



INSTITUTIONAL SEX

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“You’re very responsive,” he said finally, unmoving.

Kelly, too, felt frozen in place. “I know.”

“But you’ve never had more than one orgasm at a time.”

She shook her head. “I come quickly and easily, and I’m done.”

His jaw flexed. “We’ll see. I don’t think we’ll have the leisurely build-up I’d anticipated, however. How about we move ahead to bondage?”

A shudder passed through her, but a shudder of excitement rather than fear. “All right with me.”

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Elemental Passion

Kira's Best Friend

The Passion Of Tanner Black

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The TreeKeeper

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For Jim, for obvious reasons

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“I didn’t say I’ve never had an orgasm. I said most women can’t have more than one.”

Though her voice echoed a bit in the cavernous, oh-so-modern lobby, Kelly Fitzpatrick didn’t flinch as her boss, Jordan Whetstone, head of the Whetstone Institute for the Advancement of Sexual Research, grinned at her statement.

“Sounds like a challenge to me,” he said.

“Hardly.” Her heart skipped at the thought of him accepting the challenge, and she hoped it didn’t show. She folded her arms and leaned back in her office chair, aware that her posture, complete with crossed legs, made her look repressed and afraid. She couldn’t help herself. “I’m just trying to make the point that all women are different.”

“That’s not a point you have to make to me.” Jordan leaned against the half wall separating the institute’s waiting area from the reception desk where Kelly sat. It was a Friday afternoon and no one else was

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around. Most of the researchers left early on Fridays, but Kelly was obligated to work the full day to answer the phones. This week even the reporters seemed to have something else to do.

"I know, I know." She sighed, unfolding herself and turning back to her desk. "In-depth study, large subject pool, yada yada. I know the company line, Jordan. I repeat it a hundred times a day."

He pushed himself away from the wall and moved closer. "Company line, yes. But there's a reason we keep that line vague. Maybe it's time you took a full tour of the facility."

Kelly's friends couldn't believe she hadn't been into the interior of the institute in the four months she'd been working here. She knew every employee and had met most of the subjects on their way through. But access to the testing rooms was regulated, and there had never been a reason to go inside, what with the state-of-the-art communication system she was in charge of. There was also a certain *ick* factor. She didn't know how they got so many people to participate in their studies.

Any one of her friends would have been charging ahead, eager for the tour. But Kelly shook her head. She wasn't ready for that. Not now, alone with her boss. The man on whom she'd developed a top-level crush, an amusing fact considering how long they'd known each other.

His face fell. "You don't want to see my work?"

"Oh, please." She laughed. "You're like a little boy. Don't take it personally, Jordan. And don't get angry with me," she added, suddenly realizing that banter was one thing, but showing disrespect for the organization that had hired her could make him revoke her job, no matter what their history. "I love my job and I'm interested in the work. I just don't...need to see it, that's all."

"No one's here. It's not like you'd be watching anything."

She squirmed under his blue-eyed gaze. None of the techs talked about the experiments they did, but some of the subjects chatted in the waiting area. She always reminded them that was a no-no, but she did

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hear bits and pieces. Enough to—well, make her squirm.

“All right. But the phones.”

“Are quiet. I promise I won’t tell your boss if a call goes to voice mail.” He straightened and held out a hand. She took it and stood, slightly surprised at how natural it felt to touch him so casually.

They paused at the door into the inner institute and Kelly watched him as he keyed in his code. The diffuse daylight that came in the high windows and reflected off the shiny white walls and floor almost seemed to make him glow. He’d toured a group of contributors this morning so he’d worn a custom-fit dark suit that had contrasted sharply with his blond hair. He’d discarded the jacket in his front office and the crisp white shirt now showed off his slightly tanned skin. Either way, he looked delicious.

Kelly sighed as they entered the well-lit hall. *Stop pining*, she told herself. Falling for your boss was so cliché, even if it wasn’t taboo anymore, and even if there were no rules against fraternization here at Whetstone. Still, she couldn’t help watching his ass as she followed him to the first door. *He must run every day, with an ass like that.*

“This is the conference room, where we meet with contributors, reporters, the board, and anyone else who visits.”

She peered into the room. Thick burgundy carpeting, solid wood table, and burgundy-upholstered chairs. It was very conservative and comfortable but not luxurious. Good balance for when they were trying to convince people to give them money.

“Erotic,” she said, twisting her mouth in a wry grin. Jordan laughed, but his eyes started to burn.

“You want to jump ahead to the good stuff?”

Hell, no. “No, I want to see it all.”

“Okay. Let’s go across the hall.”

He showed her a gigantic file room that he said held all the records of every study they’d ever done, as well as many proposed but never

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started.

“Looks well organized.” She noted a lone computer on a tall pedestal that also held a stack of scrap paper and a pencil. “I take it they’re all catalogued?”

“Yeah, but I don’t use the computer.” He dismissed it with a wave, but she detected his eagerness to show off.

“You know every file in this place?” There were easily hundreds on the shelves, color-coded and tagged and probably grouped according to study.

“I have a good memory for that kind of stuff.” His hands were in his pockets but he rocked slightly onto his toes, as if daring her to test him.

She bit. “Okay, find the file belonging to the first subject of the first test you did.”

“Ah, yes.” He immediately strode to the far end of the room. “There was no confidentiality on that one. Jason McMichael was a college student who crowed to everyone, including the local papers, about his involvement.” He pulled a manila folder and brought it to her. Sure enough, the label read “Jason McMichael, #0001, Study AxT” and a date four years before.

“It was a sperm count study,” Jordan explained as she flipped open the file. “We wanted to get some baseline information and test some of our new equipment. Jason and the other subjects provided samples after being exposed to temperature extremes, after masturbating three times in an hour, and so on. We got some great data on declining counts and some ancillary stuff, as well, on masturbation. Like how long it takes, on average, to orgasm on subsequent attempts.”

Kelly handed back the file. “So they actually had people watching them do it? That’s, like, a person’s most vulnerable moment.”

“Some people don’t care. For others, it’s a big turn-on.”

She couldn’t imagine that. “It’s too intimate. It should be saved for one-on-one sex.” Something started to churn inside her. Not a bad

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churning, like illness, but a subtle speeding up of something. Like anticipation. She had grown used to hearing discussions like this, but had never participated in one. And never with Jordan.

"Some people get more turned on when they know others are watching. We've done studies on that, too." He replaced the file and returned to her side.

"How can you do that if they know people are always watching?"

"Variable conditions. Some were watched, some weren't, and we told them it could be either at any time. They signed releases, of course, and then we told some they weren't being watched when they really were."

She was finding this much more interesting—and stimulating—than she'd expected. "Okay. That was too easy. Let's try again." Jordan grinned. She closed her eyes. "Find a file for...the sixth subject in whatever study you were doing on...April twenty-third two years ago."

"Hmm. You're getting tricky." He squinted, then spun and looked up toward the top of a shelf behind them. "Might need the stool." He stretched his arm up and snagged a purple folder with his fingertips. Kelly swallowed at the sight of his flat, hard stomach even hidden by his now-rumpled shirt. She wished the shirt was shorter and had pulled out of his pants. Then she caught herself and gave a mental slap. *You can not go there, Kelly!*

Looking very pleased with himself, Jordan handed over the folder. She glanced at the tab. "XXX, Subject #06, Study PrS, March 01 to April 23."

"Anonymous subjects for a study on bondage. Very interesting results."

Kelly had never tried bondage. The churning became more like a rolling boil. She handed that file back quickly.

"Impressive," she admitted. "And I had no idea how much you've done here."

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“It all feeds into everything else,” he explained, opening the exit door and holding out an arm for her to go ahead of him. “Any new study we do can use information from previous studies to enhance the data and come to new conclusions, or generate new questions. It makes us better able to serve our clients, and that in turn gives us more flexibility for future studies.”

Before coming to work for Whetstone, Kelly never would have believed there was so much market for the data they gathered. Every kind of company from condom manufacturers to adult bookstores purchased reports and used them to create or sell their products. Journalists were their second largest clients, and some major publications paid them an annual fee for different levels of access. Much of it was Internet based, but one of Kelly’s responsibilities was mailing reports, and she spent hours every week on that alone.

“Okay, what’s next?”

“Testing.”

She almost expected him to leer when he said it. Even though she’d known Jordan’s family for years, her mother had been horrified when she learned she was interviewing for the institute. “Do you know what they do there? Sick minds feeding sick fantasies.” Kelly had told her not to be ridiculous, but she hadn’t backed down. “You mark my words, Kelly Ann, they’re deviants who can think of nothing but sex.”

Kelly had argued, of course. She couldn’t help it. Jordan’s mother was one of her mother’s oldest friends. They’d grown up going to backyard barbeques and high school football games together. Jordan was five years older, and they’d never been close—more like comfortable, in a cousinly way—but she thought her mother would be delighted they’d be working together.

Turned out, Kelly hadn’t been listening very well. Her mother had apparently made reference to her friend’s heartbreak on more than one occasion. Jordan’s parents weren’t very happy about his chosen field of

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research. They'd wanted him to work on cancer cures, not sperm counts.

Even if she hadn't known him before, she'd seen enough in four months to know he was far from deviant. He was professional, intelligent, and always completely appropriate outside the institute. Even so, she had a hard time believing any man could have anything to do with sex like this without leering.

But he wasn't. He had the same excited, proud expression her younger brother wore when his college baseball team beat a team from a larger school.

The first room he showed her was equipped like a bedroom. Soft lights and music completed the setup. There were three like that. Then three more clinical settings, with padded slabs of metal, and three rooms with varied décor. Jordan mentioned the two-person staff in charge of changing the rooms to fit the parameters of each study, and showed her the room where they sterilized and stored the sex toys.

They had fifty different ways to restrain subjects, and hundreds of ways to measure responses. Moisture sensors, pulse and respiration monitors, cameras, sound systems, surveys, and interviews. Kelly was intrigued and, if forced to admit it, excited. At the end, she still told Jordan she thought his system was flawed.

"How can you say that? You saw how completely equipped we are." They entered the break room at the far end of the building, and he offered her coffee. She nodded, noting that though this break room was bigger than the one out front, it was equipped exactly the same.

"Equipment isn't everything." She watched him make her a cup of decaf exactly the way she liked it and wondered if that signified anything. She knew how he took his coffee because she watched him all the time. His hands were graceful yet strong-looking. Kelly hadn't really figured out why she got a flutter in the pit of her stomach when she looked at them but not at any other man's hands.

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Jordan handed her a mug and led her down the hall. She took deep breaths, trying to stifle the desire to leap on his back. Maybe the tour hadn't been such a good idea. They went into an office and settled side by side onto an old, soft couch next to the desk.

"Seriously, now that you've seen it all, what do you think?"

Kelly looked around before answering. This room really surprised her. The Jordan she knew was suave and high-toned. This office was anything but. There was a toy basketball hoop stuck to one wall, with a basket of small rubber and foam balls beneath it. Plain plywood shelves on the far wall held an assortment of books with broken bindings and torn covers. A nicked and scratched table below it was covered with papers and a few crumpled napkins. The only new things in the room were the computer and phone on the desk. Even the desk chair had rips in the upholstery.

"I think this is Mark's office."

Jordan laughed. The fluttering in her abdomen sped up to vibration at the sound.

Mark was the guru of the inner sanctum. He oversaw most of the research, hired technicians, and never, ever met the public. He was the opposite of Jordan when it came to organization and precision, except when it came to data.

"My dirty secret," Jordan admitted.

"This *is* Mark's office?"

"No, I'm a slob."

They laughed and she sipped her coffee before answering his real question. "I found it very interesting, and appreciate the tour. I like knowing so much more about what we do, even if I don't need to."

"It's not that you don't need to." He stretched and started rolling his sleeves. "We just don't convey much to employees in high turnover positions, not at first. Discourages spying and blabbing. We have a reputation to maintain."

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“Even me?” She wasn’t just any old employee.

“I didn’t hire you because of our parents, Kelly.” He settled back. “I hired you because you were qualified for the job. I’ve tried to treat you like I would any other employee.”

“I see.” She eased off her shoes and tucked one leg under her, oddly conscious of the feel of her skirt and blouse sliding over her skin as she shifted. “And have I passed?”

“Depends.”

“On?”

“Your conclusions.” He half turned toward her and waited, his head propped on one hand, that elbow on the back of the sofa.

She shrugged. “You haven’t shown me anything that belies my original assertion.”

Jordan raised his eyebrows. “After everything I’ve shown you, you still say multiple orgasms aren’t always possible?”

“Yep.”

“You want me to show you how wrong you are?”

Kelly’s breath froze in her lungs. For a moment she thought he meant now, personally. But his expression was not one of seduction or even basic lust. It was professional and open, with no hint of the intensity he’d occasionally shown.

“No, thanks,” she finally said. “I don’t think I need to see other people having them. It’s enough to prove my point that I don’t.”

“Then your partner hasn’t been doing it right.”

She studied him. Was he fishing? Just in case, she said, “I don’t have a partner at the moment. But I’ve always had a very satisfactory sex life. Explosive, even. But only one at a time.”

“You *are* challenging me.”

“Nope.”

“Too bad.” He leaned toward her, the intensity back in his eyes. She was a sucker for that kind of passion. “I’m challenging you. To give me

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a chance to prove it. If there's anything of the old Kelly beneath that professional exterior, you can't resist."

He stopped speaking and waited. She cursed. She *wasn't* that different from the kid he'd known growing up. He'd often dared her to do foolish things just for the fun of watching her struggle to succeed. It was a definite personality flaw, one she'd tamed quite well over the years.

But he brought back her inner brat. "Fine." She smacked her coffee mug onto the table. "I'll accept your challenge. But we've got to make it interesting."

His face lit up. "A bet?"

"If I prove you wrong, I win. If you prove me wrong, you win. Winner picks the prize. I want time to think about it." She stood and shoved her feet into her shoes, needing to get out of there before he convinced her to do it *now*. "It's past quitting time. I have to get home. But thanks for the tour." She motioned for him to stay put. "I can find my way out. Want me to lock up?"

"I'll take care of it." He leaned his head back against the couch and yawned. "See you next week."

She wished he didn't sound so smug.

* * *

All weekend, all Kelly could think about was how to back out without looking stupid or revealing her feelings. Not long after she'd left the building Friday night, her hormones had subsided. Away from Jordan and his intoxicating scent, she could think more clearly. And she definitely did *not* want to go through with it.

Except...that smugness gave her pause. It was the look of a man who had supreme confidence in his abilities. She wondered more than once if he *could* give her multiple orgasms. Just the thought made interesting body parts spasm.

Then reality would hit again. She had never, in her entire life, come

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more than once in a night. She was very responsive when she was in the mood, and usually came even before her partner did. Almost immediately her body would signal that it was done, thanks, and wanted to go to sleep. Even when at the peak of her best orgasms, she'd think, "I want another one of those!", a moment later she'd know it wasn't going to happen.

Even more importantly, she had a crush on Jordan. It was fresh, one of those "Hey!" things that had hit her on her first day on the job. She hadn't seen him since she'd left for college, so his masculinity seemed sudden. The last time their families had gotten together, for her high school graduation, he'd been sexy but in that young, gangly way. Now he had shoulders and abs and a much more solid-looking jaw. After her brain recognized attraction, it started cataloging other things to like. Passion for his work. Tolerance for idiots, whether they could give the foundation money or cost it some. Jordan cared about his employees. He treated the study participants like real people, not numbers or lab rats. And despite his mother's opinion of his research, he had lunch with her once a week.

No, Kelly didn't want to go through with this challenge. She wanted something much more lasting and real with Jordan, and had a feeling this was the wrong way to get it. She'd tell him first thing at work on Monday.

But she'd forgotten Jordan was attending a conference in Daytona from Sunday night through Thursday. She went back and forth on her decision a dozen times while he was gone. She wanted to prove two or three orgasms a session wasn't automatic, no matter what the stimulation. But she didn't want to be that vulnerable to him. As she packaged reports to mail, she found herself skimming the results and fantasizing about the experiments that had generated them. About Jordan doing those things to her. When she found herself aroused for the third time in a day, she made herself stop reading and just stuff envelopes.

Friday morning she strode into the building determined to tell him

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no. But there was a sealed envelope on her desk with her name written on it in Jordan's handwriting. Unable to ignore her curiosity, she sat and opened it.

Kelly,

Unless you have a pressing conflict, we will commence our challenge this Saturday at 8:00 A.M. Dress comfortably in easily removable items—you'll be changing a lot. Some of the simulations we'll demonstrate may include:

Exhibitionism

Bondage

Oral stimulation

Electricity

Texture, temperature, and friction

This is not an exclusive list. Rest assured that you will have ultimate control and can stop any activity at any time. Your safe word is "telephone." If you utter that word, all activity will cease.

This will be completely confidential and undocumented. I will not be measuring objective details, but trust you to be honest about your response.

Let the challenge begin.

Jordan

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“You okay?”

Kelly jerked her head up at the intern standing in front of her desk. She could feel her skin flush and eyes burn. “Um, yes, thank you, I’m fine.”

“Bad news?” He motioned to the letter, which she quickly folded and shoved into her pocket. She’d burn it first chance she got.

“No, everything’s fine.” She gave him the file he needed and tried to focus on her job, but her mind kept straying to Saturday. She was trying to work up the courage to go to Jordan’s front office and cancel, when he came out and walked straight to her desk.

“Kelly, I have to go do a presentation at the university. I’ll need you to come with me to assist.”

What? That was in no way part of her job description. She looked at the pile of mail on her desk, at the blinking voice mail light, at the packed waiting room of subjects.

“I don’t think—”

“It’s not a suggestion, Kelly. I have an intern assigned to your desk while you’re gone.”

She gaped at him. He so rarely acted the boss, she wasn’t sure how to react to it. Especially in light of what he wanted to do tomorrow.

Then she looked in his eyes. They twinkled, but there was something else in there. Hope?

“Certainly, Jordan, I can help you.” She followed him to his office and picked up boxes of handouts while he carried the case holding his presentation equipment. He didn’t say anything while they loaded the items in his Lexus SUV and got in. Kelly tried not to look at him while her mind raced with questions.

Finally, after putting on his seatbelt and starting the truck, he turned to her, the twinkle gone and only worry slightly visible on his face.

“Sorry about the heavy-handedness in there,” he said. “I didn’t want

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to get into a discussion in front of everyone.”

“Do you really have a presentation?”

“Of course I do.” He started to back out, looking behind them with his right arm braced on the back of Kelly’s seat. She felt surrounded by him, by the fresh-air-and-mown-grass combination of his skin and soap. She didn’t hear part of what he said next.

“...help, too, with the handouts and stuff. That could have been anyone,” he admitted, turning to face forward and drive out of the parking lot. “But I wanted to spend some time with you before tomorrow.”

Now was when she should say she didn’t want to do it. But she hesitated, and he kept talking.

“I know we’ve been kind of friends for most of our lives, but things are different with the whole boss/employee dynamic. I thought hanging out together today might bring back some of that old comfort level.”

He sounded so concerned, she said, without filtering it, “I think we’ve already found that old comfort level.”

Jordan looked so delighted she didn’t have the heart to tell him she was backing out.

An hour later, she was glad she hadn’t. She stood in the back of the room after handing out the compiled abstracts to the packed assembly, and watched Jordan in his element. He was so excited about his topic, about the conclusions they’d reached and the implications of it, that she could feel the same rising excitement in the group. In herself.

Her excitement was a bit different than the audience’s, she hoped. It was physical and intellectual and, more than either, emotional. Her crush had morphed into something much more tangible. Something worth acting on.

Jordan had an agenda for taking her challenge. He wanted to prove his techniques, prove the ultimate goal was reachable for every woman. Maybe he wanted more than her admission of his abilities, she didn’t

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know. But now she had her own agenda, and it went way beyond proving to him that she wasn't multi-orgasmic. She'd let him have his fun. And then, somehow, she'd show him how much better sex was when the emotional component was factored in.

* * *

Saturday morning she put on the zippered sundress she'd decided to wear, with no underwear or bra. He'd said easily removable. And her agenda meant she had to test his susceptibility to her. He saw naked women and erotic stuff all day, every day. If he was immune to personal stimulation, she wasn't going to get very far. She'd know right away if any spark was real.

He was already there when she arrived, waiting for her in the lobby. She walked slowly toward him, swallowing a hum of appreciation in her throat. She'd never seen him in jeans, and these weren't just any jeans. These were favorite, overwashed, body-cupping jeans. He wore a white dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and she wanted to open it up and see what was under it. It was amazing how much of a man's body a suit hid. Even a custom-tailored one.

Jordan smiled when she finally reached him. "Ready?"

"You bet."

He led her inside and to the conference room, where a sheaf of stapled papers and a pen sat on the table.

"There's a questionnaire for you. It's the first thing we do with each subject, usually to identify their qualifications for certain studies. In this case, it will identify anything I should avoid or that you particularly enjoy. We'll destroy it when we're done today."

"I'll hold the lighter."

He laughed. "I'll be right back, then."

The questionnaire was extensive and took her fifteen minutes to complete. It asked about all the obvious things, like oral and anal sex, bondage and S&M, and positions. But it also asked subtler things, like

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perianal touch versus penetration, flat tongue versus pointed, being held down versus tied up. Several times, Kelly was forced to indicate that she had no idea how she'd respond to something. She did know what she wanted no part of, and quickly checked off "do not do" for all the S&M items and most of the anal ones. Just thinking about some of the other things, though, gave her a rush.

She realized something else about her motivations as she completed the form and initialed the bottom of the last page. This had started as a way to prove a point, and she still wanted to prove it. And she liked Jordan and hoped to jumpstart the exploration of a relationship between them. But now, she also understood that a big part of what had brought her here was the lure of the fantasy. The appeal of pleasure—and maybe even ecstasy—without having to do any of the work. With that realization came a greater understanding of the people who enrolled in Whetstone's studies.

Jordan returned so quickly after she flipped the pages back to the beginning that she wondered if he'd been watching her. The thrill that zinged her told her she probably would get turned on by the exhibitionism stuff. All of a sudden, she couldn't wait to get started.

"What's first?" She handed her questionnaire to Jordan and stood, adjusting the straps of her sundress. His gaze dropped to her chest, then bounced right back to her face. She suppressed a smile. He wasn't immune to her. Maybe this really could turn into a double lesson, eventually.

But first things first.

"Let's start with a little clinical stimulation." He held the door open for her to precede him into the hall and motioned toward one of the more utilitarian rooms. "To give you an understanding of the very basics of pleasure."

"I understand—"

"Kelly." He stopped her halfway to the table in the middle of the

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room. His expression was intense, his jaw tight. "Give me a chance here. Don't fight me before we've even begun." His grip on her upper arm became a caress, and his usual light smile returned. "It wouldn't be a fair bet if you didn't give me that chance."

Kelly's breath had locked in her chest, so she just nodded. He let go, and she breathed normally again. "I'll try to keep a more open mind."

He just grinned wider, and she wondered what double entendre he'd swallowed.

"Okay, then." He shifted abruptly into clinician mode. "You'll lie down here, naked, under the sheet." He rested his hand on the thin mattress that was covered tightly with one white sheet and draped with another. A small pillow lay at one end. Kelly watched as Jordan lifted three wires from a hook on the side of the bed. She could see a box with dials and flashing red numbers under it.

"Normally, one of our technicians would apply these. For obvious reasons, you'll do it yourself."

"Apply them?" She raised her eyebrows and took the leads he handed her. Two were shaped like clamps, with very loose springs. One was a tiny suction cup.

"These you'll place over your nipples."

Kelly nodded, hoping she looked as nonchalant as he sounded. She'd thought she'd become comfortable with sexual terminology, as freely as it flowed around her on the job. But she felt ridiculously uncomfortable, especially in light of Jordan's comfort.

Luckily, he didn't seem to notice. "This one," he said, holding up the suction cup, "you'll place over your clitoris. It's gentle suction. It won't hurt." He draped them back over the hook. "I won't watch you prep. Press this button on the side of the bed when you're ready."

"Where will you be?"

He motioned to the high observation window looking out from the

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control room, grinned one more time, and left.

Kelly didn't trust him. She yanked down the tiny zipper on the front of her dress, pulled it off, and tossed it on a hook on one wall. Hoping to get hidden before Jordan got up to the control room, she jumped onto the bed and slid under the cool sheet.

Then she took a deep breath and made herself relax. He said he wouldn't watch, and now that she was covered, it was easier to believe he meant what he said. She raised herself on one elbow and picked up the wires, studying them for a moment. Then she shrugged. Might as well get started.

Lying back again, she lifted the sheet enough to see her chest. With her free hand she opened one nipple clamp and carefully closed it over her left nipple, which was slightly erect from the chill of the room. It didn't hurt—she could barely feel it. So she did the same with the right side, then looked at the tiny suction cup again. She hadn't thought to ask if it needed moisture, but it looked like any other suction cup she'd ever used, if a bit less flat. They all held better when they were wet, so she licked a finger and circled it over the inside of the cup, then slid her hand down under the sheet, parted her legs a little, and pressed it gently where it was supposed to go. It immediately held with gentle pressure, and she relaxed. So far, so good.

Her left hand, at her side, rested naturally on the button Jordan had indicated. She pressed it, and his voice immediately echoed in the room. For an intercom, it sounded very clear, without the metallic echo she'd expected. It made her feel like Jordan was in the room with her.

"All set?" he asked. She nodded. "You can talk, I can hear you clearly."

"Yes, all set." She closed her eyes and waited.

"What we normally do in here is measure physiological response. We're not using the respiration and heart rate monitors today, and I turned off the unit that registers blood flow and skin moisture and

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temperature. So I'm just going to run through a few of the steps, okay? I'm going to talk as if there are technicians running the tests, just like in one of our studies. But no one else is here."

"Okay."

The intercom clicked off for a moment, then she could hear a low hum. The cold metal on her nipples suddenly felt warm. The intercom clicked back on.

"All right, let's start with low stim to the nipples."

It was like an electric shock, but less intense. The same stim they used at the chiropractor's office, she realized. It was quick and mild, barely enough time for her to register the sensation before it stopped.

"Okay, Kelly?"

"It was fine," she said, knowing he was making sure it wasn't uncomfortable.

"Level two."

The duration was the same, but the intensity higher, and her lips parted. Her nipples tightened under their clips, and suddenly felt much more sensitive. Anticipation filled her, and she held her breath.

"Response registered. Level three."

Same intensity as level two, but longer. Kelly let a moan free and wriggled under the sheet. Her breasts tingled, and so did the part of her under the suction cup.

"Let's try level four."

She gasped and arched as sensation shot through her nipples and straight to her crotch. Wow. She could let Jordan do this to her all day, and had a feeling he could bring her off twice just with this. He definitely knew his equipment.

"We'll stop with level four. Five minute respite, then we'll test section two."

Five minutes? Kelly couldn't handle five whole minutes of "respite." She felt like she'd just had half an hour of foreplay. She

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contemplated demanding Jordan come down here and finish her, but immediately squelched the urge. This was his game, and maybe he'd win it, but she wasn't going to quit so soon. The longer she held off her orgasm, the less likely he'd be able to give her a second one.

Strategy in place, she smiled and relaxed into the cushion, which she realized was a lot more comfortable than it looked, from a clinical standpoint.

"Ready for section two?"

"Ready."

"Level one."

This wasn't the same kind of stimulation. Instead of electricity being sent into her body, the suction cup seemed to draw on her. At first, she could think clearly enough to deduce that it somehow increased blood flow to the area. She could feel her tissues swelling and becoming more sensitive. The familiar burn had begun, and she tightened her muscles to stave it off.

"Level two."

This was altogether different. There was no start-and-stop with section two. Level one surged right into level two, and a moment later, into level three. There was no friction, no pressure, but the suction was like having a mouth on her. The burning returned, building, and then Jordan nearly shot her into space.

"Dual stimulation, ready...now."

The nipple clips zinged and the suction cup sucked, and her back bowed as lights exploded behind her eyelids and her fingertips tingled. But she didn't come. He'd immediately shut off everything.

Her body slowly ticked down, like a cooling off car. But she felt restless and agitated. After a few minutes she realized Jordan was watching her, and she tilted her head back to see the window behind her. He stood motionless, and though she could only see his top half, she could tell he had his hands in his pockets. He was too far away to

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see his eyes, though, and she wondered what he was thinking.

“That’s all in here. You can get dressed, and I’ll meet you in the hall.”

She waited a few more moments before moving. What did he have in store for her next? What torture, where he took her flying but never set her free? How long would he tease before letting her soar?

She couldn’t wait to find out.

Her dress went on a lot faster than it had earlier, at home, and she slipped into her sandals and hurried to the door, pulling it open. Jordan stood outside in a similar pose to the one he’d had in the observation booth, but he was leaning against the wall now, with his hands in his pockets and his gaze locked on her.

“You’re very responsive,” he said finally, unmoving.

Kelly, too, felt frozen in place. “I know.”

“But you’ve never had more than one orgasm at a time.”

She shook her head. “I come quickly and easily, and I’m done.”

His jaw flexed. “We’ll see. I don’t think we’ll have the leisurely build-up I’d anticipated, however. How about we move ahead to bondage?”

A shudder passed through her, but a shudder of excitement rather than fear. “All right with me.”

He showed her into another room, this one equipped with pulleys and straps and velvet ropes. She’d marked on her questionnaire that she wanted no pain, and there were no whips or collars or anything in sight.

She expected Jordan to give her instructions and leave, but he closed the door behind them and held out his arm, indicating the center of the room. “Stand there.” She obeyed, and he lifted her right arm, sliding her wrist into a soft loop of rope and tightening it. She tested the slack while he did the same to her left wrist. She had room to shift and maneuver, but couldn’t get free. Her excitement started to build again, and she felt slickness between her legs, unabated since she wore no

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underwear.

“Do you remember your safe word?” Jordan asked as he bent to fasten her ankles.

“Um, yes.” It had been far from her mind, and she had to think. “Telephone.”

He looked up, and her breath caught at the startling blue of his eyes compared to his dark hair. How much of this attraction had to do with changes in him? She knew he hadn’t been this good-looking the last time she saw him. But how much was because of her? Because she saw him differently now that they were both mature? And how much of her attraction was only because of her arousal? Would it disappear by tomorrow?

Lord, she hoped not.

Jordan dimmed the lights until she could barely see him. He became a shadow with a brilliant white shirt that almost glowed in the darkness. He started prowling, circling her.

“Comfortable?” His voice was low, seductive.

“Yes,” she nearly whispered.

“Ropes too tight?”

“No.”

Her head swiveled, following him as he crossed in front of her. He disappeared on her left and she turned back to her right, waiting for him to reappear.

“This will be different, Kelly. I’ll be touching you.”

“Okay.”

“And you will obey me.”

In any other moment, any other part of her life, she’d be yelling, “Hell, no!” But right now, in *this* moment, her body was screaming, “Yes, yes, yes!”

“Yes,” she said aloud.

“Starting now, you’ll be quiet.”

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She bit back her assent and tried to still her breathing. He kept circling, getting ever closer. She pressed her chest upward, where her breasts curved above the snug sweetheart-shaped bodice of her dress. The zipper slid open an inch, exposing her cleavage, but Jordan drifted farther away.

“You won’t move, unless I tell you to.”

She stilled, her hands wrapped around the ropes holding her arms high. She was so tense she felt she could rip the ropes out of the wall, though they were probably reinforced for just that reason. She willed her body to calm, her breathing to slow, and closed her eyes, sensing Jordan instead of watching him. She knew when he paused behind her, too far away for her even to feel his heat. He was doing something, she didn’t know what, but could hear rustling and small movements. Her body tensed again when she felt him invade her space. Now she felt heat, from her neck to her knees. Jordan eased up against her, his bare chest against the skin of her shoulders. His arms came around her sides, and she could see white. He’d unbuttoned his shirt, she realized, but still wore it.

Slowly, much, much more slowly than she wanted, he wrapped his left arm around her waist and his right across her upper chest, with his hand on her shoulder. “Do you want me to touch you?” he murmured in her ear. She wanted to turn her head, wanted desperately to feel his mouth on hers, but he kept his head against hers so she couldn’t turn.

“Yes,” she whispered.

“Like this?” He slid his hand from her shoulder down into her bodice, to rest lightly over her breast. She moaned, and he immediately removed it. “I said to be quiet.” She nodded. They stood like that, with his left arm holding her against him, for several seconds. She stayed silent. “Let’s try again.” He slid his hand down again, but the pressure was so light, he was almost not touching her. Her nipple seemed to grow, stretching for his palm. She knew if she moved he’d stop again,

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and God, she wanted him to squeeze, to pinch, to do *something*.

He didn't move his hand, but his mouth suddenly pressed to the side of her neck. It was hot, his tongue both rough and slick on her skin. Her whole body tingled. Now he rubbed her breast, slowly, up and down, then rotated his palm over her nipple, abrading it. He had calluses. Good ones. Pleasure radiated from the tip of her breast. She let her head drop back onto his shoulder, and for the first time became aware of his erection.

He must have held himself far enough away that it didn't touch her, until now. Now it rested in the cleft of her backside, and it was all she could do not to wriggle against it.

Jordan suddenly pinched her nipple between his fingers, surprising a gasp out of her, and she moaned, "Nooooo," when he pulled away as a result.

"I told you what would happen, Kelly." He started circling her again, only this time he stayed close. This time, he paused in front of her to lower her zipper to below her breasts, and to run the back of his hand against their swells. This time, when he came up behind her again, he grabbed her roughly, with both hands on her breasts. He ripped her dress open so the zipper split past her waist, and squeezed her breasts, rolled and pinched her nipples, and buried his face in her neck. She bit her lip, determined not to cry out, not to do anything to make him stop again.

If he'd asked her, right then, she'd have told him no one had ever brought her to this state of arousal before.

Jordan released her with his right hand, and she felt him fumbling with his pants. His left hand shifted her skirt. A moment later his erection was between her legs, pressing upward against her slick core. He slid backward and forward, creating delicious friction and rubbing her juices over both of them. His hand splayed against her belly, holding her in place.

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He angled his hips so his cock rubbed her harder. She wanted him to move faster, but he kept the same steady, languid pace. It didn't matter. She was too far gone, and a few strokes later, she came in a long, rolling orgasm that wrenched a sob from her.

Jordan held her, rubbing his cheek against her hair and pressing his lips to her cheek. "Ready for more?"

She wanted to deny it, as she hung limply in the ropes, all tension drained from her. But she still hummed, still burned, and could only nod.

Jordan stepped away and popped open a panel that exposed red glowing buttons. It was still too dark to see him well, but she could tell he pressed a few of those buttons. The ropes holding her arms suddenly slid backward on unseen tracks, and a padded board came up behind her, then lowered her to a semi-reclining position. Her skirt draped over her spread legs, and Jordan moved up between them, pushing the skirt up her thighs. The silky fabric dragged against her super-sensitive flesh, and she shivered.

He paused, then pulled the fabric down between her thighs again. It stroked her. She shuddered again, and saw his teeth flash as he smiled. He used the fabric, sliding it up and down between her legs, stimulating flesh that had yet to dry.

After a minute or two of that he stepped sideways, grabbed a cushion, and dropped it to the floor in front of her. When he sank to his knees, Kelly knew she was lost.

Far from assaulting her, however, he returned to seduction. First he trickled warm water over her folds. Where he got it, she had no idea. But it was lush and comforting, until he pressed an ice cube to her clit. Her body jerked and she swelled again. He alternated the hot water and the ice cube three times. She couldn't help crying out, and this time, thank God, he didn't reprimand her.

He took her by the hips and shifted her lower, closer to his mouth,

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then touched her with just the tip of his tongue. When she tried to lift closer, make him press harder, he held her hips still. Then he licked her, long, smooth strokes with the flat of his tongue. Three, four, five times, followed by the hard point again, up and down over her clit, then around it, then the flat, hot strokes.

“God, Jordan.” Amazingly, she felt the pleasure building again. Okay, he was going to win. She’d pay the bet, gladly, a hundred times over, no matter what he requested as his prize. She’d do anything to make him make her come. “Please, Jordan,” she begged.

Instantly he drove a finger inside her, pressing upward against her G-spot. She cried out, stifled it, and realized no one else was here. They had no neighbors, no windows open to the summer breezes. She could be as loud as she wanted. He wiggled his finger inside her, and she yelled. “I can feel it, Jordan, it’s...oh, God. No, don’t!”

He’d gone motionless, easing his finger out and his mouth away. The climbing ache subsided, and just when it was about to disappear he thrust his finger back inside her and started whipping his tongue over her clit. The pleasure came back, climbing, climbing, slowly but inexorably...

When Jordan pressed another finger to the flesh above her anus, she exploded, fiercely, wildly, screaming loudly, thrashing her arms and pressing her hips downward as hard as she could, against his hand and mouth. It seemed to take forever to peak, and when she did, the descent went on and on as Jordan sucked on her and her entire body convulsed, over and over again.

He didn’t give her time to be embarrassed or admit defeat. He stood and untied her ankles, then her wrists, zipped her dress, and pulled her to her feet.

“Okay?”

She could only nod.

“All right. We’ll slow it down a little.”

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She stared up at him. Weren't they done? He'd proved his point, and then some. But no, he was leading her to a very luxurious bathroom. It was partitioned, with a sink and toilet behind a solid three-quarter wall, and a deep, wide Jacuzzi bathtub in the main area. A main area with a large two-way window.

"Clean up," he said gently, "do whatever you need, and run yourself a bath. Use whatever scents you want, oils, salts, sponges, anything. When you're ready, I'm going to watch you." He looked meaningfully into her eyes. "You'll know I'm watching you. You'll be turned on by turning me on. And you'll come."

"How?" she asked without thinking.

He smiled. "However you want to. As long as you know I can see it. And just so you know." He tugged the zipper down a few inches. "I love your breasts." Kelly gaped at him, making his smile grow. "Here's the switch for the blinds." He flipped it down, and mini-blinds lowered over the window. "Just raise them when you're ready." Then he was gone.

Except, she knew he wasn't, not really. Her awareness of him, always high, didn't fade with the closing of the door or her glance at the opaque blinds. She felt him on the other side of that covered window, and wondered what he was doing. Was he sitting or standing? Was he going to...pleasure himself while he watched her? Or just watch her pleasure *herself*?

She shivered and suddenly the tension was back. Post-orgasm lethargy fled and sensitive tissues began to ache again. But this time, it would be a slow build. This time, her goal was titillation.

Kelly smiled to herself and retreated behind the partition. She went to the bathroom and cleaned up, then returned to the main room and flipped the switch to raise the blinds. She stood in front of the mirrored glass, pretending she was making eye contact with Jordan, and gave what she hoped was a seductive, meaningful stare for a long moment.

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Then she turned her back.

The faucets of the whirlpool tub were easy to reach on the front side of the tub instead of the end, but shifted to one side. Kelly sat on the edge of the tub and leaned over, letting her breasts swing as she turned the handles. A roar filled the room as water blasted from the wide tap, bouncing to splash her conveniently on the chest. She stayed leaned over until her bodice was completely wet, then sat up and thrust her chest forward. Her nipples peaked against the thin fabric as it cooled.

For the first couple of minutes she felt stupid. What if she looked foolish instead of seductive? How could exhibitionism be a turn-on if you didn't know if the person you were exhibiting for was excited?

She moved slowly around the room, gathering towels, checking bath options, and every few seconds, drawing her zipper down half an inch, letting the sides peel back, exposing most but not all of her chest.

She added a drizzle of bubble bath to the filling tub. The jets would stir up more foam than the running water would, and she didn't want her "show" to turn into a joke. When the tub was full, she bent and twisted off the water, then stood with her back to the window and slowly unzipped her dress past her waist and let it slide off her shoulders, catch at her elbows, then down to her wrists, and drop to the floor. Naked, she stepped into the tub and sank with a moan into the hot water.

"Heaven," she murmured, closing her eyes. The bubble bath was lilac-scented, her favorite. She floated in the water for a minute, letting the warmth and silkiness soak into her.

Awareness changed gradually. First, it was recognition that she wasn't in her own bathroom, or any other private bathroom, and didn't have the luxury of soaking the day away. Then she remembered Jordan was watching her, and she thought he must be bored, since she was just lying here.

Then she felt him. His eyes on her, through the glass, hot and

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expectant. And she went from languid to charged in a New York minute.

Kelly picked up a net scrubby from where she'd set it on the edge of the tub, and stretched for the bottle of lilac bath gel, careful to keep the tips of her breasts under the bubbles. She squeezed gel onto the scrubby, set the bottle down, and squeezed and rubbed until it lathered. Lifting her left leg high, she rubbed the scrubby from toe to thigh, following it with strokes of her free hand, then did the same with the other leg. Her skin felt hot, and tingled where she touched it.

She repeated the action with her arms, then sat up to run the scrubby over her chest and down her abdomen. She kept her left arm positioned so that nothing was exposed for very long, doing a kind of peek-a-boo.

When she was clean, she turned on the jets.

The water churned in time to the roar of the engine powering it. Kelly had expected to have to perch awkwardly on one side of the tub, or to have to face a jet with her legs over the edge, but of course, this wasn't a regular tub. She gasped as a jet from the floor hit her in exactly the right spot, and arched into the exquisite, immediate pleasure. Her breasts rose above the water and she remembered she was being watched. Pinching her own nipples had never done anything for her, but she'd bet it would do something for Jordan, and *that* did something for her. So she drew her hands up and glided them over the wet soapiness of her chest, squeezing and moaning...and oh, that *jet!*...and then pinching and tugging her nipples.

The jet was doing its job quickly. Too quickly. The pleasure tightened and she shifted away from it, not wanting this to be over so soon. What she was doing was sensual, maybe erotic, but it wasn't carnal. Jordan watched this stuff all day long. Her mostly hidden body wasn't going to do much for him.

Kelly rose to her feet and perched on the back edge of the tub,

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bracing her feet on the opposite side, her knees together. Slowly, she let them fall open, then trailed her hand down her body and began fingering herself. The pleasure was more smooth than it had been with the jet, but the whole area was swollen with need and sopping wet. The lightest touch made her body vibrate, she was so sensitive.

She wondered what Jordan was thinking, feeling, and again could sense his eyes on her, hot, wanting. Maybe it was her imagination, but did it matter? She figured that was his point. She knew he was watching, and if she believed he was turned on by her actions, it would turn her on in return.

Her imagination supplied an image of him on the other side of the window, panting. He braced himself against the wall with one hand. His skin was damp with fighting his desire. His lust. He wanted to come in here and take her.

She gasped as that thought sent her to a higher plateau. She pressed her fingers against her clit and rotated them, fast, as the Jordan in her brain ripped off his clothes, stepped into the tub, and plunged himself into her, deep, so deep—

“Oooohhhhhh, Goooodddd,” she moaned as she came, her head thrown back and her legs trembling. She let them splash into the water, then sank back down into the tub, aftershocks rippling under her hand. How many was that? She was definitely done now. Her body couldn’t handle any more. In fact, she’d better get out of the tub before she fell asleep and drowned.

She had just stepped onto the soft rug when the door opened. Jordan stood there, one hand on the doorknob, the other on the doorjamb, looking exactly like he had in her mini-fantasy a moment earlier: panting, rumped, and totally hot.

Okay, maybe she could come again.

“Jordan.” Her voice was husky, but she didn’t have the energy to clear her throat. She didn’t bother trying to cover herself as she would

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have in a normal situation with a different guy.

“Kelly.” He didn’t move except for his hand clenching harder around the doorknob and his throat moving as he swallowed hard.

Feeling like a total seductress, she bent and lifted a towel from the low shelf to her left, then began patting the water and suds from her body, ignoring Jordan while simultaneously walking toward him. She was close enough now to hear his indrawn breath, but still he didn’t move, not even when she stood inches away from him. She lifted her head slowly and looked at him through heavy-lidded eyes.

He took a deep breath and pulled himself together, straightening and retreating more than the inches his body moved.

“Um, toys. We haven’t done toys yet.”

Kelly didn’t care. He’d proved his point, now she was going to prove hers.

“I don’t think so.” She moved closer. She could smell him. He smelled like any man ready to fuck, but he also smelled unlike any man she’d ever been near. She inhaled slowly, deeply, and her eyes closed. He was hers.

A friend had once told her that she could never be attracted to someone whose smell she didn’t love, and that when she met her husband, he’d been like an aphrodisiac. She’d spent so much time sniffing him and saying, “Oh, you smell so *good*,” that her mother had admonished them to practice safe sex.

Well, Kelly knew there was nothing safe about this encounter. She was about to have her heart broken, in one way or another. But she couldn’t turn back, couldn’t put a halt to things that had already gone too far.

She couldn’t even remember her safe word.

Placing her hand flat on Jordan’s chest, inside his partly unbuttoned dress shirt, she pressed until he moved backward, out of the room and into the light-industrial hallway. There was a conventional bedroom to

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their right, she remembered from the tour, and guided him in that direction, never breaking eye contact as he moved backward and she glided forward, the towel held in front of her but hiding little. He stumbled when she turned him to go through the door, but recovered, only to fall neatly onto the bed when she hooked his ankle and shoved his chest.

“Did you like watching me?” she asked, still husky-voiced, as she rubbed the towel randomly over her body.

Jordan nodded.

“Did it make you want to touch me?” She pulled the towel behind her and dried her back, the back-and-forth movement making her breasts sway. Jordan’s gaze dropped to them and he didn’t answer the question.

“Do you want to touch me now?” She pushed his hand away when he reached for her. “I didn’t say you could.” The towel dropped over the post at the end of the bed, and she propped her knee on the quilt next to his hip. Leaning over him, she started to unbutton his shirt. Her breasts began to ache, craving his hands on her again, but she didn’t want to reward *him* yet so she simply rolled the tips of her nipples across his chest and down his abdomen. He had nice washboard abs, nothing outrageous but slightly ridged. Her fingers rose and fell in a path from the top of his abdomen to the waist of his jeans, then toyed with the button. Jordan made a noise in his throat but lay still, his hands upraised but his elbows trapped by the shirt she’d spread open. She flicked her fingers, and the button popped. The zipper slid down halfway on its own, encouraged by the size of his erection.

“How long have you been carrying this around?” She stroked him through the boxer-briefs, and it flinched. Jordan sighed.

“All day.”

“Think it’s ready to do some work?”

“More than.”

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Kelly stood and pulled the stretchy material up and over the head of his penis, then down, exposing him. She bent, then paused. Jordan's whole body tensed, waiting. She could tell he held his breath. She hovered, her mouth over him, then tipped her head so her hair trailed over his skin. He sighed and relaxed, and she stroked her wet mouth down over him, taking him in all the way. Jordan braced his feet on the floor and lifted upward when she slid back, sucking, until the tip slipped free of her mouth. She repositioned herself so her arms were braced over his thighs, supporting her, then began swirling her tongue around him, then her whole mouth. He rocked upward again with a cry and she took up a basic rhythm, up and down, as fast as she could. He yelled again, grabbing her head, and she sucked hard as he exploded in her mouth.

"Holy hell, Kelly." He tugged on her arms, signaling she should come up on the bed with him, but she pulled away and shook her head.

"Good?"

"Fantastic, but..."

"I'm not done." She started wandering the room, looking for props.

Jordan laughed shakily. "I am. I've been primed for you for hours. I almost gave up on our project in the first room, I wanted you so bad. And now you got me off in five minutes."

"Less." She opened a small wardrobe and smiled. "I think we can do better than that."

"Kelly, I set out to prove any woman could have multiple orgasms. This wasn't about men. Or me."

Or us, she finished silently. She got it. But she felt too good to worry about it now. She had set out to prove him wrong but hadn't fought very hard to win the bet. She could play games and argue that she had still only had one orgasm at a time—he'd stopped each time without trying to give her another one right away. But she didn't really need to do that. She'd never had so much pleasure in her life, and it

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seemed ungrateful to argue now.

Instead, she was going to do some other experiments. She lifted a diaphanous black baby doll with matching thong off the hanger rod and hid behind the door of the open wardrobe to put it on. A pair of four-inch heels was only half a size too large. She peeked around the wardrobe door to find Jordan had lifted himself all the way onto the bed and reclined against the pillows. His right arm was behind his head, his left loose at his side, and his open jeans framed a less-than-relaxed cock.

“What are you doing?”

“I think you know.” She crossed to the stereo system built into the wall and pressed the power button. A throbbing instrumental immediately came on, and she started moving to the beat. Her hips swayed left, right, left, and circled around. Jordan shifted. Kelly picked up her moves, running her hands over her body, arching, spinning. She looked over her shoulder, posed, and let the left strap slide off. She kept dancing, lifting her hair off her neck, rotating her hips. The song was coming to an end, and on the final, solid note she bent over and grabbed her ankles with her feet spread wide. Jordan sounded like he was stifling a moan. The music started again and she bounced her knees, then flung her hair back to hang past her waist. She was bent back so far she could almost see the top of Jordan’s head, and she knew he could see her now-bare breast. She touched it, and he hissed.

Slowly, she rose and turned, her hand still on her breast, playing with the nipple. Her eyes widened when she saw what Jordan was doing. His left hand was no longer loose at his side. He was...well, an active participant, so to speak. She watched hungrily as he stroked himself, and licked her lips. His penis jerked and his hips lifted a little.

“Kelly.”

She started dancing again, this time watching him as he watched her. She bared most of her body to him but left the baby doll gown on,

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though she did remove the thong. She wanted him to have easy access when the time came. She stroked herself in time to his own strokes, and felt another orgasm on its way. It must have shown on her face because Jordan suddenly removed his hand and called to her.

Kelly crawled up the bed to him, straddling his hips, holding herself off of him. “Do we need something?” she asked, hoping he understood what she meant. It felt wrong, in the midst of all this eroticism, to talk about something so mundane. But she felt obligated to ask.

Jordan looked sheepish. “I haven’t had sex with anyone in about five years,” he said, his hands idly caressing her hips under the sheer nightie. “I’m like the guy who works in the donut shop who can’t stand to eat them.”

She smiled. “I’m on the pill, but I’m very selective about my partners.”

“And?”

“We’re okay, I think. Do you think?”

“I think.” He pressed her downward until she took him into her, deeper and deeper. They both groaned. Kelly closed her eyes. All the “sex” she’d had today, and none of it had felt as good as this.

He was hot and hard inside her, filling so much more of her than that small part. She buried her face in his neck, not wanting him to see on her face all the things she was feeling. His arms circled her, cradling her against his chest, and he kissed her temple softly.

She’d had a few lovers in her life, and they’d run the gamut from a one-night-is-fun-but-let’s-not-get-carried-away to God-I-love-you-until-the-sun-rises. She knew what it felt like to think she was in love with someone just because she was flooded with serotonin or whatever. This was different. This was deeper, stronger. It made her chest ache, and her throat swell, and her teeth hurt with the effort not to say the words.

“Kelly, I—”

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She reached up and pressed her fingers over his lips before he could say it. Whatever it was, she didn't want to hear it in the heat of passion. If it was what she wanted to hear, she could wait. If it wasn't, well, she could still wait.

Jordan started to move under her. She rose up and braced her hands on his chest for support as she lifted herself, then lowered slowly, taking him as deeply as she could before pushing up again. Jordan kept one hand on her hip, guiding her, and covered her breast with the other. Their eyes locked. Even with the pace slow and languid, the intensity of emotion between them sent Kelly flying gently off the cliff. She closed her eyes and shuddered.

"Not enough." Jordan flipped them so smoothly Kelly blinked. He had one arm under her back and the other braced next to her head. She felt surrounded by him, and now her heart soared. God, she loved him. She couldn't keep the thoughts away from herself, but she closed her eyes again, trying to keep them from him. He thrust into her more urgently now, lifting himself high against her. She hadn't fully come down from her orgasm and felt it climb again. Jordan's breathing changed, and his pace quickened. He was about to come. He groaned her name and dipped his head closer to hers. She kissed him frantically, matching his pace, holding herself back. She wanted to come with him this time. *This* wasn't about science or physiology, and she thought—foolishly, she knew—that if they came together, it would mean he felt the same way about her as she did about him.

"Kelly. I'm going to come."

"Yes, Jordan. Me...me...oh, God!" She couldn't help herself. She screamed at the pleasure flooding her. She'd come so much in the last few hours that the central orgasm wasn't as powerful as some of the others, but this one was unique. It was like she felt Jordan's, too, and like the ecstasy had invaded her chest and radiated from there to the tip of every finger and toe.

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At the end, after all aftershocks had faded and Jordan cradled her against his chest, she heard him murmur, “I love you, Kelly.”

* * *

She had to have imagined it. She’d frozen, not sure she’d heard him correctly, but he only shifted to make them more comfortable and drifted into sleep. She relaxed and followed immediately after. She was suddenly as exhausted as she was satisfied.

How long they slept, she didn’t know. She’d lost all track of time when she entered the facility. When she surfaced, she lay still, not wanting to break the spell. As soon as one of them moved or talked, it would be over. She could tell Jordan was awake, too, and doing the same.

Problem was, she *really* had to use the bathroom. As the urgency grew it broke the spell anyway. Reality had a firm hold on her now.

She shifted to slip out of bed. Jordan’s arms tightened, then released.

“It’s through that door on the left.”

“Thanks.” She hesitated. He had sounded glum, resigned. She sat up, then bent and kissed his lips. “I’ll be right back.”

When she returned, she wore the robe she’d found on the back of the bathroom door. She had a feeling Jordan would be dressed, and she was right. She sat next to him at the foot of the bed.

“What now?”

“I think we’re done. We established—”

“Dammit, Jordan.” She stood and started to pace. “Obviously, you won. Even if I wanted to argue that multiple orgasm is two right after each other, not six over several hours, you even managed to do that. So what the hell do you want?”

He didn’t answer right away. When she turned around, he looked sad. “It was never about the bet, Kelly.”

She shrugged. “About being right, then. Well, you proved that,

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too.” She felt tears threatening. “Do we need to analyze it to death?”

He just watched her, and she couldn’t stand it. She was too raw. She couldn’t pretend everything was fine, whatever “everything” was. She needed to get away. Where the hell were her clothes? The bathroom. Somewhere down the hall. She stalked to the door and yanked it open, then froze when Jordan put his hand on her arm.

“Kelly, wait.” He reached around her and took her other arm, gently pulling her back. The door closed. “Don’t go like that.”

Her breath hitched. “You don’t have to worry about me, Jordan. I’m fine. You have no obligation to me—”

“Fuck obligation.” He jerked away from her. She whirled, stunned, and couldn’t believe how tight with anger his face was.

“What?”

“Kelly, I am not the cliché. I’m not the guy all your friends and books and movies talk about. I don’t play games, and I don’t look for intimacy without commitment. For God’s sake! How could you think that after everything we did today?”

She stared at him, her jaw loose. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Then she got angry right back.

“You have no idea what I’m thinking and feeling, Jordan. It may just be that I *don’t* think those things of you, that I never expected them of you. It may be that I’m overwhelmed by ‘everything we did today’ and I’m not up to having this discussion!” Her chest heaved and the belt of her robe loosened from the force of her breathing. She jerked it tight.

“I’m not letting you go without having this discussion.” He came back to her, wrapping his hands around her shoulders. “I love you, Kelly. I’ve been trying to come up with a way to show you without scaring you off.” He sighed and let her go. “I guess I still didn’t succeed.”

Her mouth fell open again. She’d hoped he could feel the same way

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she did, had even thought he did, but never expected to hear him say it so soon. “Jordan...why didn’t you just ask me out?”

“I didn’t think you’d say yes.” He sat heavily on the end of the bed again. “You may not believe me, but I haven’t dated much since I started the institute. The only women I meet are subjects and employees, and neither one is a very appropriate possibility.”

“I’m an employee.” She had trouble believing him. He was gorgeous, and charming, and smart, and funny. He could meet a great prospect in line at the grocery store.

“Um.” He blushed. “I kinda did something unethical. I, uh, kind of hired you with ulterior motives.”

Kelly narrowed her eyes. “You hired me for this?” She waved a hand around the bedroom. Jordan looked shocked.

“No! I hired you because I’ve had a crush on you for years. I was hoping we could get to know each other better, and I was afraid if I didn’t hire you, I wouldn’t get a chance. Your mother told mine you were thinking of going back to school out of state.”

She sighed and sat next to him. “All of that’s really irrelevant, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, I hope so.” He tentatively threaded his fingers through hers. She tightened her hand on his and felt him relax.

“So, let’s back up. I thought, just before you fell asleep, that I heard you say something...important.”

Jordan shifted so they were facing each other, tipped her chin up with his hand, met her gaze, and smiled. “I love you, Kelly.”

She sighed again, this time happily. “I love you, too.”

He grinned and leaned in to kiss her. “And I was right, too.”

Their lips met, clung, parted.

“About?”

His grin turned cocky. “Every woman is capable of multiple orgasm.”

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Kelly smiled gently back. “I think you’ll need to prove that one to me again.”

NATALIE J. DAMSCHRODER

Natalie J. Damschroder became a writer the hard way—by avoiding it. Though she wrote her first book at age five (appropriately titled, *My Very First Book*) and received accolades for her academic writing (Ruth Davies Award for Excellence in Writing for a paper on deforestation her senior year in college), she hated doing it. Colonial food and the habits of the European Starling just weren't her thing.

Shortly after graduating from college, however, she found her niche—romantic fiction. After an internship with the National Geographic Society, customer service for a phone company just wasn't that exciting. So she began learning how to write the books she'd loved to read all her life. Four books and six years later, she finally sold. Now she struggles to balance her frenetic writing life (how else can she get all the stories in her head on paper?) with her family, the most supportive husband in the world and two beautiful, intelligent, stubborn, independent daughters (one of whom has already declared her desire to be a writer, too). She somehow also fits in a day job and various volunteer positions in and out of the writing industry.

More can be found at www.nataliedamschroder.com.

* * *

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