one neat tug. Dammit! This had been his plan all along. I wanted to scream. “Kneel by my feet, Lois, and open that delectable little mouth wide.”

“You can’t do this,” I wailed. Unfortunately, he’d already proved on more than one occasion that he could. If the two of them were let loose on me, my will power was shortly going to vanish. Even though I had never had the urge to try girl-on-girl before, with James in the room, I was going to go up in flames.

“Oh, I think you’ll find I can. Quickly now, Lois. You’re already at twenty swats, and this time I won’t be using my hand.” He lifted his head up and stared at me directly, as if daring me to object. Closing my eyes for a second, refusing to let him see the look of pain that crossed my eyes, I then slowly drifted towards him. It would all be over in a couple of hours, I told myself, and then I’d be one step closer to where I wanted to be. When I finally reached him, I sat back on my heels once more, opening my mouth wide, as instructed. The fear had thankfully gone. In its place was white-hot heat, and I was dripping wet.

“Good girl.” He patted my head and then, without warning, gripped a fistful of my hair tightly. Pulling my head back sharply, watching as my mouth widened in shock, he slowly slotted the bright red ball into my mouth. The strap was then swiftly buckled behind my head. As Sharkey’s eyes continued to bore into mine, I found the humiliation of being seen like this almost too much to bear.

“Now, where were we?” He stroked my cheek as he considered the matter. It simply fanned the flames and enraged me.

“Elizabeth, would you like to get naked for Lois and me? Things will be much more fun if you’re naked.” James turned his head round and looked at her questioningly. He gently began fondling me between my legs, and then he used his hand to slowly push my head to the side so he could nibble my neck. Elizabeth didn’t stand a chance, and neither did I. The infernal man had me mewling and dribbling over him in no time at all. When he finally pulled away, my hands were clutching at him, clinging on for dear life. I balled them into fists and cursed the day he’d entered my life.

“Let’s watch Elizabeth strip together. You’ll probably want to get revved up for

your spanking, right, Lois?” James gripped my hand and entwined my fingers in hers as if we were intimate lovers. I couldn’t help but wonder what he was playing at. If this was some kind of united front for Sharkey, the action was wasted. The woman was sky-high, and she wasn’t coming down any time soon.

Patting the bed beside him, he indicated that I should sit by him. When I hesitated for a second, James simply hauled me up and turned my face with his hand so I was forced to admire the sexy striptease that was going on for our benefit. Scrap that, it was going on for James’s benefit. Sharkey was a red-blooded woman at heart, and I was nothing more than a passing diversion for her. Trying to sigh, but completely unable to because my mouth was stoppered, I let my gaze fall to the sight that was unfolding before us.

Sharkey had now wriggled out of her black silk shirt, which wasn’t a great hardship - James had pretty much ripped the thing off her earlier. She was now trying to slither out of her jeans, but her co-ordination wasn’t what it once was. Fumbling around, trying to find her zipper, I almost felt sorry for her. Almost.

“Lois, go help her.” The sexy undercurrent of James voice went straight to the parts that other voices couldn’t reach.

Unable to answer, I shook my head no. This was all moving far too quickly for my liking.

“Remember the promise you made to me last time I let you orgasm? You owe me, Lois, and not doing as you’re told will result in punishments. You already have more of those stacked up than you can handle.” When I didn’t budge from my seated position, James decided to use dirty tactics.

“You need to do this, Lois. Girl-on-girl will be something you’re expected to do regularly at CB. If they sense that you don’t like it, they’ll make you do it all the more. So dip your toes in and get them nice and wet.”

Whilst I knew he was speaking the truth, I still didn’t want to jump on up and get up close and personal with another woman’s lingerie.

“Remember all those things on that limits list we have yet to try? There’s some corker’s on there, Lois. Let’s see... we could always try some more medical play, or perhaps some anal training. That could be fun, right, Lois?”

James didn’t laugh as my feet began to straddle Elizabeth, although I suspect he might have gloated a bit. In the end, the threats hadn’t really been necessary. I’d known he was right about this being something I’d need to get under my belt. It appeared to be one of a long line in upgrades that needed to be applied to my sex life.

As Elizabeth struggled with her trousers, a worried look crossed her face. She wasn’t used to dealing with uncoordinated fingers and fumbling thumbs. Her brain was trying to figure out what was wrong, but coming up blank. Whilst the

wicked side of me could almost revel in her discomfort, there was also a part of me that wanted to erase the worry away and see if there was any way we could make this experience pleasurable for the both of us. As her fingers continued to try and work the fly of her jeans loose, I gently caressed her hands with mine before setting them gently at her sides. She made a couple of mewling sounds of distress, and I had an idea of how to soothe her. Feeling James's eyes boring into the back of my head, I decided to give him the show he wanted. One day my life might depend on it, so it was probably time to see what I was made of. Realising that I wasn't going to be able to give a very inspiring show without the use of my lips, I turned to James and pointed directly at my gag. He was a smart man. He'd get the message.

"No way, Lois. I'm enjoying the peace and quiet immensely." He grinned at me, so I knew we still had room for negotiation. I pointed at the gag again and blinked my eyes prettily.

"What's it worth, Lois? Are you willing to bargain?"

Ahh, so that's what this was about. Things were beginning to slot into place nicely. After every obstacle he threw at me was accomplished, there seemed to be a mountain just around the corner.

"Well, off you go, Lois. I must say, I think I'm almost looking forward to this." James motioned with his hand for me to continue. There was just one small problem with that. I was still gagged. Since when had James ever made anything easy for me? Eyeballing him rather unpleasantly, I took a moment to calm down and think the challenge through. Seriously, this was child's play considering some of the things I'd had to do in the past. Something would come to me.

Think, Lois, think. What would James want from you? And then it hit me. There was something I very much wanted to do. Hopefully James wouldn't be as averse to the idea this time, and now I was more than prepared to beg for my supper – especially if it meant getting the use of my voice back. Patting Sharkey softly on the cheek, I let her know I'd be back to finish what I'd started very shortly with a wink.

My next move was to push James's chair back a little, which enabled me to kneel on the floor at his feet. Looking up him, unafraid to meet those icy blue eyes for a change, I placed a hand on each of his knees. A little anticipation wouldn't hurt – would it? Then, without warning, I nuzzled my gagged mouth into his crotch. He'd get the idea. Running the top of the silicone ball I wore up and down a surprisingly hard member, I felt rather proud of myself as it jumped underneath my touch. Maybe he wasn't quite as immune to me as I'd previously thought. After several passes up and down his groin, where I alternated with a feather light touch before pressing myself against him very firmly, I paused and

waited for his verdict.

“Don’t stop on my account,” he said cheekily.

Making a large annoyed sound in my throat, I gave him ‘the look,’ though he didn’t seem much bothered by it. Following that up with an aggravated sigh, I began using the tips of my fingernails to torment him, and if several of my nails dug in a little deeper than they should, that was his problem. Eventually, he took pity on me.

“Is this your way of saying you’d like to suck my cock after all?”

I nodded vehemently. Now was no time for beating about the bush.

“Ahh, the proposition is lovely, Lois, but you know I want a little bit more than that.”

Damn the man! He was really trying his best to make my life as difficult as possible. Pointing with both hands to my gag, I then threw them up in the air. Why did he have to make this so hard? Knowing exactly what he wanted, I tried to figure out a way to get the message across to him. It didn’t take me long to come up with something.

Cupping both my hands together, I held them out in front of me, as if begging for alms. It was the only thing I could think of that would get the idea of what he wanted across.

“So you are prepared to beg?” His eyes widened in surprise, though I didn’t know why that should be. He was an attractive man, and sucking his cock wouldn’t be a hardship. Hell, I might even enjoy myself. “Then I’ll look forward that later.” Leaning forward in his chair, he brushed his fingers through my hair before reaching down to unfasten the buckle of the leather strap. He didn’t hurry, and for that my hair roots were thankful, but when the gag was finally pulled free of my lips with a large sucking pop, I felt nothing but relief.

“Thank you, Sir,” I whispered, my head down and my eyes to the floor. I was learning.

“You’re welcome. Now get back there and finish what you started, Lois. I find myself very keen to watch, knowing what my reward will be afterwards.” With a light tap on my backside, he shooed me off the floor.

Uh oh. Now I had to give him the show he was expecting. Guess I’d better make it a good one. As I climbed back on the bed, I wondered if panic would overtake me. Whenever I ventured into the unknown, there was always a fifty-fifty chance that this might be the case, but for some reason I was completely calm. It was probably due to the fact that my body was desperately excited by James’s teasing, and I was prepared to do almost anything that involved naked body contact.

Straddling Sharkey again, I said, “Need a hand?” The poor woman had given

up all pretence of trying to strip, and her eyes were beginning to droop. Whatever James had given her, it looked like it had sedative effects thrown in.

“Am I allowed to let her sleep?” Having a rough idea of what the answer was, I still thought it best to be sure.

“If you do, your technique is abysmally bad and we’ll have to work on it all night. Then, when she wakes up tomorrow morning, we can go through this all again.”

Rolling my eyes at the big bad monster, who looked thoroughly entertained by my antics, I decided I could put off the inevitable no longer. It was time to pop my girl-on-girl cherry.

As Sharkey’s jeans were currently around her ankles, a single tug at both heels freed them easily. I let them fall to the floor behind me, uncaring of where they landed. Running the tips of my fingers gently over the smooth soles of her feet, I laughed when I found out she was ticklish. Somehow, her soft laughter erased most of the tension in the room, and I became a bit bolder. Using the tips of my fingers, I gently ran them up the inside of her legs, and when I reached her lacy black panties, I let the heat of my breath tease her.

James didn’t leave me alone, of course. “Seduce her, Lois. Find out exactly what makes her tick, light her up, and send her flying. You’ve got to make them want it. Get her head in the game, and everything else will be easy. There’s eight billion people on this earth, Lois. You’ve got to make her feel as if she’s the only one you’d ever want to fuck.”

His words didn’t stop there, but I tuned them out. If I was going to do this properly, I needed to concentrate, and James was a distraction. There was a simple solution to the problem. I needed to start talking dirty. It would hopefully shut him up, and turn her on at the same time. *Here goes nothing*, I thought.

“Elizabeth,” I purred, letting my lips touch her sex. “Have you ever had sex with a woman?” My voice was bold, and I sounded sure of myself. Good.

Her eyelids fluttered once, twice, and then she managed to focus on the question. “Yes, but only once.” Her words were slurred and slow, but still easy for me to understand.

“And did you enjoy it?” My lips spoke against the crotch of her panties. I knew from experience that the movement would torment, and by the way she squirmed, it seemed I was on the right track.

“It was okay. I’ve stuck to men since then. You generally know what you’re getting with men.” My tongue lapped at her clit through the pretty swirling pattern of the black lace, and she moaned.

“A big fat cock pistoning in and out of you a few times, and a pat on the head when it’s all finished?” I enquired. She laughed.

“Something like that.” Gently biting the tip of her clit, I giggled and she let out a low moan.

“James?” I didn’t look at him as I was speaking to him. “Could we have a few toys?” If I was going to do this, I intended to do it properly.

“Of course, Lois. Let your inner dominatrix roam free. That way you can cross two things off my list at once. How very *efficient* of you.”

As I had no idea it was on there, it wasn’t, but I didn’t intend to argue with him.

There was a scrape of chair legs and the sound of footsteps disappearing. It was a relief to have him out of the room. I had a feeling that I was never going to be comfortable anywhere near James, but in a week’s time, that wasn’t going to be a problem. A week was a time frame I could deal with, and although it would seem like forever, it would actually be gone in a flash. I smiled for the first time.

“Elizabeth.” The words were whispered against her sex again, and I watched her hips writhe against me. “Elizabeth?”

“Mm?” She tangled her hands in her hair and pulled at the ends in frustration, which was interesting, as I’d barely gotten started. Maybe she suffered from the James effect, too.

My warm hands rose upwards to caress the plump globes of her breasts. Squeezing them lightly, I said, “I’m going to make you scream my name, over and over again. All fucking night long, you are going to forget that any other word, bar Lois, exists.” My hands reached under her bra and pushed it up high on her chest. Pinching her nipples between my thumb and forefinger, I alternated between soft pulses and firm pinches. With the odd, sharp flick of a fingernail, I teased them into tight little points, and the friction they created against my hands was exquisite. Sucking a tip into my mouth, I suckled long and hard, feeling immensely proud of myself as her body arched up in pleasure. I’d heard women could come from nipple stimulation alone, and it was certainly worth a try, I thought. Using my hands to stroke and knead her right breast, my tongue and teeth went to work on her left. Soft, gentle caresses with my tongue were followed by a light graze or nip with my teeth. In a matter of seconds, I had her grabbing the bed sheets with her fists as she squirmed under my torment.

Rubbing my own breasts against her, anxious for a little stimulation myself, I began switching my attention from one pouting peak to another as my knee sank between her legs and pressed against the sweet softness it found there. Her nipples were now like knife-edges, straining for all the attention they could get, and I was happy to give it to them. Rocking my knee between her legs, I bit, tweaked, flicked, lapped, and fondled. She was soaked, and the friction worked in my favour. All of a sudden, I stopped in mid-flow and waited to see what would happen.

“Noooo,” she wailed. “I’m so close. Don’t stop. Please don’t stop.”

“Are you going to be a good girl and come for me?” Okay, I was making the most of my power trip, but could you blame me? Her soft whimpers and moans empowered me, and now that I’d had a taste of her, I found I that wanted more. Lots more.

“Yes. Yes, please let me come for you. I’ll do anything you ask, just please let me come.” Her voice was ragged, and the beautiful edges it now bore turned me on something fierce.

“You’re right. You will do anything I ask, and before the night’s out, you’ll wonder what the hell you’ve signed up for, but I promise you one thing...” I waited quietly for her to take the bait.

“What?” Her breath was coming in fast little pants, and watching those silky ripe breasts rise and fall in tandem was a delicious sight indeed.

“I’ll make sure you enjoy it.” With that, I set to tugging, twisting, sucking, and pinching. One moment my tongue gave a barely-there liquid caress, and in the next I had half a boob in my mouth and was tugging ferociously at it. The woman went off like a rocket with a one-way ticket to outer space.

When James came back into the room, it was to find Sharkey’s hips rolling and her hands begging me to stop. I paid neither any attention.

“Lois, get off her and give her a minute. You might as well pick your poison out of these goodies meanwhile, and then you can return to tormenting her. I had no idea you had a taste for domination.” To make sure I complied with his orders, James grabbed a handful of my hair and pulled me upwards. “She needs air, Lois.” He rolled his eyes.

Sighing, I pouted prettily before saying, “Did you know you can come just from having your nipples stimulated?” I then got very distracted by the large plastic tub of toys that he had in his hands. Handing them over to me, I was like a kid in sweet shop for a moment as I considered what I could do with all these wondrous implements of torture.

“Funnily enough, I did know that, Lois. I do own a fucking shop, after all. Found anything you like yet?” If he thought he could change the conversation that easily, he was much mistaken.

“Ha. You own a fucking shop, but you don’t fuck. That’s a joke for a start. Who did a number on you?” And there it was. I’d overstepped the boundaries, but I didn’t care. There was a strong desire to dip my toes into James’s past and uncover every last little secret I could find.

“Oh, I fuck on occasion, Lois. I’m a red-blooded male, after all.” He ran his thumb along my bottom lip roughly, distending it with his harsh treatment, and it was intended to shut me up.

“But you don’t fuck girls like me.” This was all beginning to make sense now.

“Spot on, Lois. I don’t fuck girls like you. Now, go pick your toys and fuck someone you can fuck before I get fucking annoyed.”

James was taking all the fun out of my evening, but I refused to back down that easily.

“Correct me if I’m wrong, but you don’t mess with anyone that might fall in love with you, or vice versa.” There, I’d said it. If he wanted to shoot me down in flames, now was his chance.

There was deathly silence for a moment, and it didn’t take a brain surgeon to realise that whilst I was probably correct, I’d also overstepped the line.

“You have three seconds to get back on that bed, Lois, or I’m going to fill you with the same shit I’ve just given Sharkey, and I’ll have considerably more fun with your body than I probably should.” The smile was cold and calculating.

“You don’t scare me, James Leveritt.” That may have been more bravado than I actually felt, so I didn’t look at him as I busied myself rummaging through the toy box in front of me. Feeling his eyes boring into me, I didn’t take too long making my choices. Picking up a purple thirteen inch double-ended dildo, a vibrating butt plug, a sachet of lube, and finally grabbing a riding crop, I hoisted myself back on the bed.

“Do you even know what to do with that?” The dry comment from my temporary lord and master did not make me turn around.

“Well, you’ll just have to watch and find out, won’t you?” From then on in, I tried my best to erase his presence from my mind. I had bigger and better things to focus on.

Sharkey’s eyes were drooping closed when I repositioned myself back between her legs, so I gently laid my toys beside us and used my fingers and tongue to wake her up again. Thankfully, it didn’t take her long to come around.

“Mmm, Lois?” she said sleepily.

“Mm,” I agreed, blowing against her clit. “Think you can go another round with me?”

“I’m not sure I have the energy,” she said, laughing, her eyes fully open now, and it was clear they were actively encouraging me to get on with things.

“Let me see if I can convince you,” I purred, and I set to work.

It didn’t take me long to discover that, contrary to my earlier thoughts, I quite liked girl-on-girl. Don’t get me wrong, I was still firmly in the I-love-blokes camp, but playing around with a willing female participant every now and again had its charms. They were softer, smoother, and just far more delicate than their male counterparts. Sharkey smelt enticing, too. Jasmine and musk tantalised my

senses, and I found I couldn't get enough of it. Licking the fragrance off her at every opportunity, I had her writhing in very short order.

Deciding that I would try to give her a G-spot orgasm, because whatever James had done to me back in Elite Encounters had been amazingly awesome, I began stroking the inside wall of her vagina. Having done some reading on the matter, after my 'Ultimate Pain Package,' I'd tried to recreate the experience from the comfort of my own bedroom, but to no avail. It wasn't the easiest thing to do to yourself. Perhaps if I practised on Sharkey, it might help me gather a few hints and tips on the subject. It certainly couldn't hurt.

Curling my fingers upwards in a 'come hither' motion, it didn't take me long to find the spongy, walnut-sized bump that was otherwise known as the G-spot. So my first challenge had been easier than I thought. There was no time for congratulating myself, though, as my second challenge was to figure out how the double-ended dildo worked. Okay, so I kinda knew the basics, but whether it would actually work as well in practise was another matter entirely. There was only one way to find out.

Inserting the dildo a good four or five inches inside me, I was unsurprised to find myself extremely wet. Apparently I really liked being in charge. Too bad that wasn't going to be in my immediate future. Oh well. Dipping the remaining end into Sharkey's pussy, I began to lubricate the beast slowly. Sliding nothing more than the tip in and out, over and over again, I watched as she writhed about on the bed, and then slapped her hands away when they tried to pull me closer for more.

"Uh uh uh." Shaking my head at her, I said, "This is my show and you need to obey my rules if you want to come. Okay?" She responded by whimpering and nodding. I decided that I'd keep this image of Sharkey inside my head for special occasions. After a particularly bad debriefing, it just might come in handy. "Do you want more?"

"Yes. Yes, I want more," she pleaded, her hands coming up for me again as the dildo dipped inside her and then quickly retreated. I batted them away again.

"Then ask nicely," I drawled, my hands reaching up to tweak both of her nipples simultaneously.

After she'd finished gasping, she whispered, "Please, Lois. Please fuck me properly. I'm desperate." Another breathy little gasp escaped her lips as I entered her again.

Feeling mightily empowered after that little comment, I just hoped I could deliver what she was expecting. Whilst I could hold the dildo pretty accurately for the few light penetrations I was giving her, full blown thrusting might be beyond the ability of my PC muscles. Oh well, there was only one way to find

out.

Down on my knees, I grabbed her hips and lifted them upwards. I then began slowly thrusting back and forth inside her. Thankfully, the dildo was quite firm and I somehow managed to control the beast.

“Oh God, that feels good. Don’t stop, Lois. Don’t, whatever you do, fucking stop.”

So, of course I stopped. Slipping out of her gently, I went back to my G-spot teasing, tormenting that soft, slippery little bump until she was breathless and pleading in front of me.

“I’m going to come, Lois. Oh fuck, I think I’m going to come.”

Which was my cue to stop again. Sucking my index finger into my mouth and getting it nice and wet, I asked, “Have you ever been fucked in the ass before, Elizabeth?” Repeating the question a further two times, I finally got my answer.

“Yes,” she whimpered, and, to be honest, I wasn’t really surprised. Having no wish to know exactly what my boss got up to behind closed doors, I left the conversation there and began running my finger around her tight little hole, getting her ready for what was to come next.

“Do you want to be filled, Elizabeth? Both holes at once?”

“Yes,” she whimpered, and there was no hesitation now. Her eyes were nearly bulging out of their sockets in pleasure, and it felt gratifying to know that it was me who put that wondrous expression on her face.

Carefully laying myself down on top of her body, I caressed her face, exploring all the curves, contours, and delightful hollows that presented themselves to me. The enticing smell of jasmine teased me at each taste, and the feel of her body wriggling beneath me was a potent aphrodisiac. As her arms came for me, trying to push me down lower, I grasped each one firmly and slammed them into the bed.

“I’m the one running this show,” I whispered, “and if you don’t do as you’re told, you’re not going to enjoy yourself very much.” Biting her lip firmly, to make my point known, I stared into a pair of lovely chocolate brown eyes until she got my message. It didn’t take too long, thankfully. Rewarding her submission with my eager lips, I thrust my tongue against hers, and the battle for supremacy continued for a while, although we both knew who the winner was in this game.

When we both needed to come up for air, I diverted my attention lower once more. Kissing a leisurely path down her body, purely to torment her, my fingers began teasing her ass again. Nestling themselves deep within that dark valley, I began to circle her hole again and again. It didn’t take me long to find the sachet of lubricant and, using one hand and my teeth, I tore the packet open. When I

removed both hands to make sure the plug was fully lubricated, she whimpered and moaned in heat.

“Shh,” I soothed her. “This will all be over in a minute.”

Holding the plug in my left hand, I went back to teasing her G-spot with my right. Inserting three fingers now, I tormented both her pussy and ass at the same time. Gentle little pulses of the plug, followed by firm strokes of my fingers had her near delirious in record time. She was more than ready for orgasm number two, I thought.

Stealing a casual glance over my shoulder, I found James with his eyes glued to the both of us. Giving him a slow smile, I said, “Kiss her.”

He gave me an answering one in return. “Looking to distract her, Lois?”

“That’s exactly it,” I grinned.

He did not need to be asked twice. Having already disposed of his shirt, James’s naked back leaned over the bed, and it was already glistening with sweat. Had we made him hot and bothered? I certainly hoped so. Maybe he could have some of what I normally had every time he was in close proximity to me.

Watching his fingers slide carefully under her head, before his hand lifted her up, I once again became insanely jealous. It was an instinctive reaction, and one I could do nothing about. *I* wanted those lips near me, knowing first hand all of the wondrous things they could do. Managing to curb my growl of annoyance, I gritted my teeth, but that anger had to be vented somehow.

Pushing the plug forward with a little more force than necessary, Sharkey shot up off the bed and yowled, but the deed had been done. The plug had slotted nicely home, which gave me time to concentrate on the other sweet hole, the one dead centre between her legs. Twisting my fingers inside her, in long, slow thrusting motions, I found her elusive little spot once more and began to torment it. Reaching to my side for the crop, my hand touched down in several places before I managed to confirm that it was missing. I looked sideways at James.

“That was my toy,” I snarled.

“Yes, it was. Now that you find yourself insanely jealous of Elizabeth, I think I’d better make it mine until I can calm you down.”

Arrghh. How did that man read me so well? Seriously, I might as well have had a flashing neon sign on my forehead that instantly relayed the contents of my brain.

Not bothering to deny it, I said, “And how do you intend on doing that?”

The crop flew in the air with a whoosh and landed sharply on my left buttock. I yelped, and the resulting smarting sensation drew tears to my eyes. “That’s supposed to calm me down?” I asked incredulously.

“Hell no. But you will be when I’ve finished with you. Get a move on and make her come, Lois, and then I’ll see to both of you.” With that, his lips were back on Sharkey, but thankfully the jealousy had ebbed. Even though I knew the man was a playboy, I still couldn’t help those green moods. I really had to do something about that...

“Lois, concentrate.”

And that’s what I did. Less than two minutes later, with my fingers coiling firmly around her insides, Sharkey came with a guttural roar and an impressive eruption of her own. Somehow, I’d managed to make the woman squirt. This had to be a near miracle. Feeling particularly proud of myself, I almost didn’t notice when James wrapped his hand around my neck.

“Impressive, Lois. Maybe you’ll fit in just fine at CB after all.” It seemed I now had a red, rosy glow to go with my feel-good mood. If it was praise from the master, it had to have been good.

“Elizabeth, I want you to watch Lois and me while you masturbate yourself to orgasm. Do you think you can do that?” James’s voice clearly suggested that *he* did, even if she didn’t.

“God, yes,” came the immediate, raspy reply. I didn’t know how she could be so sure - she’d just come twice, for goodness sake!

“Then be a good girl and open those legs wide. We want a good show, don’t we, Lois?”

I wasn’t given time to respond before his lips crashed into mine, and after that, all the good brain cells decided to go on strike. Trying to come up for air on several occasions, I was quickly sucked back down into the maelstrom, and my head spun in dizzying, effervescent circles. The feeling was electric, and I nearly smothered myself, so great was my need to be close to him.

A sharp tap with the crop soon centred me, though, and Sharkey was given one of the same. We both yelped in tandem.

“Get those fingers moving, Elizabeth. I want you nice and wet.” James pressed the leather tip of the crop to the top of Sharkey’s mound and watched as she rushed to do his bidding. After a few seconds, he clucked his tongue. “Not nearly good enough, darling. You can do better than that.” He tapped the crop lightly on her mound as an added incentive, and she tried her best, but it was obvious the poor woman was exhausted. James smacked the crop down hard, making her yelp in shock, before he turned around to face me.

“Lois, lie down between her legs and warm her up for me.” My backside got a sharp swat with the crop as I hastened to obey, but I didn’t give him the satisfaction of hearing me shout. “That’s it, Lois. Torment her with your tongue and pump that plug in and out. Let’s give her the big finale.” Having my boss

suffer under my hands one last time this evening wasn't going to be a hardship, so I did exactly as he said. This time, however, it was nowhere near as simple as the first.

For starters, James had begun spanking my backside. With one hand, he alternated from cheek to cheek, and the pressure was just hard enough to keep me wriggling. Even if it hadn't been, his other hand between my legs would have been.

"You are so wet, Lois. If I'd had any idea how much playing with girls would turn you on, I'd have brought one in earlier." Had I been able to speak, I might have responded to that, but my lips and tongue were being firmly employed elsewhere.

Trying to concentrate with all that going on behind me was nearly impossible, but James was intent on making things as difficult as possible.

"Did you know that spanking is great as a warm up, because it increases blood flow to the sweet spot, or 'genitals' as it's more commonly known, which helps to turn you on?"

I didn't answer that question.

"It also stimulates some major nerves, and the body often confuses pain for pleasure."

Now that was something I had already noticed. My body was already humming in anticipation of what was to come. Hopefully my fingers and tongue were doing a reasonable job at getting Sharkey to the same place.

There were three cracks of the crop upon my body, and I was nearly paralysed for a second, but when no more were forthcoming, I began to relax. Then the crop lightly skimmed my skin, and I jumped so forcefully, I lost contact with Sharkey's clit. Oops.

"The anticipation of a swat is almost as good as the sharp sting of a hit, isn't it, Lois?"

It was, but I still wasn't going to answer him. I had Sharkey writhing again, and it was a pretty good feeling. Grabbing hold of both her breasts, I tweaked her nipples again, laughing as her hands rushed up to try and protect her poor little nubs. I then began pumping her plug backwards and forwards, and the deep, raspy moan she made was my reward.

James didn't want her to come so quickly though, so he dotted a round of quick, sharp swats all over her body, leaving angry red marks in their wake. Quite mean, but extremely effective. The sound of very vocal swearing made my ears burn for a few minutes.

"Not yet, Elizabeth. I haven't finished with Lois yet." Not sure I liked the sound of that, I paused for a second. Sharkey began moaning in earnest, so it was

difficult to hear much, but the sound of tearing caught my attention. Goddamnit. I was shortly going to kill...

“Unnnghh.” A plug, very similar in size and shape to the one I’d used on Sharkey, was now being positioned at my rear - at least, I thought it was a plug. When another soft plastic dildo entered my pussy, and both began vibrating in earnest, I realised my mistake. How in the hell was I supposed to concentrate now? James’s fingers continually flicked and nipped at my clit, and if I thought wailing and begging would have done any good, I might have gone down that route. Another whack with the crop had me seeing stars.

“Make her come, Lois. It’s the last one of the evening, so make it good.”

And that’s exactly what I did. Three fingers of one hand were pumping inside her, my mouth was on her clit, and my other hand penetrated her over and over with the plug. The edge of pain had helped lengthen my play time with her, but judging by the heaving gulps of air she was taking in, Sharkey wasn’t going to last too much longer, and neither was I. As her hips arched majestically off the bed and she began sobbing hysterically, I increased the onslaught of my fingers and tongue until she began screaming. Nearly at the point of no return myself, I waited patiently for James to return the favour, but suddenly, on the edge of that precarious precipice, he stopped all movement and withdrew the invaders from my body.

“Nice work, Lois. Now it’s time for Elizabeth to go home, and you to go to bed. You’ve got a long day ahead of you tomorrow.” I wanted to scream, but I didn’t. There had been an inkling at the back of my mind that he might pull this stunt with me, so I sucked in my displeasure and held myself firmly in check. He was not getting a reaction. Climbing off the bed slowly, I drew in several gulps of calming breaths and wiped my lips clean with my wrist. *You can get through this, Lois*, I told myself. Although, right now, it was a miserable experience.

Leaving Sharkey in a state of near hysteria, writhing and rolling as her stomach and hips tried to come to terms with what I’d just done to her body, I reasoned it would take her a half hour or so to recover, but she’d come around just fine. Strangely, I didn’t waste any time wondering whether my actions this evening might affect my future promotion prospects. If I was lucky enough to survive this experience, there was a good chance I might be considering different career options at the end of it.

Swinging weary legs off the bed, I stood up and faced James with a penetrating stare that went far beyond his eyes.

“That was pretty impressive,” he acknowledged, and I genuinely think I’d surprised him. He did not get an answering smile from me, however. The pain of acute orgasm denial did not put me in a warm and fuzzy mood, so I gave it to

him with both barrels blasting.

“Next time you pull a stunt like this, be honest with me,” I said. “If you’re injecting barbiturates into her system, her eyes are going to dilate. Similarly, as expert an actor as she is, she forgot to slur her words as soon as we got serious, and she was pretty concise with her hands and fingers when she wanted to push me away. You could have saved yourself the trouble of wasting a needle and a bottle of saline solution.”

James didn’t look in the least bit chastised, but I didn’t let that stop my tirade.

“Well, I’ve had an exhausting night. Forgive me if I don’t crawl back to my bed, but I’m sick and tired of the lot of you. “

“Aren’t you forgetting something?”

My eyes nearly shot forward from their sockets at that remark. After all he’d put me through, he could not be serious. “Yes, I think I am. I’m forgetting that I should probably throw a swift kick to your general groin area on my way out.”

“Oh, you’re not getting out of our little deal that easily, Lois. You made me a promise.” The seductive purr of his voice left me in no doubt as to what he meant.

“You’re not serious? I’ve just insulted and yelled at you, and you want me to suck your cock?” My mouth hung open. I couldn’t be bothered to close it either, because it looked like I’d be using it soon.

“Angry women turn me the fuck on.” Tangling a hand in my hair, he applied direct, forceful pressure to my back until my knees buckled and I was on the floor before him.

“Remember that you have to beg, Lois. That was also part of the deal. I’m *really* looking forward to that part.”

“James Leveritt, you are the biggest asshole that has ever walked the face of the earth,” I said in fury, but in reality, my mouth was already watering, and I could think of nothing but freeing the constrained cock that was bulging forth in front of me. Exhaustion be damned, I was once again horny as hell.

“Nah. I’m the second biggest asshole. You’ll meet the guy that holds the top spot shortly. Now shut up and put that hole to good use.”

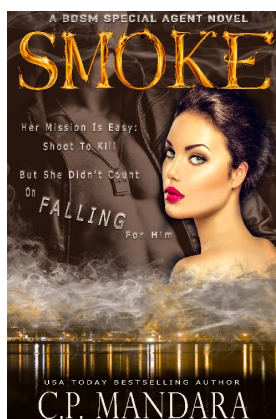
And that was how our story began. Little did I realise, even though I was half in love with James back then, I would soon forget all about him in less than two weeks’ time. As unbelievable as it sounds, it was the truth. When the doors of Carte Blanche opened for me, they would strip my world bare, and I’ve never been a girl who was fond of black and white. Though James had tried his best to warn me, it wasn’t until I was on the road of no return that I realised I had made

the biggest mistake of my life. All alone, and with no one to turn to, I'd made my bed, but lying in it was almost impossible. Alain Dumortier was out for blood. Mine.

The End

If you want to be notified when the next in the series, 'Smoke,' is released, then sign up for Christina's mailing list here: <http://bit.ly/1MVubkR>

Turn the page to see what's in store for Lois next!



Smoke

I've been sold to Alain Dumortier. I was delivered to his doorstep naked as the day I was born, and two weeks later, I haven't got a stitch of clothing to my name.

This should have been an easy assignment. Get in, have him fall under my spell, grab every little piece of intel I could find, and then assassinate him. They were simple instructions, and ones I'd followed countless times before. What could go wrong?

Just about everything. Alain's kept me imprisoned and drugged up to my eyeballs. The mind games he's playing are nearly my undoing, but it's hard battling a body that's full of barbiturates or opium. There's one more problem, too.

I think I'm falling in love with the bastard.

**** Releasing 2018 ****

Bio

Christina Mandara was born in the UK, but has spent most of her life travelling the world. She speaks three languages and has been chiefly employed in the fields of finance and travel. Her favourite city is Sydney, and her favourite holiday destination is the south of France.

She loves keeping fit and enjoys running, cycling, and water sports. Think surfing or sailing. She's a big fan of BDSM in all of its glorious forms, and her favourite item in the toy closet (a box simply isn't big enough) is her riding crop.

In her spare time she's usually cuddled up with a good book, exploring the countryside, or baking in the kitchen. In fact, she loves her kitchen so much she's one of few woman who wouldn't mind being tied to it! Her first and foremost love is writing, however, and more often than not you'll find her on a laptop spinning tales of romance, erotica, or dark, paranormal fantasies.

Christina's Social Media Hangouts:

C.P. Mandara's Newsletter: <http://bit.ly/1MVubkR>

C.P. Mandara's Facebook Street Team: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1021736604577782>

FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/CPMandara>

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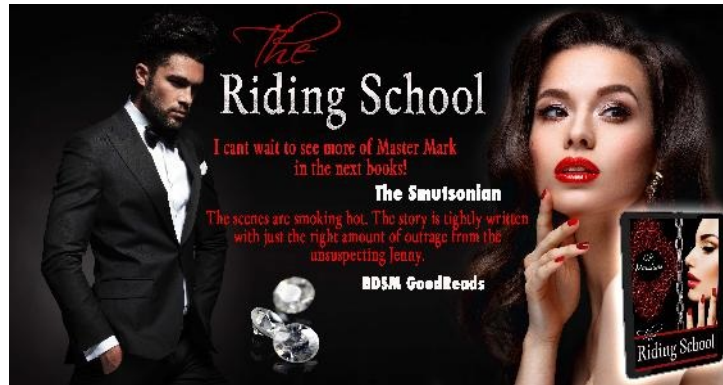
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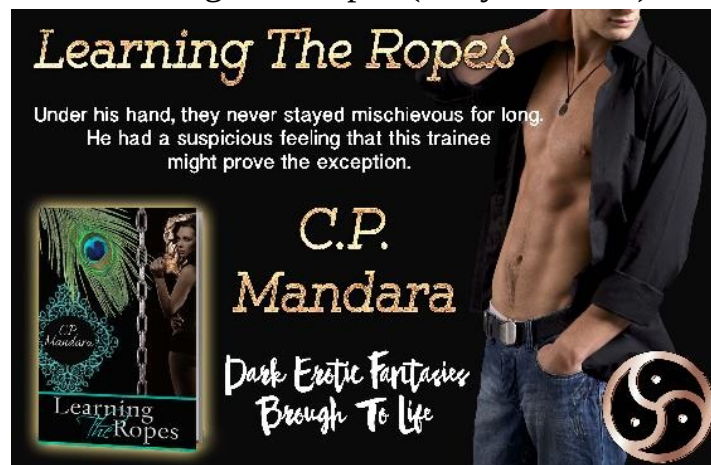
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Turn over for some naughty previews!

Named And Shamed

GOOD EVENING

The Mercedes coupé slunk silently through the evening traffic, sneaking in and out of lanes with stealth and speed. Like a bullet made of liquid silver, the six litre engine had eaten up several hundred miles of motorway with sublime ease and was now purring happily in the smog-filled heart of London. Comfortably stretched out in one of its grey, Nappa leather seats, the driver was in a world of his own. His knuckles were tightly clamped around the steering wheel and it was evident that the events of his day had been stressful. The bittersweet strains of Beethoven's Moonlight

Sonata could be heard throughout the vehicle, but the dulcet tones did not manage to soothe its occupant.

After forty minutes of queuing, the driver finally reached his destination, exited swiftly and tossed his keys to a waiting valet. In the heart of London, the city played its usual vibrant tune and the sounds of honking horns, noisy car stereos and cursing motorists could be heard. Usually, he barely even noticed them, but this evening they appeared to be amplified to unbearable proportions. His usual smile was absent and the state of agitation he found himself in grew with each passing second. Walking purposefully towards the revolving doors of the sheet glass skyscraper that towered in front of him, the only sound that could be heard was the receptionist as she scraped back her chair and rose to greet him.

“Good evening, Sir. I hope you had...”

“Thank you, Lucinda.” He shut the blonde down with those three clipped words and continued walking. Initially her eyes flared with shock, but recovering quickly, she looked carefully at the floor before re-seating herself. She didn't quite manage to hide her disappointed expression. Although they had been intimate on several occasions, the blonde was not what he needed today. He required a brunette and not just any brunette. He wanted a trained accomplice for the deeds he had in mind. He would find one of those several metres up in the air.

Pressing the button for the elevator he waited until a melodic ping announced its

arrival. Immediately stepping inside, the doors closed swiftly behind him and he rode in contemplative silence until they opened their jaws on the twenty first and uppermost floor.

“Good evening, Mr...”

Another chair moved and another blonde shot up to try and greet him. “I want Marianna in my office, now,” he barked.

Unlike the female downstairs, Kerry had the benefit of at least three years of submissive training. His surly demeanour and sharp commands immediately primed her for action.

“And tell her to bring me a cup of coffee and an aspirin.”

He strode purposefully to the dark panelled door to the left of him, which bore his name plate in scripted gold lettering and pulled it open wide. He rifled through the papers on his desk and checked his messages. There was nothing that wouldn't wait until tomorrow, which was good. This evening, he had plans and lots of them. No sooner had he sat himself down, than Marianna's high heels could be heard marching efficiently down the corridor. Kerry had obviously relayed the news of his good humour. He almost smiled.

The long-haired brunette entered gracefully, bearing a silver salver with a cup of black coffee, a tall glass of water and a blister pack of tablets. She laid it to rest on his giant, solid mahogany desk and gracefully fell to the floor beside it. On her knees, she kept her eyes downcast and tilted her head forward. Her arms were then neatly folded behind her back.

So, this was the lovely Marianna. He vaguely remembered employing her. Unlike most of the girls in his office, she had been hired chiefly for her computer skills rather than any other purpose. Of

course, the girl was a beauty, but then... they all were. Her long chestnut hair framed her face in delicate waves, she had a pair of sparkling green emerald eyes which could dazzle a lesser man and her lips were full and ripe for the taking, dressed only in a thin coat of clear gloss. They were currently posed in the most deliciously sensuous pout. For a couple of quiet minutes, he allowed himself the pleasure of admiring her tantalising form. The sheer white blouse that she wore accentuated her full breasts and he could see wisps of white lace beneath it. The

knee length black skirt did nothing to cool his ardour because he was already imagining what it might be concealing. Most of his submissives knew that he preferred his women clean shaven and without the additional hindrance of underwear, but he would have to wait and see what delights this one would reveal. He suspected she'd toe the line. The penalties of misbehaviour in his office were often detrimental to the health of one's backside... amongst other things.

He had never used her. It was no secret that he had a preference for blondes and eighty per cent of the women in his office conformed to this whim. The brunettes were there purely for decoration. They were often used by his colleagues or a visitor, but rarely, if ever, by him.

It was clear that she was nervous by the faint ripple of movement which flowed through her body and so she should be. Women talked and the other ladies in his office had many tales to tell. Tonight, this beautiful creature was going to be used as he had used no-one else in his office before. He punched two chalky white tablets from their plastic coating and let his fingers rest upon the highball glass. There was a slight wobble in his hand as he reached for the water, and it annoyed him. He needed to calm down and he needed release. One would probably follow the other, although the order might need to be reversed. Swallowing the tablets, he began to envision how his evening would unfold.

“Stand.” The command was soft, but there was no disguising the edge to his voice. She obeyed instantly. “I want my coffee, Marianna.” His voice was a growl and his eyes appeared almost evil in their obvious carnal intent.

To her credit, Marianna didn't miss a beat. She took hold of the platinum edged cup and proffered the beverage towards him.

Finally, his mouth turned upwards at the corners. “That is not how I want to drink my coffee.” The girl looked at him blankly and stood frozen in an obvious state of panic.

He took pity on her. “Take a sip, but do not swallow. Remember those words. I'll be using some of them again, later this evening.” Finally, a smile left the contours of his lips. He waited for her to obey.

Raising the cup, she took a tiny sip of the scalding brew and waited. He let her

wait. She could cool the damn stuff down, as the girls always made it too hot. He watched as she struggled for a moment with the heat. He could see the slight downturn of her eyelids and the pinched set to her face. The beautiful emerald eyes changed briefly from their transparent crystal sheen to cloudy pools of discomfiture. His need to devour her grew.

“Straddle me.” He swung his chair out from under the confines of his desk and allowed her legs to position themselves over his. Inhaling the sweet scent of her perfume, which was spicy and enticing, he allowed his hands to brush lightly over her hips. She shuddered in response. His hands circled her

tiny waist and caressed the soft flesh of her stomach through the thin material of her blouse. He couldn't wait to unwrap every last morsel of satiny skin and have her laid bare before him, but there was no rush. He let his hands roam, stroking the soft orbs of her backside before running them down the coarse fabric of her tailored skirt. When the material ended, the smooth silkiness of her legs was a beautiful contrast. His hands began to roll her skirt upwards, inch by slow inch. His fingers walked a leisurely path up her naked inner thighs. Would she be wet? Did she want him? He would demand answers to both of his questions shortly.

“Kiss me.”

He watched as she bent down and angled her head. He waited. Plump, full lips pressed against his and he did little more than accept their gentle pressure. If she wanted to get rid of that coffee, she'd need to convince him to open up. If you were asked to play with the boss, you needed to know how to tango. It didn't take her long to figure the game out. She tilted her head back, keeping the liquid safely inside her mouth and let her tongue trace a warm, wet path around his lips. She circled them from top to bottom with the softest of caresses. Oh, this one was good. Pulling her roughly onto his lap, he sealed his lips over hers and drank from his vessel.

He took his time plundering her mouth. With slow swirls and long snakes of his tongue he revealed his intent and let the battle commence. Threading his fingers through her luxuriously thick curls, he deepened the kiss, and his mouth sucked the very air from her body. She tasted divine; mainly because she was drinking his coffee, but he could taste peppermint, too, and the combination when added to her sweet saliva was intoxicating. Reluctantly, he released her lips.

“We’re going to play a little game, you and I,” he murmured seductively.

“You’re going to feed me every last drop of my coffee, using nothing more than these.” To reiterate his point, he traced an outline of her damp lips with his index finger. Pausing for a second, deep in salacious thought, he took the opportunity to give her a dark look. “If you manage to complete my task without spilling a drop from these luscious ruby-reds, I will allow you the choice of foregoing the punishment I have planned for you, which will be three lashes from my belt.” He watched how her eyelids fluttered downwards and knew she was studying the thick brown leather that encircled his waist. He knew what she was thinking. “Yes, they will hurt.” The delightful shudder of her body caused his cock to pulse and twitch. “Just remember that if you manage to accomplish your task, you have the power to avoid them, but you should also know that if you fail miserably the lashes will be doubled and you will beg for each and every one,” he paused again and bent down to whisper in her ear, “and believe me when I tell you they will lacerate both body and mind.” He tipped her chin back with his fingers to admire both the apprehension and lust that were reflected in her large, expressive eyes. She didn’t appear unduly concerned. Ah, so she thought this game was going to be easy. Was this one going to make a grave error and underestimate his tactics? The sexual tension in the room rippled upon an invisible thread and he could smell her arousal, which was pouring off her body with a pleasant and yet powerful aroma. It suffused his office in a matter of seconds and was far more potent than any aphrodisiac he had ever tasted.

She took her time, giving her lips a sly lick as she was fully aware he had his eyes on them, but when she made to take the cup and saucer in her hand, he had the last laugh.

“I distinctly remember saying you will feed me using nothing more than your lips, my dear. I believe those are your hands, are they not?” The black look he gave her would have destroyed a lesser mortal.

When the mesmerising eyes connected with hers, Marianna found that her breath was imprisoned in her throat, too scared to divulge its presence. The cup and saucer rattled dangerously in her hands, the coffee sloshed from side to side in the inadequate confines of its creamy-white porcelain container and her grip faltered. Spraying a moving arc of steaming brown liquid, the cup sailed through the air.

SWEET DREAMS ARE NOT MADE OF THESE

Jenny was once again down on all fours, of her own free will for a change, and she was having a stand-off with a herd of pony-girls who looked like sex-starved, rabid dogs. The odds were decidedly stacked against her. The creatures were practically dribbling with excitement.

There were several dilemmas to be considered, from her perspective. One, she would quite like to let them have their way with her and get a jolly good tonguing, because her body fairly thrummed with excitement. Two, she would be rescued tomorrow, so the stupid threats could probably be ignored. Three, trying to escape these beasts in pony hoof-boots was going to be nigh on impossible. The only trouble was viewpoint four. Number four was murmuring in her ear: but you don't do girls, do you? The thing was, unless she tried a girl, or perhaps several, how would she know if they were any good? They might be a damn site better than their gender opposites when push came to shove. It could prove to be interesting research. She needn't have wasted her grey matter, though, because in the end, all her dilemmas mattered for naught.

Four naked pony-girls took it upon themselves to pin her down and then promptly sat on her. One positioned herself on her chest, another her waist, and the last two took a thigh each. The air in her lungs whooshed out in a painful gasp. Who needed restraints?

“My name's Creamy Dream,” said the naked pony on her chest, “but you can call me CD. Who might you be?”

“I didn't think we were supposed to talk?” Jenny wheezed out the sentence, finding conversation was somewhat painful when you had a good-sized backside pressing all of its weight into your intestines.

“Oh, as long as we keep the volume down, we can pretty much say what we like in here. Of course, it's a different matter when the grooms get here tomorrow morning. The good news is that there are quite a few hours between now and tomorrow morning and we get bored with the same old, same old. So, what's

your name?”

“Jenny,” she croaked. “Henny? That’s an interesting name for a pony. Much better suited to poultry, I’d think,” mused CD. Jenny didn’t have the strength or the necessary volume of air in her lungs, to argue the mistake.

“Does she have a golden egg?” This came from the pony on her left thigh, whose twin, rather hard buttocks were overlapping each side of her leg.

“Henny certainly would be rather more an appropriate name if she did,” replied CD. “That was a goose, silly,” said right thigh, rolling her eyes. “I’d always thought it was a hen.”

“When was the last time we saw an egg?” asked the red-headed pony on her chest, anxious for the conversation to turn the corner.

“A very, very long time ago,” said CD and I’m sure Henny won’t have one.

“I’ll volunteer to go check,” drawled a blond-haired pony, who was sitting in the corner and chewing on a blade of straw in a rather bored fashion. She slowly meandered forward on her hands and knees. Even though she was completely devoid of make-up, she was clearly beautiful, with flawless skin and elegant cheekbones that would make even Katharine Hepburn’s pale in comparison.

Jenny paid no attention to her. Now that her eyes were becoming accustomed to the dark interior, she was sizing-up her surroundings. The stable block was divided into several smaller stalls at the rear, perhaps twelve in total, and each featured a heavy wooden door. All the doors were currently closed. Even though the doors were thick and well-built, muffled sounds could be heard filtering through them, some of which were pleasure and others which were not. The floor was made up of tightly compacted earth and strewn with a generous few inches of hay in all directions. There were several stone troughs, similar to the ones she had fed and drank from earlier, and these were positioned against a brick wall to the right. The left wall displayed an array of restraints, such as handcuffs, metal hoops and ropes, which were embedded into the red blocks with large steel screws. That wasn’t all her eyes had managed to spot. Two naked pony girls had been strung up in the ample restraints by their necks, legs, thighs and arms. One had been gagged and blindfolded, and the other had her face dressed in a glossy black hood, with nothing more than two little holes under her

nostrils to breathe through. Whilst the gagged one struggled weakly in her bonds, the other had fallen limp in hers, obviously asleep, from the gentle swell of her chest at regular intervals.

Meanwhile, the blonde had made good progress, nearing the V of Jenny's open legs and seeing where the newbie's eyes were headed, she smiled. "That's one of the better punishments, Henny," she drawled. "You wait till you see what's inside those stalls behind you. They get progressively worse the further you move down the line, which in turn means the less sleep you're likely to achieve in them." Her eyes sparkled with mischief. "Now I'm just going to nestle myself between your legs, darlin, so make yourself comfortable."

The woman was as good as her word. Her shiny, satin tresses tickled Jenny's thighs as she dipped her head towards the freshly shaven mound. Oh, her hair! She had forgotten all about the massacred mess on top of her head but it was impossible to stay miserable for long. When Beauty inhaled, deeply, at the apex of her legs, she found herself quivering. She had no idea whether this was going to be pleasure or torture and if was going to be pleasure, mightn't that be a torture all in itself?

"So soft, smooth and pretty," Beauty crooned, letting her tongue dip towards the naked, pale pink and fleshy lips of her pussy. Her tongue fluttered in gentle butterfly kisses, tracing the silken line of Jenny's labia and savouring the heady aroma of lavender and musk. She then traced a pretty line around the flower plug embedded in Jenny's butt and used her teeth to pull it slowly in and out, several times over. Ponies rarely had any scent other than that of mud, muck or sweat to savour so this was a special treat for her. Overwhelmed by the sweet smell, the blonde opened her mouth wide and suckled at the source of the fragrant nectar.

"Beauty, stop being greedy. We all want a go. Has she got an egg or not?" CD sounded rather ticked off.

Right thigh groaned. "She won't have an egg. It's been years since someone around here had an egg. Is it my turn to have a suck yet?"

Beauty sighed. She disengaged her mouth from its succulent resting place and let her red tongue poke out prettily. It was the longest tongue in the stables and she had gained an impressive reputation with its use. Gently parting the folds of Jenny's pussy and delving around the other edges quickly confirmed what CD

was so anxious to know.

Pulling away reluctantly, not unlike a cat which had just slurped at a bowl of cream, Beauty licked her lips in satisfaction and whispered, “She’s got an egg.”

The only person in the room not to take a quick indrawn breath was Jenny and the reason for that was twofold; firstly she had no idea what they were on about and secondly, it was a near impossible feat with two people sitting on your torso.

“Oh, well, that changes things,” said CD, somewhat obliquely.

Jenny was no longer listening to a word that was being said. Air was becoming a very important commodity. “Can’t breathe,” she rasped.

“You’ll get used to that,” said CD, blithely unconcerned. “Just you wait until you’re corseted tomorrow. Your stomach will feel like someone’s wrapped a live anaconda around it.”

“Speaking of snakes,” said left thigh, “did you know that a snake has to digest its prey really quickly, because if it starts to rot they have to regurgitate it or the resulting bacteria will cause food poisoning?”

“Our thanks to Miss Zoology in the left-hand corner,” said CD with her best forced smile. “Let’s move swiftly on, shall we?”

“Can I assume that because of her egg, we won’t be going down the traditional initiation route?” Beauty was using her lithe tongue to lap every last trace of Jenny’s sweetness from her lips.

“Henny, can you remember exactly what the ponies said to you, in regards to your egg?” CD began chewing her nails thoughtfully.

Lucky her, thought Jenny, whose hands were sweating uncomfortably, bundled up in the tight leather mittens she had been forced to wear. “Um, MG,” Jenny had to pause to suck in air, “said

something about,” another pause and another strangled breath, “no unauthorised... orgasms.” She was beginning to feel light-headed and nauseous. She had no idea whether it was due to lack of circulation, lack of breathable air or the side-effects of the pain killers which had been administered.

“Do you remember what the punishment was for failing?” CD bestowed a severe look upon the trainee, which she hoped would indicate how important the question was.

“No,” replied Jenny, who had her own concerns at the moment, such as trying to remain conscious.

“Damn,” muttered CD and she promptly slithered off Jenny and began to pace, or what counted as pacing for pony-girls, which was, of course, crawling.

Thankfully, the others followed her lead. Jenny’s eyes just about managed to pop back into their sockets and she sucked in several great lungful’s of air.

“Alright, horsies, here’s the plan,” said CD in an authoritative tone, “we probably don’t want to risk a group punishment, so instead of everyone working over the trainee and being rewarded with an orgasm in turn, we’ll have to adjust our procedure slightly.” A collective groan fanned around the room.

“The trainee will be allowed to perform an enthusiastic welcome to each one of us by demonstrating her oral skills. It’s in our interests to make sure she perfects them as soon as possible. Each pony will then be allowed a few laps at the trainee, wherever they might take her fancy, but we must be careful to ensure that she does not climax.”

What, what, what? If Jenny had just heard that correctly, there were intending to turn her into a lesbian and then torture her with the newfound knowledge. She squirmed on the prickly hay and managed, with some concentrated effort, to flip herself over and resume her crawling stance.

“Um, ladies, I don’t do... that.” Jenny waved a mittened paw in the air for emphasis. More ponies were joining the fray now, ones who had been previously snuggled down for the night, judging by the bits of straw that poked out of their hair in scarecrow fashion. There were a few sniggers, some sideways glances and the odd whinny of amusement.

“You do, now,” said Beauty, and she sat up, crossed her arms over her generously proportioned breasts and parted her thighs in invitation. “I’ve had my three laps, so I guess I’ll go first,” she purred.

“No, no, you don’t understand,” said Jenny, backing away as fast as her tight and

rubbery pony- boots would allow. “I’m going to be rescued tomorrow.”

There was a long pause before the stable erupted in riotous laughter. Some of the ponies were laughing so hard, they had to sit down and wipe tears from their eyes.

“Sit on her, Beauty, and we’ll hold her down for you,” said CD, rolling her eyes. She looked rather disgusted with the protégé that appeared to have landed into her care.

Jenny found herself tumbled once again, which wasn’t really hard considering she didn’t have proper use of either her legs or arms and the same ponies sat in their respective corners. This time

however, there was yet another obstacle to overcome. Beauty was lowering her... bits... slowly down towards her face. When her knees pressed tightly against either side of her head, making sure she couldn’t move an inch, she pressed the slippery folds of her pussy directly on top of Jenny’s mouth.

“You don’t get to breathe until you do the business,” said CD ominously, who was once again sitting atop Jenny’s chest.

Jenny didn’t realise, until quite some time later, that it hadn’t been an idle threat.

DISASTER AVERTED

He caught the cup neatly in one hand and by following the direction of the moving liquid, managed to contain the imminent disaster which threatened. A few drops of coffee sailed over the rim of the cup and sloshed around in the saucer. No matter, he'd make sure they were not wasted. Setting the cup back on his desk and returning his attention to the employee before him, he studied her expression. Marianna's face was a picture: Edvard Munch's 'Scream' to be exact. Her jaw was slack in horror, her eyes were so wide her eyelids had almost lost themselves in the back of her head and her hands flailed around madly. She began stammering.

"I'm so sorry, Mr Mmm...atthews. I mean, Sss..sir."

Mark sat back in his seat and had to work hard at keeping his grin in check. This was priceless. She had just delivered her pretty little backside on a platter for his delectation. How adorable this one was. Why had he not used her before? It took a few moments to compose himself before he could locate the stern tone that was needed with which to chastise her.

"You've made not one, but two grave mistakes within seconds, my dear. What shall I do with you?" He let the open question settle in the silence of the office. As expected, she made no response. She did manage to sink to her knees once more and resume her stance of supplication, which was, he conceded, an apology of sorts.

"To make amends, Marianna, you will roll up your skirt and place your backside over my desk, so that I may do whatever I wish with it. You will then lap up the contents of this saucer, as I hate to waste good coffee. After you have accomplished both feats, you will return to the kitchen to fetch me another cup of coffee and we will begin again. I trust you will be more careful if given a second chance?" Though she couldn't see the dark look he directed at her, he knew that his words had affected her by the way her fingers tightened into claws around her elbows, which were once again placed behind her back.

"Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir," she whispered. Getting to her feet, somewhat unsteadily, she kept her eyes downcast as she approached his desk. It was a pity,

as he would have quite liked to have seen the expression of apprehension, or perhaps even fear that might have lingered there.

“Well, get on with it,” and he pushed back the castors of his chair to allow her to pass in front of him. His impatient tone was not lost on her. Practically flinging her body over his desk, he watched

her shaking hands as they reached down to grip the hem of her skirt. As they slowly rolled the fabric upwards, he realised that the pace of her fingers was not purposefully tantalising because she fumbled more than once at her task.

“Are you nervous?” Her hands faltered yet again, but quickly resumed the act of displaying the beginnings of a very pert set of buttocks.

“Yes,” her voice was throaty. She appeared to take control of herself and began rolling the material back with renewed purpose.

“Your tanned flesh is beautiful. I’m going to enjoy taking that backside later. When was the last time you indulged in anal sex, Marianna?” He was being mean and he knew it, but watching her squirm uncomfortably on the desk, he wanted to know if he aroused her.

“When I was under the instruction of James Entwell, Sir, about two years ago.”

Good Lord, had she been in his office that long? He wondered who had had the pleasure of using her. Without realising it, he found he’d asked the question out loud, because the next thing he knew she was answering it.

“No-one Sir, since my induction about eighteen months ago.”

“You mean to tell me that you have had no penetrative sex in eighteen months?” Mark’s voice was somewhat incredulous and he shook his head in amazement. Surely that little snippet of information couldn’t be true. Distracted for a moment, he watched as the uppermost curve of her ass was gradually revealed and already his cock was pulsing behind his trousers. He suspected that Marianna’s body would have to be fucked several times and in many different ways for it to be sated. If she’d really gone eighteen months without sex, he’d have to go gentle, dammit.

“Does a vibrator count, Sir?”

Mark slammed his head against the backrest of his chair. She was serious. He knew full well that she'd had no partners, because he paid for the security which guarded the apartment block which housed all of his submissives and they were not allowed callers of any kind except for family members. When they were out and about, they were watched and any fraternisation of a sexual nature would guarantee instant dismissal. The idea was to keep them hot and horny at all times, but the thought that not one of the dignitaries, clients or visitors that were allowed the use of his staff had picked her, made him somewhat perplexed. She was a beautiful woman, so why had no-one required her services before now?

“No, it does not.” He closed his eyes and rubbed them with the tips of his fingertips. Fine, he'd go gentle, but she was still getting a taste of his belt. He'd been looking forward to that part.

The skirt moved higher and higher. The further the skirt peeled back, the harder it became to breathe. He noticed the disobedient woman was wearing panties, which she'd pay for later, and the only thing it did was fan the flames.

“Were you aware that I require my submissives to forgo their underwear at all times when in the confines of my office?” He generally let them get away with wearing a bra, especially if they had a generous-sized cleavage, but there were zero exceptions to the ‘no panties’ rule.

“Yes.”

At least she was honest. Now that her fingertips had stopped moving, he admired the whole expanse of her tanned backside and noted that she either sunbathed ‘au natural’ or used one of the tanning tubes in the beauty salon that all his ‘ladies’ had an account with.

He stood up and bent his large frame over hers. “Place your hands beside your head.” His long arms, still encased in his suit jacket, helped guide them into place. “And what made you think you could flaunt my rules?” He bent down to whisper the sentence in her ear and noted that her body trembled. For the second time, he wondered if she would be wet for him. He would soon find out.

Marianna made an audible gulp before she answered his question. He noted, with some amusement, the two bright spots of colour that had just bloomed upon her cheeks. It took a moment for her to reply. “After a year of not being called

upon, I figured no-one would mind too much if I wore panties.”

It was a reasonable answer, but it didn't excuse her behaviour in the least. “Do I, or do I not pay an awful lot of money to have you at my beck and call, Marianna?”

“Yes, Sir, you do.” Marianna's bank account had a ridiculous sum in it to testify to the fact.

“I have very few rules in this office. I wonder if a disobedient little slut such as yourself, would be able to remember them all?”

She remained silent, but then, he hadn't expected anything else. Placing a palm underneath her body, just below her left breast, he smiled when he felt for her heartbeat. It was easy enough to detect, the thing was trying to make a break for it. “Calm down, Marianna. I'm not an ogre.” His fingers caressed each little bump of her rib cage and he smiled when her heart appeared to pound harder. So, at least she found him attractive. “What were those rules again, my dear?” His voice was that of a master seducer's and dripped with hunger.

“Sir. All submissives are required to be clean shaven, wear no panties and not indulge in any sexual activities unless prior permission from yourself or staff has been given, Sir.”

“Where did you obtain permission for the use of your vibrator?” Mark was curious. He'd never spoken to the girl on any matter remotely sexual. She would be aware that if she was caught in her rooms bringing herself to orgasm she would be liable for instant dismissal, as per her contract. All of the rooms in each submissives apartment had cameras and although they were not monitored 24/7, it was usually a good enough deterrent for them to behave.

“I asked your secretary, Sir.”

“You asked Cecilia?” This time, his jaw dropped open. Cecilia was his private secretary. She was approaching her sixtieth birthday and had been with him right from the start, over fifteen years ago when he had first dipped his toes into the world of commerce. Whilst she knew about his sexually

deviant nature, she chose to distance herself to that side of his dealings and few of his submissives would dare to approach her with anything more than a

perfunctory request. Her stern glance and vicious-looking shoulder pads usually kept the girls at arms-length.

“Yes.” “What did she say?”

Marie paused for a second. “She took pity on me because I was a brunette. She did say not to bother her with ‘these type of requests’ too often, though.”

Mark laughed. “I’ll bet she did.” That woman would have some great tales to tell when she retired, had she not signed an NDA, of course. His curiosity had been piqued yet again, though. “How many times did you ask her?”

“Just the once, I couldn’t summon enough courage to ask her again.”

“You mean to tell me, that in the past 18 months, you’ve had precisely one orgasm?” Mark could not believe what he was hearing. She simply nodded in response. “Have you missed sex, Marianna?”

“Oh, yes, Sir.” There was no doubt that her answer was in the affirmative bracket.

“Well, on the plus side, I guess you’ve got a lot of joyful catching up to do.” Spanning a hand across her cheek, ensuring that her head would stay on the table, he entwined a lock of her beautiful chestnut hair on his index finger and then tugged at it sharply. Her eyes became luminous with need. “Do you like pain, Marianna? Would it arouse you to suffer a little, under my hand?”

“Yes Sir. I would like that.” It was a standard response; whether it was true or not remained to be seen. The girl had been expertly voice trained; her breathy little whisper gave nothing away. He’d see how good she really was, when they tested the theory in a few minutes. If she could school her features under the cruel bite of his belt she’d be a bloody good actress.

“Have you broken any more of my rules, by any chance?” He pressed his lips to the pulse point on her neck and lathed at the area with his tongue. Thud, thud, thud went the traitorous beat.

“No, Sir.”

“Let’s check, shall we?” He stood up and let his right hand trace a leisurely path down the side of her body until he reached her ass. He then let two of his fingers

walk down the valley of her backside until the soft peaks denied him further access. He scooped his fingers under the thin, white lace of her panties and pulled roughly. The flimsy elastic didn't stand a chance. Ripping the offensive material away from her body and discarding the remains on the floor, he cupped her sex. When his fingers brushed the smooth expanse of her soft, shaven pussy, she jumped up like she'd been shot. She was wet alright. Letting his fingers arch into the fluid heat of her body, his efforts were rewarded when he felt a trickle of liquid slide down his finger. She was aroused, ripe and oh-so ready for him. He curved both his middle and index finger into a crook shape and began to torment her clit. Marianna was certainly due an orgasm, but seeing as how she hadn't had one in months, a few more minutes here and there probably wouldn't hurt. He stopped fingering her and laughed at the little petulant moan she gave him.

“Kneel before me.” Her body slithered down the table and she was on her hands and knees quickly. He expected the woman thought she was down there for a blow job. She was in for a shock. “Remove my belt, Marianna, using nothing more than your teeth and then beg to feel its vengeance.” Yes, there was the delightful gaze of disbelief in her eyes. He had been right.

A few minutes later, when her teeth were still working to free the tight leather, he wished he had asked to have been blown. Having her hot breath torment the sensitive skin of his cock was a torture all of its own. If he ended up staining his suit, it would serve him right.

When she finally freed his belt, it was not a moment too soon. The image of her grasping the leather between her teeth, with its tails poking out of each side of her mouth would stay with him for some time to come.

“Back over the table, Marianna, and start begging.”

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The Velvet Chair

My name is Mark Matthews. I own half of London, and the part I don't own, I'm working on.

Life was all going swimmingly well until Michael Redcliff entered my life, demanding that I marry his daughter. Actually, swap demand for blackmail. He's got goods on me that I want no one else to see, so for the time being I need to be his little lapdog.

I'll marry his daughter. I'll give him all the status, money and power he can handle... for as long as it takes me to get a divorce. You see, I can't renege on our little arrangement – but she can. I give her a week. One week and she'll be screaming the place down for her legal counsel.

I am never wrong.

Chapter One - Mark

It felt like a death sentence around my neck. Marriage. The mere idea was a suffocating blanket of dread that was slowly beginning to strangle me. Each step I took towards my impending nuptials had me itching to run away in the opposite direction, as far and as fast as my legs could carry me - but that wasn't going to be possible. I would be marrying Jennifer Courtney Redcliff in exactly one week's time and there wasn't a thing I could do about it. As my body was once again consumed by feelings of utter helplessness and fury, I had to resist the urge to punch something.

I could not believe how easily I had been duped. I still had no idea what Michael Redcliff's end game was, but I had now made it my mission in life to find out. Whilst it was clear he wanted me to suffer in every way imaginable, judging by what he had done to me in the abandoned Greyson building, I was still no closer to discovering what it was he actually wanted. Quite a few theories had been flying around my head but I had nothing concrete. He could be after money, property, status, power, or something else entirely. The not knowing frustrated me. Even though I had Khalil, my head of Intel, working on the problem twenty-four seven, he'd not managed to unearth anything of consequence yet. He had advised me to make the entire staff of my office redundant, and to my chagrin I had found myself doing exactly that. After one key employee's colossal betrayal, I was prepared to take no more risks with my general wellbeing. Though I bore no scars from Redcliff's and Katrina's hands, I had frequently begun to look over my shoulder wherever I found myself alone, and I didn't much like the feeling.

The first thing I wanted to do was get my hands on Miss Morreau. How in hell she'd managed to slip through the net and enter my employment, only to betray me less than two years later, was something I clearly needed to look into. Of course I knew Redcliff was behind the mess, but I wanted to find out just how much she knew. If Khalil managed to unearth the dark hole she'd managed to hide herself in, I would show her exactly the same courtesy she'd shown me. She'd be drugged, kidnapped, and strung up, before being hung out to dry. I would find out everything I needed to know and my methods of torture were as good, if not better than Redcliff's. I might not be quite as extreme, but I took a certain satisfaction in a job well done. Miss Morreau had better pray I never managed to lay eyes on her again, or I was going to make her wish she'd never set foot on this earth. My thoughts maddeningly returned to Jennifer.

I wanted to make that woman bleed so badly. Already, I could picture myself wrapping my hands around her neck and squeezing until every last breath of life inside her evaporated. Lucky for her, they were just dark thoughts. I was not a murderer. Well, not yet at any rate. In a couple of weeks' time, after the traitorous, lying bitch had walked down the aisle with me, there was a possibility I might change my mind. Scrap that. Death wouldn't be nearly as painful as the torments I had in mind for my bride, and I fully intended that she would pay dearly for her crimes. If she wanted to play with me, then I was more than capable of taking her on, except this time I would fight dirty. If Miss Morreau was in for a hard time, Jennifer Redcliff would be made to think that an eternity in hell was a summer camp, when compared to a single week with me.

Currently, I was plotting the worst possible ordeals that I could heap upon my future wife, so that she would feel compelled to divorce me immediately. I was aiming to have her screaming for her legal counsel inside of a week, give or take a couple of days. I had considered the idea of getting the marriage annulled, but that wasn't going to be possible if I didn't want to lie in a court of law. Yes, believe it or not, I still had some morals, no matter how questionable they may be. You see I fully intend to fuck the living daylights out of my future wife. Even though I now knew her for a scheming, conniving wretch, I also knew that as soon as I saw her, my body was going to go into overdrive. She has an effect on me much like heroin, addictive and deadly in the wrong dose. As much as I cursed my weakness, I didn't think I'd manage to make it through a week of celibacy if she was under my roof, and there was no possibility of playing around because the risks were too high. So, if I wanted to expend some of my ample energy and sexual tension, there would be only one way to do so. I smiled. Miss Redcliff was about to reap her own sweet rewards. Except they wouldn't be very sugary, and when I was pissed I was a whole lot of creative. Oh, the things I had planned for that woman. Conjugal rights didn't even come into the equation. I was going to own that body and mind for a week, and when she left my abode she'd be lucky if she wasn't scarred for life. She might have expertly planned my downfall, but now it was my turn to plan hers. I was going to break that girl down piece by piece until her screams were deafening, and her tears formed a veritable ocean. I was going to be the ultimate bastard and I would show no mercy. *Lie to me once, shame on you, lie to me twice, shame on me.* I'd already decided that after our wedding day, she'd get no further opportunities to lie. She'd either learn to keep quiet or I'd have her jaw wired shut. The idea had merit. I'd add that to my arsenal of threats and torments to inflict upon her.

I was prepared to pull out all the stops to get rid of her as quickly as possible. I

was going to fuck with her head in the worst possible way and just when she thought she couldn't take any more, I was going to shovel a load of new cerebral bombs her way, until there wasn't much grey matter left. At this moment in time I honestly didn't care what state I left her in, all I cared about was my freedom. They might temporarily steal it from me, but there was no question I would be claiming it back. I was not going to be used as a pawn in Redcliff's happy-ever-after plan, whatever that might be. Realistically, and upon given the right incentives, I knew that Jennifer would be relatively easy to control. Getting even with the old man was going to prove a much harder task, I suspected, but damned if I didn't relish a good challenge. Grinding his face into the dirt was going to give me an extraordinary amount of pleasure and I was prepared to spend a lot of money, and I meant *a lot*, to ensure the job was done properly.

Fuck Redcliff, fuck Marianna, and Jennifer, well; she had better fucking brace herself, too. I was rip-roaring mad and my temper, which was normally tightly leashed and carefully controlled, was nearing DEFCON 1. Tension rippled through my body, bile bubbled up my throat, and blood solidified in my veins. I would have my pound of flesh, so help me god. Everyone who had wronged me was going to feel the wrath of my vengeance, and just like Icarus, they were going to burn. I might not be able to control the path of my destiny right now, but I would damn well be shaping my future. A week gave me plenty of time to plot and scheme, and I was extremely good at both. The inactivity was going to kill me, though. Seven days was a long time when you were trapped with nothing but ugly, dark thoughts inside your head.

Steeling myself to concentrate on the task at hand, I continued to flick through several glossy magazines, which all promised to have me in exquisite sartorial splendour for my wedding day. I couldn't help but grimace. Throwing one across the room, I swore. I didn't care who made the damn suit, but I knew it would be black. This whole charade was beginning to make me feel as if I was about to attend my own funeral – so I might as well dress the part.

One Week Later

Anxiety clawed at me, like a beast with no conscience that was intent on swallowing me whole. Giving up all pretence of sleeping, I left the stifling confines of my bed and padded through to the kitchen. I'd been tossing and turning for a good two hours now, and it seemed pre-wedding jitters were getting the better of me. I rolled my eyes at the irony. I didn't give a flying fuck what Redcliff thought of me, and Jennifer Redcliff was going to get hers soon enough, but there were so many other tiny little details that I couldn't get out of my head.

What if I couldn't bear to look at her as she walked up the aisle, especially with all those cameras flashing and the video footage rolling? What if I couldn't get the lies of my vows past my lips, or worse, stumbled upon them? Damn it, what if I couldn't bring myself to go through with this farce? I hated to think how many people Redcliff had invited. Some would be close friends and associates of mine and I felt physically sick at the thought of creating an intricate dance of lies for them. Whilst I knew I had no choice in the matter, it wasn't going to make the deceit any easier to swallow. I would have to make a speech, for fuck's sake. How was I supposed to wax lyrical about the love of my life, knowing full well I was marrying the daughter of the enemy? Tomorrow might well be the greatest performance of my life, if I managed to pull it off. What was wrong with me? My usually unwavering confidence appeared to have deserted me this evening and I'd gone from being an untouchable God to a mere mortal. The armour I normally surrounded myself with had taken a good-sized dent.

As I turned on my poor, recently much overused coffee machine, I sighed. Worrying about things I couldn't change would achieve nothing. I would get through this because I had managed to get through much worse. *What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.* Grunting, I searched around my kitchen cabinet and plucked out a shiny, glass tumbler. Filling it with water I necked the lot and then refilled it once again. There was a way out of this mess. Khalil would help me find one. Yesterday, he'd informed me of a possible sighting of Miss Morreau. She'd disappeared before my team could pinpoint her exact whereabouts, but now they had a rough idea of her location, they could begin closing the net. I needed answers and I needed them yesterday.

Flicking on the television, even though I knew I wouldn't listen to a word that was said, I poured myself a coffee and then settled lengthways into my leather couch, with my hands behind my head. The noise was comforting. It calmed the clambering thoughts in my head. Oddly enough, tonight I seemed to need noise in order to receive peace.

Chapter Two – Jennifer

My hands were visibly shaking. Flexing my fingers repeatedly, I tried to still the tremors, but they were not to be subdued. It was hardly surprising. Today was the day I walked up the aisle and married... a monster. I was under no illusions that Mark Matthews would forgive me for what had happened, and I could hardly blame him. He'd been manipulated and sexually tortured until he could take no more, and then he'd been neatly cornered. He might have agreed to my father's demands, but he'd come snapping and biting, feral as a wolf.

I sighed. Today was supposed to be a magical day – every little girl's fantasy. A gigantic cathedral, a sea of flowers, a big fancy dress, and the man of my dreams. I'd imagined it would be filled with tears of happiness and protestations of love. How stupid was I?

Inhaling a shaky breath, I wondered what Mark would do with me. Having always been the sacrificial lamb in this family, today I was being sent off to the slaughterhouse. When I'd mentioned this to Michael, I'd refused to call him 'Dad' a long time ago, he'd laughed and told me to stop being so melodramatic. As if that made me feel any better. Dear old Dad couldn't care less whether I lived or died, so I didn't waste my breath trying to plead with him. All I had to do was play my part in this charade and he would be happy. I *needed* to keep Michael happy at all costs. The trouble was, in order to play my part, Matthews had to trust me, and I had a feeling that trying to coax that emotion out of him was going to be almost as impossible as trying to convince the Queen of England to relinquish her throne. Matthews wasn't the sort to trust easily, and now that I had lost what little ground I had gained with him, I would be back to square one. Wrong, I thought grimly. I was going to be at least twenty stories below square one, trying to claw my way out with nothing more than my bare fingernails. Facing up to facts, I stifled a sob. The man was going to annihilate me.

Clutching my two hands together to stop them from shaking, I tried to look on the bright side. Mark Matthews would have to be a better flat mate than my father. *Oh you think so, now that you've crossed him and hung him out to dry?* The little voice inside my head burst into a fit of hysterics. I swallowed tightly and stifled another sob. Do not cry. Part of the agreement between my father and I, required that I walk down the aisle looking every inch the glowing bride, and that I perform the act of love-sick fiancée to the best of my abilities. It wouldn't be a great look if my eyes were of the Rocky Horror Show panda variety, complete with tears dribbling down my face. *You can do this*, I whispered to

myself. Compared with what I'd had to put up with in the past, this would probably be a piece of cake. One could only hope that were true, but my gut feeling said otherwise. There would be repercussions to my actions, however small my part was, and I was positive I wouldn't like them. Three troubling questions plagued me. What was he going to do to me? How long would it take him to tire of tormenting me? Could we ever manage to live together amiably? They were important questions. Divorce was not going to be an option available to me and no stunt that Mark pulled would be worse than the consequences that Michael had already threatened, should I fail to carry out my end of the bargain.

Staring at the monstrosity of ivory lace and tulle that had been carefully hung within my wardrobe, I felt almost blinded. The dress was patiently awaiting its victim with quiet determination. The sight of it made me shudder. As soon as my dress fitting had been completed, I'd had it packaged up in black plastic and hidden in the garage. There it had remained these last three months. That was the minimum time in which a society wedding could be planned, so I'd been told. It had been three months of hideous torture. Michael was far too busy to concern himself with the details, so he'd hired a very efficient planner, who'd taken it upon herself to bully me into doing whatever she wanted as each choice unfolded. We'd talked to ministers, paraded ourselves around cathedrals, and picked hymns. We'd scoured the ends of the earth for photographers, videographers, florists, caterers and cake decorators. We'd stared at countless albums of wedding invitations and spent hours debating each single word and colour upon them. We'd had ten sample meals at ten different wedding reception venues, and I'd nearly choked upon a different canapé at each. They'd all had fancy names such as, 'Asparagus Barquette,' or 'Watercress Oyster tempura' and they'd all tasted like sawdust on my tongue. Thankfully, trying various different vintages of champagne just about managed to keep me sane. Until now, I'd had no idea how much effort went into planning a wedding. I couldn't understand why anyone would want to do such a thing willingly. The work was endless. One moment I was picking silks and patterns for bridesmaid dresses, and in the next I'd be co-ordinating them with flowers and favours. My life was a whirlwind of shoes, hair and makeup artists, speeches, readings, menu cards, rings, and gift lists. Each item required a tick beside the box on June's clipboard or we were not allowed to sleep. You think I'm kidding? The woman would have made an excellent mistress at Albrecht. She had more tenacity than a bulldog who'd just lost his favourite bone. At the end of the three months, as soon as I heard her Manolo Blahnik heels smacking into the floor I had heart palpitations. Needless to say we were barely speaking to each other. I daresay she couldn't figure out either my lethargy or obvious depression, and there was

no way I was going to enlighten her. I might have to perform for Matthews and a crowd of vultures on my wedding day, but I was under no pressure to continue the façade with her. June could take me as she found me, *if* she found me.

This morning I'd locked my bedroom door, having no wish to endure her endless chatter and wedding pep talk. I was already a whisper's breadth away from tears, and I knew without a doubt that June would have me sailing into the black abyss of endless despair. You'd had thought it was her getting married, not me, and I heartily wished it was. She could have him. A small part of me desperately needed to clap eyes on Mark again, though. To drink in the perfection of his tanned, toned body, bask under the gleam of his perfect smile, and feel his hand fisting sharply in my hair. I had it bad for that man. I was entering into the most god-awful, fucked-up marriage of the century, and yet somehow, I was already in love with my tormentor. I was the kind of crazy that required padded walls and lots of drugs. Speaking of drugs, I reached for the little bottle of Ativan that had been my only coping mechanism for these last few months and I popped a couple of pills. I suspected it would take the whole damn bottle to get me through today's proceedings, and I wasn't entirely averse to going down that route if I had to. I was going to need at least a couple before I let June in, and she was beginning to get edgy as she paced outside my room. I could tell by the odd scuffle of her heels. Her pacing was getting too fast for the heels to handle. Too bad. If she smacked into the floor headfirst and had to be rushed to hospital, my day would probably improve tenfold. My brain just needed silence. I wanted to analyse every little detail of what I knew about Matthews, and form some sort of attack plan. I'd had months to get this under wraps, but my head was all over the place and I was no nearer to a solution than I was at the beginning. I had a funny feeling that Matthews would give me silence, a whole lot of peace and eerie quiet, and that I would probably rue my earlier thoughts. *Be careful what you wish for.*

"Do you need a hand in there, Jennifer? You've been in your bedroom for two hours, now. It's okay to have nerves on your wedding day, you know. Let me in and we can have a chat."

A hand? Now that was hilarious. No I did not need a hand, or even two. What I needed was a one-way ticket to a remote desert island and a team of marines, and even that wouldn't save me now. It was payback time, and I was about to be served up as the main course in a gigantic dish of revenge. I didn't want to think about it. I couldn't *stop* thinking about it. What was he going to do to me? Would I be able to endure this new round of cat and mouse? How was I going to keep it together? I was so close to cracking. When I did, not if, broken glass would have nothing on me. When Mark and Michael finally finished with me, there would

be nothing left to put back together.

A series of frantic raps sounded on my door, followed by lots of clucking noises and I banged my head against the wall, praying that I had the strength to get through this.

“I’m fine. Just soaking in the bath. It’s not everyday a girl gets married, you know.” My voice sounded bizarrely cheerful as I reeled off the lie. Perhaps my acting skills were better than I thought.

“Okay sweetie, but don’t take too long in there. You’ve got two hours until the Bentley arrives, and the photographer wants a formal family session in the drawing room prior to that. Are you sure you don’t need my help?” June’s voice had a whiney note to it.

Positive. “I’ll be fine. I promise I’ll be downstairs in half an hour. Just give me a few more minutes.”

She huffed, but I heard her heels receding back into the distance. Thank god. Leaning against the wall, I slowly slid down it until I reached the floor. My heart was beating double time and nausea consumed me. There was no escape from my fate. Caught in the line of fire, all I could do was take a bullet and crawl forward, one day at a time. I would survive this. I was strong, reasonably smart, and very resourceful. This was just another obstacle that needed to be overcome in order to attain my freedom.

My gaze wandered to the La Perla lingerie that hung on a velvet-lined hanger on the front of my armoire. I was about to attire myself in over one thousand pounds of sensual, sheer, cream lace and silk. Beautiful macramé cut outs would reveal more of my body than they would conceal and a large rhodium-plated metal buckle would accentuate my now tiny waist. Hysterical laughter began bubbling from my lips. I guess I had something that I could thank Mark Matthews and my father for. Between them they’d successfully wound my stomach in knots so tight, that I had barely been able to eat since I’d left Albrecht. I now had the figure I’d always dreamed of, whilst stuck in a nightmare that was worse than any hell I could have imagined.

The Velvet Chair is available on [Amazon](#), B&N, iTunes, Kobo and Smashwords.