

PHAZE
HEAT SHEET FETISH



EDEN BRADLEY
BREAKING SKYE

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A PHAZE FETISH HEATSHEET BY

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BREAKING SKYE

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EDEN BRADLEY

Also by Eden Bradley

Heat Wave

ONE

This could not be him. This man could not be the one who would strip her bare, put her on her knees and do unspeakable things to her...lovely, wicked things she had only ever imagined in the darkest corners of her mind.

When she'd posted the ad on [bondage.com](#) she'd imagined finding a man with an air of command. A man who carried himself with utter confidence. A man who could guide her through this experience with capable hands.

He was all of these things. But he was too beautiful to be real. Like some fallen angel with his evil-looking goatee, his sharply-honed bone structure, his too-lush mouth. He had shoulders like a Greek god beneath his black trench coat. Droplets of water clung to the fabric, and she watched as he shrugged out of the long coat and shivered a bit at the damp, San Francisco cold. Perhaps he was human after all.

He spoke her name in a low voice that felt like a caress. "Skye."

Certainty in his voice. She had a feeling this man never doubted himself. A Dominant through and through. What had she heard this kind of man called in her research on the Internet? A true Dominant?

"Yes. You must be Adam."

He nodded, took her hand as he slid into the chair across from hers. He held on just a moment too long, the flickering heat of his touch making her wonder if she wanted him to let go. The tiny café table seemed like too little space separating them. Adam Dunne had an enormous, palpable presence.

A waitress came as though summoned and took his order for an espresso while Skye made a brief study of his face. Absolutely masculine, every line, every plane. A short, thick thatch of brown hair a few shades lighter than his goatee. He had a small scar just below his lower lip, making his features appear even more masculine. His eyes were a dark, dusky blue framed in thick lashes. God, what it would be like to have those eyes turned on her, focused...

She shivered and realized he still hadn't released her from his grip. She glanced down and saw another scar on the back of his left hand, a small crescent around the joint of the thumb. Why was it she wanted to run her finger over it? When he turned to her, meeting her gaze, she shivered again with a fine, pure heat.

Lust.

She hadn't expected to feel this.

"Are you all right, Skye?" He smiled. Gorgeous white teeth.

All the better to eat you with.

She really had to get a hold of herself. Carry on a conversation like a normal person. She pulled her hand back and put it in her lap.

"What? Yes, I'm fine. Thank you."

"Am I the first Dominant you've contacted?"

"No. There have been several others but they...I don't know. I wasn't comfortable with any of them."

"Are you comfortable with me?"

It felt like a trick question. Her pulse was racing at a thousand miles an hour.

"I don't know yet."

The waitress brought his espresso in a small, white china cup that looked even tinier in his hand as he lifted it and sipped.

"Just relax. We're here to get to know each other. To see if we'll work well together." He put his cup down and leaned forward a bit. "You said in your e-mail that you're interested in exploring what it's like to be a submissive. Interesting, the way you phrased it. It seemed detached. As though you don't think of yourself as a submissive."

Very observant. "I don't. I believe this is simply one small corner of myself. That this one experience will purge this...yearning from my system."

"I'm not sure that's a healthy attitude to have going in."

"I think exploring even your darkest side can be a healthy way to express repressed desires, needs. Once expressed, the need often disappears. It's the symbols that count, what these things represent to people. To me."

He sat back in his chair, raised one dark brow. "You truly believe that?"

"Of course. I'm an artist. I believe very strongly in symbols."

"That's not what I meant. But you know that. Are you at all willing to have your mind changed?"

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Why the sudden flutter in her stomach? She picked up the cup of Darjeeling tea she'd ordered before he'd arrived, sipped, found it cold. She set the cup down again.

He leaned forward in his chair, until he was only inches from her. The warmth of his hand slid over hers again. He said quietly, "I think I can challenge your theory. But that's not why I want to do this with you. You intrigue me, Skye. I've worked as a trainer for ten years. I've learned to read people. I can read you. So strong on the outside. So controlled. You need to break that control. To let it go. I can do this for you. But only on my terms."

She swallowed hard. His hand on hers seemed to scorch her skin. Her whole body surged with need for his touch. She shook her head to clear it. "What exactly are you suggesting?"

"That you give yourself over to me."

"That's what I'd intended. For one night—"

"One night won't work. It'll take at least several evenings. This is a process, Skye, not an event. That's not how the human mind works. And as much as this experience will be physical, the most important part happens in your head. Brain chemistry, psychology, your personal history, symbols, as you said. It all comes into play. Did you really think you could do all that in one night?"

"I...I don't know..."

Her mind was spinning. She *had* thought that. Foolish, she could see now. But could she do what he was suggesting? Losing control for one night, that she could manage. That she could excuse. But more?

He slid his hand up her arm, leaving a trail of sensation even through her cashmere sweater. When it came to rest on the bare skin at the back of her neck her legs trembled and went weak. His hand was absolutely burning on her skin. Her body flooded with desire. Physical desire, yes. But also an inexplicable desire to please him. This stranger with the smoky blue eyes that seemed to see right through her. Eyes like the misty February sky outside.

Her heart hammered in panic. But she didn't want to run. She wanted—needed—to understand why this man was making her feel like some trembling virgin with starry-eyed fantasies flashing through her mind. The same images that had plagued her since she was a teenager. Fantasies she had finally decided to live out.

God, she was really going to do this!

He leaned in closer, until she felt the warmth of his coffee-scented

breath on her cheek. "Say you want to, Skye."

"How...how much time?"

"As long as it takes."

God.

She licked her lips, tasted the faint peppermint of her lip gloss. "I understand your point, about needing more time. I'm just not sure..."

"Not sure you can do it?" he finished for her.

"Yes."

"There's only one way to find out."

He reached out and tilted her chin in his hand, forcing her to meet his dark blue gaze. His eyes were too intense. If he hadn't held her there she would have looked away. Could he feel her shaking?

"Say you want to do this, Skye."

That velvet voice again, swarming over her like a soft blanket. Her whole body quivered with desire, just hearing his voice, feeling the sizzling heat of his fingertips on her chin, and those eyes...

She swallowed again, her mind fighting the sharp stab of need in her body. Her body was winning. "Yes. I want to do this."

* * * *

He'd thought for a moment she might change her mind. Those golden brown eyes like a doe's, the pupils enormous with nerves. Tiny, delicate bones to match. Too gorgeous, this woman. And smart. That always killed him. But he was here to do a job. A job he enjoyed, but a job nonetheless.

"We'll need to talk about a few things first."

She nodded. "Of course."

He could see from the faint movement of her long, brown hair that she was trembling. The sadist in him loved it. And hair like a dark curtain. He'd love to get his hands on it. In it. Pull it hard.

"Let's start with your name. Skye...?"

"Just Skye is fine."

Her tongue darted out, a flash of pink against the dusky rose of her plush, glossed lips, distracting him. Utterly kissable lips. But he was losing focus.

"We need to trust each other here."

She took in a deep breath, exhaled, played with her teacup. "It's Ballard. But it's my father's name. I don't use it."

"You can tell me why later. You said you're an artist? What medium?"

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"It changes. Right now I love pen and ink, the starkness of it. And charcoal. I haven't been using any color lately, just exploring lines, shapes, contrast." She paused, looking uncertain. "I'm sorry. That was probably more than you wanted to know."

"On the contrary. I want to know. Everything. And I love the way your eyes light up talking about it. I love seeing the passion on your face."

She blushed, a pink sheen rising in her high, curved cheeks. He reached for her hand again and watched the blush deepen. He pulled it toward him, turned it over to inspect the tattoo curling around her left wrist, a small, sinuous piece done in dark, tribal style. He looked up at her, surprised, letting her hand go. "A phoenix?"

"Yes. It represents rebirth."

"I know. I have one, too."

"A tattoo?"

He nodded. "A phoenix."

A small laugh from her. "What a strange coincidence."

"I don't believe in coincidences. I'll show it to you eventually."

She nodded her head. Her nervousness radiated off her in waves, along with a subtle, smoky scent that made his cock harden. That was all right, she could be nervous. Should be, if she had any idea about what he planned to do to her. An image of her tied, naked, to his bed, and his cock sprang to life.

Yes, he had to get her there. He'd better get back on track.

"You've seen my references. I've read the list of desires you e-mailed to me, things you'd like to try: bondage, spanking, floggers, all of these things interest me, as well. We'll be a good match. I'm going to send you a questionnaire. There are a few things on there you probably hadn't thought about."

She was visibly shaking now. But he understood it was as much from excitement as from fear. Not that he minded if she was a little afraid. That only made it more exciting. Domination and submission, sadomasochism, were all about an energy exchange, after all. He fed off her energy. Pleasure, fright, it was all the same at that level. And this woman, as controlled as she tried to be, unconsciously wore her emotions on her sleeve. To play her would be fantastic. He couldn't wait to begin.

"I'll e-mail you as soon as I get home with the questionnaire. There will be some other things, instructions. Do you know about safe

words?"

"Yes. I'm to use 'yellow' if I want to slow down a scene, if I can't handle something you're...doing, and red if I need to stop completely."

"Exactly. Remember your safe words. Don't be embarrassed to use them. That's the only thing you're responsible for during play. I'll be responsible for everything else. You will be in my hands. Do you understand?"

She swallowed; he could see her throat working for a moment before she spoke. "Yes."

"I'll send you my address. Come Friday night."

She paused before nodding her head, looking for a moment as though she were going to argue. But in the end she didn't question that he'd phrased it as a command. A momentary struggle. Enough that he could see she would fight yielding to him. But he had no doubt he could handle her. He'd trained girls like this before, those who had to hang on so tightly to control that letting it go was the ultimate relief. He loved nothing more than to break past that wall of reserve. The idea of breaking this particular girl, this beautiful woman whose very scent made him want to taste her skin, would be a pleasure. Hers. His.

Breaking Skye. He knew it was all he would think about all week.

TWO

Skye let herself into her third-floor apartment, her hands still shaking. She hadn't been able to calm down since her conversation with Adam Dunne.

Had it really even happened? It all seemed dream-like to her now. Too good to be true. Too frightening. But this was exactly what she'd wanted, wasn't it? And more. Too much more, maybe.

She'd wanted an experiment. An experience. But she hadn't expected to find a man—a dominant—that she'd be so unbearably attracted to. That complicated things. And he was graceful in that way only utterly self-confident men could be. That was the sexiest thing about him. Except for his mouth, maybe...

She groaned and tossed her purse down on the antique sea chest in her front hall, kicked her shoes off and padded barefoot across the hardwood floors of her small living room to the bay window overlooking the city.

The apartment was on a hill overlooking the Castro district. This was a beautiful neighborhood: well-kept, safe. And one of the few areas in San Francisco to get the occasional bit of sun.

It was twilight now, and the evening fog was rolling in, turning the lights on the streets below her into a glowing wash of color. Wisps of fog threaded its way between the mini-Tudors and remodeled Victorians that lined the streets. Cold and lonely-looking out there, as San Francisco often was. But she was glad for the sense of solitude now. She had a lot to think about.

Had she gotten in over her head here? Her whole body gave a long shiver as she pictured Adam in her mind. He obviously knew exactly what he was doing. She felt so...naïve. Yet he obviously didn't expect anything more from her.

I'll be responsible for everything...

Yes, she knew he would be, had an absolute sense of that. How frightening. How freeing.

She had three days to ponder this, to look over the questionnaire he would send her, to make her final decision. He'd already assumed she would come to him, but she had to really think this over, now that she'd met him, didn't she?

Her heart surged in her chest, her limbs going warm and weak as she imagined his face. Oh, hell, who was she kidding? She'd made her decision the moment she'd seen him walk into the café. She wanted this. More specifically, she wanted to do these things with him. In fact, if she were going to be perfectly honest, she could hardly wait to see him again. Three days suddenly seemed like far too long to wait.

* * * *

Wednesday and Thursday had passed quickly enough; she taught a few art classes at the local junior college, which kept her busy and distracted. But she'd spent her evenings going over and over the long questionnaire Adam had sent her.

He was right, there were things on there that had never occurred to her. Some of them too scary to contemplate, some of them enticing. Would she like to play with hot wax? Maybe. Would she like to try caning? She just might. Would she allow any sexual contact?

Her mind had emptied as she read that question, her body flooding with hot desire.

Oh, yes...

Since then, her head had been filled with images of him touching her. She'd spent most of Thursday night in bed with her collection of vibrators. But orgasm after orgasm didn't satisfy her. She had to feel his touch, she knew, before the aching desire that ran hot through her veins would be sated.

Friday morning, she awoke with that same need humming through her system, but she resisted, wanting to save it all for him, to go to him with this almost unbearable wanting. A sort of torture, she thought, loving the idea.

She spent the day preparing, allowing herself to think of him, indulging herself, really. Her body was nearly throbbing by evening, when she laid out her clothes on her old iron bed, the outfit he had requested: a short, black skirt, a white button-down blouse, sheer, black, thigh-high stockings, high black pumps. She wore nothing underneath, making her feel sexy, a little vulnerable, a lot wicked.

She bathed herself, careful not to give in to the need to slide her fingers over her aching pussy, her swollen nipples, as she leaned

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against the cool, white tiles in the shower. The contrast of the hot water and the tiles at her back was a surprisingly erotic sensation. When she got out and dried herself off, she rubbed scented lotion into her skin, every touch of her own hands an unexpectedly sensual experience.

How much better would it be when she stood before him?

Finally it was time to go, and she called for a cab. The ride over to his house in Noe Valley seemed to take forever. It was one of those classic 1920's stucco homes that were so popular in the city: three stories, with the garage on the ground floor, a small iron railing balcony at each window. She got out of the cab and walked up the stairs on one side of the garage to the front door. It stood silent sentry, daring her to knock. Why did she feel as though her life was about to change forever?

Because it is.

She took a deep breath and ordered her racing pulse to calm. It didn't help.

She knocked anyway.

And felt the breath escaping her lungs when Adam opened the door.

So damn handsome. No, that word was not enough. He was stunning, in his black slacks, his white shirt rolled up at the sleeves. Flash of strong, white teeth as he smiled at her. Flash of burning lust when he took her hand and guided her inside.

"Welcome, Skye."

"Thank you." She didn't know what else to say, feeling shy suddenly. Overwhelmed. And something else, something to do with being in his presence. She didn't understand it. It felt good, right, yet she almost wanted to cry at the same time.

"Come and have a seat on the sofa."

He led her into the living room. Beautiful house, great architectural details. Her artist's eye took it all in quickly; the scrolling crown molding, the polished wood floors, the gorgeous mantle. All white walls, an eclectic collection of contemporary and antique furnishings. The enormous beige sofa was all clean, modern lines, while the square coffee table was a gorgeously carved piece of old Indonesian teak topped in glass. Soothing neutral colors everywhere except for the really astonishing art on the walls and the dark red Persian rugs on the floors.

She sat on the sofa, her stomach fluttering, unsure as to what to do

with her hands. She fisted them at her sides, finally. Her stomach gave a sharp jump when he sat down beside her.

"You don't need to be nervous," he said quietly. "But I don't mind if you are."

Another smile, this one definitely wicked. She averted her gaze. But he immediately cupped her chin in his hand, forcing her to look into those dusky blue eyes.

His voice was more commanding this time. "Don't hide your eyes from me again." He was quiet a moment, allowing her to absorb his words. "The eyes really are the windows to the soul. And I need to know you on the inside if this is going to work. Understood?"

"Yes. I just...something is happening to me already..." She shook her head helplessly.

"I can see that. And trust me, it's good. You're responding to the mere idea of what we're about to do. I can only imagine how you'll respond once we begin. Do you have any questions?"

"I...don't know. When do we begin? Is it now?"

That devastating smile again. "Yes."

He stood, offered her his hand. She took it, let him guide her to her feet.

A small wave of panic hit her. "Where are we going?"

He turned to her, and she realized she'd never been this close to him before. He seemed even taller, standing right next to her. He smelled like pure male. Just clean skin and a hint of earthy musk. Sexy as hell.

"Shh, no more questions now. No speaking unless you're spoken to, or unless it's to use your safe words." He cupped her face in his palm, making her legs go weak with desire, and something else, that sensation she couldn't seem to put a name to. "You are in my hands now, Skye. No more worries, no concerns, no control here. I will do it all. For you. Just let it go. That's why you're here."

"I...I'm not sure if I can."

"You can. And you will. For me."

She nodded, unable to speak. Yes. For him. She wanted nothing else at this moment. What was happening to her? But she couldn't think clearly enough to figure it out.

When he quietly ordered her to undress, the breath went right out of her.

"Wh—what?"

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"I said to take your clothes off." His voice was low but certain.

Tears threatened, but she bit her lip and held them back.

He stood before her and pulled her to her feet. She was shaking her head again, unable to speak. He pulled her right up against him, and his scent went through her like a small storm of sensation. Dizzying. Electrifying, with his big body warm against her and his breath in her hair.

"Skye, listen to me. You are going to have to find a way to do as I tell you. To accept that. To yield. As I said before, this is a process. If you can't give yourself over to the process, we can't do this. But I think you can. I know you can. I see that in you. Cry if you need to. It doesn't matter. All that matters is just doing it. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

She nodded, squeezing her eyes shut. She wanted to do what he told her to, but she was so damn scared suddenly.

"It's too real," she whispered.

"Too real to deal with?"

"No, just...incredibly, intensely real."

"Tell me again that you want to be here."

"I do, I swear it." She pulled back and looked up at him then, caught his blue gaze. Was struck again by his pure, male beauty. Yes, every cell in her being wanted to be here.

"Just stop thinking," he told her.

How could he know that was exactly what she was doing? "I'm trying."

"Come with me. I'll help you."

He took her hand and led her across the room. She followed blindly down a long hall, through a doorway, into a dimly lit space. When she finally allowed herself to look around her, she saw an enormous, four-poster bed, an over-stuffed chair with a large ottoman covered in suede, a fireplace with a high mantle. A fire was burning, the acrid scent flooding her nostrils, the amber glow casting the only light in the room.

He took her to the chair and sat down, pulled her so she stood before him. Silently he unbuttoned her blouse, his hands gentle, almost tender. She was trembling all over, with fear, with excitement, with an exquisite anticipation she'd never felt before. When he pulled her blouse from her shoulders her nipples went hard beneath the intensity of his gaze.

"Beautiful," he murmured.

She could not believe she was standing here, allowing this man, this virtual stranger, to undress her. That she stood so silently, so passively. Yet at the same time, it was her very passiveness that allowed her to do it.

When he unzipped her skirt and let it slide down her thighs, she gasped.

"Shh," he soothed. "Relax."

But how could she relax when she wanted so desperately for him to touch her? Her mind was spinning with the possibilities. Something about his touch, the way his eyes roved over her almost reverently, was causing a strange sort of heaviness in her limbs. And the vee between her thighs grew damper every moment.

And then he put his hands on her. Just laid his fingertips against the skin on the front of her thighs. That touch went through her like an electric current, sending a stab of excitement straight to her sex. She was shaking as he stroked her skin with small, feather-like touches. He moved his hands higher and she took in a deep breath.

When he slid his hands to the back of her thighs and squeezed hard enough to hurt, she gasped. But she didn't move.

"Good girl. Very good."

Something about the pleasure in his voice made her heart surge. And the words themselves. *Good girl*. Lovely.

He spent some time just running his hands over her, tracing the curves of her body. His touch left a trail of sensation everywhere. Her body was heating up beneath his hands, her sex growing heavy with need, her breasts full and aching.

"That's it," he said. "Enjoy this, being touched. Close your eyes. Let it happen."

She did as he said, closing her eyes, letting her head fall back as he continued to brush her skin with his fingertips: her thighs, her stomach, the back of her hands. Soon she wanted to beg him to touch her breasts, to slip a hand between her thighs. Her sex was pulsing. Every inch of her body seemed to have a direct connection, sending currents of excitement coursing through her.

When he finally swept his fingers across her already hard nipples she gasped aloud and opened her eyes. She found him staring up at her, amusement in those hazy blue eyes. But something else, as well. Lust? Yes. He was as excited as she was. And that knowledge made her soar

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with a sense of power she didn't quite understand. But then he took her nipples between his fingers, pinching lightly, and she couldn't think any more. Her mind was simply telling her, *yes, more...*

He tugged and rolled her nipples, paused to cup the weight of her breasts in his hands, went back to pinch her again. God, it felt good, like something she'd needed all her life. Her secret desire.

A sharp flash of heat when he said, "Spread your legs for me, Skye."

She did as he asked instantly. She felt open, exposed. He moved in until his face was only inches from her body, and she could feel the heat of his breath on her belly. She had never felt so naked. So vulnerable. So turned on.

He took in a deep breath and said, "You smell like heaven, Skye."

Then he brushed her mound with one hand, just a brief, feathering touch, and she thought she'd fall over. Desire rushed through her, ran hot in her veins like a fiery tide. She moaned.

"I can feel your need, Skye. I can smell it on you. Trust that I will feed it tonight. I will satisfy your cravings in a way you've never experienced before."

She loved the command in his tone. Loved the husky edge of raw desire even more.

"I'm going to turn you over my knee now. I'm going to spank you."

He pulled her toward him, but she fought him, struggling against a wave of panic. Over his knee? That seemed so...personal. Intimate. Could she really lay naked over his lap, with him fully clothed and in control of the situation? Her heart thudded a heavy rhythm in her chest, making it hard to breathe. Could she give that much power to another person? Could she allow herself to be so entirely vulnerable?

"I...I can't. Adam, I can't do this."

THREE

Adam snaked his hand up and gripped the back of her neck, forced her down to her knees on the floor in front of him. He buried his hand in her hair, pulled her head back so she had no choice but to look into his face. It hurt. Tears stung her eyes. Her pulse raced. A flood of damp heat pooled between her thighs.

"You will do as I say, Skye. You will obey. Do you understand me?"

She nodded her head as much as she could with him still holding her so tightly. His face was stern, but there was no anger there. Why did she find that reassuring?

His voice went softer. "I understand what you're going through. When you truly give yourself over to this, to *me*, the panic will go away. And what I'm about to do will help you."

He pulled her up and into his lap, turned her face down. The wool of his slacks was scratchy against her stomach, the front of her thighs. He smoothed his palms over her back as he talked to her, helping her to handle it, to accept what was happening.

"You need this, Skye. You need a little pain to give you the chemical release in your brain that will make this all good for you. Endorphins. You got a little just from me touching you. You're so damn responsive."

A small pinch at the skin on the underside of her buttocks, making her wince. But it didn't hurt, she realized.

He went on, his voice growing deeper, smokier. "You have a gorgeous body. Your skin is incredible, flawless."

He drew one finger slowly down the length of her spine, causing a ripple of desire to dance over her flesh. When he got to her buttocks, he moved lower, dipping between her thighs, brushing her pussy lips. She squirmed, parted her legs a bit more.

"Good girl. You like it, don't you? You'll love it all, I promise. I'll see to it."

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The first slap was nothing more than a quick rap against her skin. Sensation more than pain. He began a slow rhythm, moving his hands over her buttocks. She was surprised that, while there was a slow build of pain as he increased the tempo and force, it felt good. And the harder he smacked her, the wetter her sex grew.

"Breathe into it, Skye, into the pain, into the pleasure."

The spanking went on, harder and harder. Tremors of pleasure moved over her skin, spread over her body in rolling waves. She felt an odd sinking sensation, and understood what it was she'd experienced when she'd first met him. Her mind was letting go, moving to some other plane. Here, she was hyper-aware. She could feel the hard muscles of his thighs beneath her, her breasts crushed into his lap. And the solid ridge of his erection against her belly. She moved her hips, grinding into him.

"Hold still."

She tried. But as the volley of smacks rained down on her, her flesh heating up, it became almost impossible.

When he moved a hand between her thighs and plunged two fingers right into her wet, aching heat, she jumped.

"Shhh," he soothed her, pressing down on the small of her back. "Tell me, Skye, do you need to come?"

"Yes!"

"I'll make you come. But not yet."

She wanted to cry. But she bit her lip, did her best to be compliant. Wondered for a moment that she found herself wanting that, to obey his orders. To please him.

He started to spank her again, kept his fingers in her wet, needy pussy. She wanted to beg him to pump into her. She clenched her jaw to keep quiet. And frankly, his hand slapping her ass felt almost as good to her as his fingers inside of her. She didn't understand, didn't try to.

The slaps grew harder, sharp and stinging. Her skin was on fire. And her pussy burned with the most exquisite need she'd ever experienced. Harder, faster, until the pain reverberated through her body, inside and out. The shock wave of that alone caused spearing shafts of pleasure in her sex, in her breasts, all over her.

He moved his fingers deeper and the first wave of climax caused her to clench around them.

"Not yet."

She squeezed her eyes shut and commanded her body to calm. He held perfectly still, until she had herself under control. Then, as though he knew she was ready for more, he smacked her ass hard, then harder, and pumped her with his fingers.

She whimpered, couldn't control the sound.

"Soon," he told her, still working her with his fingers, still smacking her ass.

Then a sharp volley of hard, punishing slaps, making her wince. Pain coursed through her. When he pressed onto her clit with his thumb, pleasure joined the pain, became one sensation. She came apart under his hands.

Her orgasm slammed into her like a brick wall. Pleasure, pain, shafted through her. Her sex pulsed, clenched. Behind her eyes was an explosion of white light, and she was blinded by pure sensation, by the raw power of it.

She knew she yelled. She didn't care.

He worked her mercilessly, milking her orgasm for all it was worth, until she was squirming and moaning in his lap. Totally out of control. Undone.

When it was over he was quiet, but she could hear the ragged cadence of his breath. His cock was still rock-hard beneath her. She wanted him inside of her body, even now.

He pulled her up so she was sitting in his lap, his arms around her. He took her chin in his hand, searched her eyes. "You are fucking beautiful, Skye. Like nothing I've ever seen before."

A warm glow filled her at his words, the reverent tone of his voice.

"And you take it well. Your body soaks it up. Revels in it." He spoke in a quiet mutter, almost as though he spoke only to himself. "Have to try some other things with you, but later. Later. You're done for now."

He stood with her in his arms and carried her to the bed, laid her down and draped a blanket over her.

"I'll bring you something to drink," he told her before walking from the room.

She was fine laying there, drowsing, not allowing herself to dissect what had happened to her. She wanted to simply feel for a while, to bask in this drug-like haze. She could easily become addicted to this.

No, she wasn't thinking clearly. This was temporary. But she

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couldn't really think it through at the moment. Too sleepy. Too happy to be there, with him. *Adam*. Right now, there was nothing more in the world she wanted.

* * * *

What the hell was wrong with him? Adam paced his narrow kitchen, a glass of water in his hand. He should bring it to her. But he needed a minute to calm down.

Christ, the way she squirmed and moaned in his lap...

He'd spanked dozens of other beautiful women. But none had ever affected him the way Skye did. What was it about her? Maybe the way she'd fought so hard when they were talking about it, then slipped into it as easily as any experienced submissive the moment he laid his hands on her?

Whatever it was, he had the hard-on of his life, and he'd been seconds from tearing his clothes off and fucking her senseless.

Unforgivable, that loss of control for a Dom.

Even now, he couldn't get the image of her rounded ass, her skin pinking beautifully under his hands, out of his mind. That glorious mass of chestnut hair falling over the naked skin of her back. Fucking poetry, everything about this woman.

He had to get back in there. Inexcusable to leave her alone after her first play session. He had to pull himself together.

He ran a hand through his hair, dragged in a long breath, blew it out, and headed back to the bedroom. She was draped across his bed, her pose languorous, utterly relaxed. The blanket he'd wrapped her in had fallen, exposing one perfect breast. Unbelievable, that gorgeous skin, the areola a dusky pink, her darker pink nipple swollen and so damn succulent all he wanted was to take it in his mouth...

Instead he bent over her, helped her to sit up and take a few sips of water.

"How are you?"

"Fine. Great, if you really want to know." She smiled, dazzling him. Too beautiful.

"I'll keep you here a while, let you come down, before I take you home."

"Home? Do I have to go?"

Her voice was a soft, husky sound. Hell, he'd keep her here forever, if he could.

But of course, he couldn't do that.

"Don't worry. You'll be here with me a while."

"Okay." The answer seemed to satisfy her. She closed her eyes, her dark lashes lying like a sooty fringe against her flushed cheeks.

He sat down on the bed, avoiding touching her. His cock was as hard as it had ever been. He was still rock-hard an hour later when he helped her get dressed, put her in his car and drove her home.

She was quiet in the car as they sped through the dark city. He was grateful for her lambent sleepiness. Grateful he didn't have to make conversation. His head was too twisted up.

The point was driven further home when they arrived at her building and he had to help her from the car and up the stairs, her warm little body pressed against him all the way. The scent of her, the feel of her, was making his stomach tighten up.

He got her inside the apartment, quickly took in the comfortable furnishings, the beautifully worn antiques. He took her coat from her shoulders, sat her down on the overstuffed velvet sofa. Her long hair was mussed, her eyes glazed, her lips a perfect cherry red, wanting to be kissed. But all he dared was a quick brush of his mouth across hers.

"You'll be fine," he told her. He didn't dare linger. He was too undone. He didn't trust himself.

"Yes, I'm fine. Wonderful. A little tired." She smiled sleepily.

"Okay. I'm going to let you get some rest then. I'll see you later."

He made his escape—for that's exactly what it was—as quickly as he could down the old staircase, and onto the street. He got in his car, started the engine and drove home a little too fast.

Back at his place, he spent the rest of the night pacing his living room, trying to figure out what was wrong with him. Why he could barely stand to leave her at her apartment despite the driving need to flee.

He never became attached to a woman. Never had, never would. He understood why he was like this, the lone wolf. He had damn good reason to be. He'd had one huge loss early in life, and he wasn't about to set himself up to go through that again. Ever. He'd successfully avoided attachment since that god-awful night, so long ago. So why was it so damn hard to let Skye go?

He strode to the sideboard in his dining room, poured himself a scotch and threw it back. It burned going down, a cleansing burn. He poured himself another.

He was supposed to see her tomorrow night. He'd better have his

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shit together by then. He would. Control was key. The antithesis of weakness. He'd had years of practice. He knew how to do it, how to keep his emotions at bay.

The problem was, he'd never been challenged in quite this way before. While he told himself he could handle this situation, he wasn't quite sure he believed it.

* * * *

Morning dawned with the usual San Francisco fog floating outside her bedroom windows. Skye glanced at the clock on her nightstand. Almost ten. Late for her. But she didn't want to get out of her warm bed yet. She stretched, noticing how her arms and legs felt used, a little sore. She ran a hand over her bottom and smiled at the tenderness of the skin there.

Why should this make her happy?

She didn't know. She only knew that it did.

She smoothed her hands over her body: her stomach, her ribs, her breasts. Beneath her fingertips her nipples came up hard. Her skin was hyper-sensitive everywhere, as though her night with Adam had awoken something in her.

She wasn't thrilled that he'd been right about her. She was too much attached to her own sense of control to be happy about that. But she couldn't deny the way her body had responded to the things Adam had done to her. Hell, she couldn't deny what it had done to her head.

And maybe to her heart.

But no, that was ridiculous. She hardly knew the man.

I know everything I need to know.

Why was the voice in her head so damn smug? Maybe because it was right? But what did she really know? He was gorgeous, intelligent, articulate. He was kinky. But no, that wasn't quite right. Adam was a true sensualist. She could see it in everything he did. The way he moved, the way he touched her, in the simple, sensuous luxury of his home. The perfect man for her, really. Except that this BDSM thing was a huge part of his life, and for her, it was a temporary experience. All they had was a little time together, a few days, perhaps a few weeks. By then, she would have this urge out of her system, and whatever was going on between them would be over. Just as it was supposed to be.

And he certainly hadn't given her any hint that this would continue longer than was necessary for her to understand what her desires were

all about. Hell, they hadn't even slept together. What reason would he have to become attached to her? And why did she want him to be?

Tears stung her eyes, just thinking about how he'd stayed next to her on the bed after he'd spanked her last night. Just sat with her, stroking her hair. What kind of man did that? Then he'd dressed her, taken her home. Every moment, every gesture, had been gentle, caring.

He was just doing his job.

Yes, of course. It was that irrational, girlish part of her that thought she'd read something more there. A part of her she'd closed off a long time ago.

It seemed Adam Dunne was loosening the tight hold she'd always kept over her emotions. Opening her up. Breaking her open. He frankly scared the hell out of her. But she would go back to him next Friday night.

She wouldn't miss it for all the world.

FOUR

She rode the same route in the cab to Adam's house she had the week before, but she felt completely different. This time she had some idea of what might happen there. She knew the scent of him, the feel of his hands on her skin. She was soaking wet by the time she reached his door.

He'd made her wait the week, to give her time to think. To figure out if this was working for her. To be certain this was what she truly wanted.

She'd never wanted anything so much in her life.

The week had been pure torture. Adam had called her a couple of times. Friendly conversations, about work, the usual things people talked about who were getting to know one another. She'd found out what a huge art fan he was, that he played hockey on the weekends. Such normal activities for such an unusual man.

When she got to his house and he answered his door, he was just as absurdly handsome as he'd been before. He seemed more deliciously imposing tonight as he smiled wickedly, turned and led her into the dining room this time. He was dressed all in black. The color of sin.

The lighting in the house was dim, but she could still see the carved legs of the antique dining table. All of the chairs had been pulled away to ring the edge of the room. No artwork, just enormous, ornately-framed mirrors on every wall. On a heavy, antique sideboard, tall silver candelabra held ivory tapers, the flames making their shadows dance.

He turned to her. "Take your clothes off, Skye. And get on the table."

He reached out and slid his hand around the back of her neck, heating her skin up instantly. Her body filled with the aching need to please him. She began to remove her clothing, her hands shaking. Her mind emptied out, allowing her to let go. With the last shred of reason, she realized it was Adam's mere presence which was doing this to her

head.

Soon she was naked and he smiled down at her, his smoky blue eyes glittering. He moved in closer, until she could feel the heat emanating from him. The faint, male scent of him was making her dizzy. She closed her eyes.

"Get up on the table now, Skye. Come, I'll help you."

He took her hand, steadied her while she climbed onto the cool, wood surface.

"Lie on your back," he told her, pushing her down just enough for her to understand completely that he was in control.

The table was hard and silky at the same time. And she felt as naked as she ever had in her life. Naked and strangely beautiful. Even more so when Adam began to run his hands over her body: her stomach, her thighs, her arms. They finally closed around her wrists, locking them into a pair of padded leather cuffs.

She gasped.

"It's alright, Skye. Trust me. The binding will only free you more."

By the time he'd cuffed both wrists and ankles, her heart was racing. But the vee between her thighs was soaked and pulsing with need. She pulled on the cuffs, testing them. He must have cuffed her to the table legs somehow. She couldn't move, her arms and legs spread wide. She loved it.

He stood over her, stroking her skin again, his touch lighting tiny fires of desire all over her. When he took her nipples between his fingers and rolled them, she sighed with pleasure. When he pinched them hard, she moaned in pain. But it all felt good. He kept at it, tugging, pinching. Sensation shot through her body, her sex. She wished he would use those clever fingers between her legs.

Please...

He gathered her breasts in his hands, pushing them together.

"Too damn perfect," he muttered. Then he let her go and turned away.

She had one small moment of panic simply because he was no longer touching her. But soon he turned back to her, leaned in close to her face and told her, "Stay as still as you can, Skye. This is going to hurt."

* * * *

He watched her pupils widen at his threatening words, exactly the effect he'd been after. Not that it was a lie, of course. This *was* going to

hurt.

He pulled from his pocket a tiny red, plastic clothes pin he'd picked up at a crafts store. Amazing the things one could find there. Or in a supermarket, a hardware store. Pervertibles, he liked to call them, these everyday objects that could so easily be turned into instruments of torture.

Leaning over Skye's bound body, he smoothed a few fingers over the soft skin at the edge of her left breast. An exquisitely sensitive area, he knew. He pinched the skin together lightly between his fingers, pulled a bit, and fastened the tiny clothespin there. He smiled when she sucked in a sharp breath.

"Breath into it, Skye. It'll get a bit worse before it gets better. I'm going to put a lot more of these on you."

He pulled a few more of the pins from his pocket, and created a small arc of them down the side of her breast. Every pin caused a small, satisfying gasp. He loved the sound of it, that whisper-soft noise coming from between her plump, red lips. And christ, those lips...all he could think of when he looked at her mouth was pushing his cock in, fucking that lush mouth. His cock filled, hardened.

Control.

Yes, he needed to control himself. He'd thought this would be easier, without her hot little body pressed against him. But it didn't seem to matter. Just looking at her was challenging his self-control.

Focus.

He moved in again and began a line of the wicked little pins down the side of her right breast. By the time he was done she was panting hard. He stepped back to look at his handiwork.

"Beautiful."

And she was. So fucking beautiful he could hardly stand to look at her. Bound to the table, her legs spread wide so that he could see her pink pussy lips, damp and inviting as hell. And the pins pinching her skin. He knew it hurt, could see it in the dilation of her eyes, in the sharp cadence of her breath. He wanted to hurt her. He wanted to bring her pleasure. He wanted to do everything to her. For her.

He slipped a hand between her thighs and right into the heat of her. Like hot silk inside. What would his cock feel like wrapped up in that slippery heat?

He pumped his fingers into her, pressed onto her hard little clit with his thumb, making her squirm. Then he pulled the first pin off.

She yelped.

"Yes, I know it hurts, worse coming off than going on. The blood is rushing back into your skin. I know how bad it is, but it's good at the same time, isn't it, Skye?"

"Yes..." She groaned, her head thrashing from side to side.

"You can handle it. I promise you." He leaned in and brushed a kiss over her hot cheek. "It's about to get much worse."

He pulled another pin off, and this time, rather than waiting for her to ride the pain out, immediately pulled off two more. She arched up off the table. He plunged his fingers deep into her pussy.

"Oh!"

"Yes, pain and pleasure, all at the same time." He caught her face in his free hand, held her chin, forcing her to look at him. Her golden brown eyes were glowing. "You love it, don't you, Skye? Tell me you want more."

"Yes...", she panted. "Please, Adam."

The pant turned into a whimpering cry when he circled her clit with his thumb, pressing down. He took another pin off.

"Oh...oh, oh, oh..."

He pumped his fingers into her, removed the last few pins in rapid succession. She was crying out, over and over, her sex clenching around his fingers. And as she came into his hand he leaned in and crushed his mouth to hers. He needed her so damn much at that moment. Needed her to come into his mouth, to drink in her breath, to taste the sweetness of her. She thrashed beneath him, as much as she was able to in her tight bonds. His cock was so hard he thought he might burst. He thrust his tongue into her hot little mouth, pumped into her tight, claspng pussy with his fingers. And almost broke apart as she came and came.

* * * *

It seemed like forever before she was able to catch her breath. And Adam kept kissing her: tiny, hot kisses over her cheeks, her lips, her eyelids. When she was finally able to open her eyes and look at him, his whole expression was soft, somehow. His eyes were dark and glittering, his mouth as bruised-looking as she knew her own must be. He frankly looked undone. Shocking, to see him like this.

Her heart surged. And all she wanted was to be in his arms.

"Adam..."

He looked at her almost helplessly, shaking his head. "If I uncuff

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you now, Skye, I am bound to do something I'll regret, and maybe you will, too." He paused, ran a hand back over his hair. "Fuck me, but I am barely hanging on right now."

"Don't hang on. Let it go, Adam, as I have. I need you."

How was she able to even put a coherent sentence together? She pulled hard against her bonds. "Please," she begged.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck," he muttered, unbuckling the cuffs from her wrists, massaging them, then doing the same with her ankles. As soon as he leaned over her to ask if she was okay, she wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him down, planting a firm kiss on his mouth.

He pulled back. The look on his face was pure shock, and she wondered for a moment if he might be angry with her. Then his whole expression shifted, his eyes going glassy, color rising in his cheeks.

"God damn it. Damn me," he murmured before he grabbed her face in his hands and kissed her.

His mouth came down hard on hers. Brutal, crushing. But his lips were soft and warm. His mouth was even softer when he opened hers and his tongue drove inside. His kiss was pure animal need. Frantic. She held on while he bruised her with his lips, while they panted into each others' mouths. It was as though they were one singular, driving need.

Without taking his mouth from her, he stripped his shirt off, then his pants. In a moment he was on top of her, skin to skin. The weight of his body was the most erotic sensation she'd ever experienced. She had never needed anything more. Her legs went around his wide back, and she felt the ridge of a long scar under the tender skin of her left thigh, where it pressed against the side of his ribcage. But she forgot all about it when his thick cock probed at the opening between her thighs. And he was kissing her and kissing her, until she couldn't breathe, couldn't think. All she knew was the feel and the scent of him. *Adam*.

They were moving together, their hips grinding, his cock pressing against her mound, burning hot. Her body shook with need, with the pure pleasure of him on top of her, the wet heat of his tongue in her mouth. She needed to come again.

When he shifted and slid the head of his cock into her, her sex clamped hard around him. God, he was big. His cock was a hot, pulsing shaft, paused at the entrance of her needy sex.

He pulled his mouth from hers, looked down into her face. Then,

with his gaze locked on hers, he plunged inside.

She was filled, stretched, hurting and delirious with pleasure at the same time. The pleasure shot through her system like wildfire. Her clit pulsed, on the edge of climax already. She didn't think it could get any better until he pulled back, then drove into her body. Her hips moved to meet his. He pulled out, pushed into her again, and again she met his thrust. They moved in a primal rhythm, sensation driving through her, a powerful force. She could do nothing but give in to it.

The pressure built along with the pleasure. He bent his head to bite at her neck, his teeth sharp. She gloried in the pain, in the sensation of him marking her. Yes, pure animal. But she was no more than that as she raked her nails down his back, dug in as the first wave of her climax slammed into her. Her pussy was on fire, his cock pounding into her over and over. And she shattered beneath him, exploding with a molten rush of liquid heat.

The scent of him in her nostrils, the feel of his big body crushing her, it was all part of it. And she was coming and coming. He didn't stop, even when his own climax made every muscle in his body go rigid. He twisted his hands in her hair, and the sound that came out of him was a guttural growl. Still he pumped into her, until she was weak and shivering beneath him.

When he finally stopped she couldn't move. Her arms were still around his neck, her legs wrapped around him. His cock was still hard inside her. His face was buried in her neck, his breath hot against her skin. She wanted to stay just like that forever. Never wanted him to let her go.

At that thought her chest tightened and the damn tears wanted to start again. She bit down on her lip, trying to hold them back. But she couldn't do it. A sob broke through before she could prevent it.

"Ah, damn it, Skye."

FIVE

Adam raised his head, looked into her eyes, and saw they were brimming with emotion as much as they were with tears. The sight of her like this hit him like a blow to the chest. "Skye, I don't mean it like that. I'm not angry. Not with you. I'm angry with myself. I should never have done this to you."

He stroked her cheek and she turned her face into his palm, closing her eyes. Skin like hot satin. His hand was wet with her tears. *Shit.* "This is exactly why I never should have done this."

"I wanted you to," she whispered, her voice rough. "I begged you."

"Still, it was my responsibility to stay in control. But I lose it when I'm with you, Skye. You just... shatter me."

Christ, had he really said that out loud?

He wiped at her tears with his thumbs. "I'm sorry."

"Please don't be. Don't tell me you're sorry about any of this!"

"Fuck," he muttered, then gathered her in his arms, and carried her into the living room. He laid her down on the sofa, draped a blanket over her, and sat next to her, naked still. His heart was hammering. Pure panic. What the hell was going on with him? And christ, she was beautiful. He'd never seen such a purely beautiful being in his life. But right now, she looked absolutely tortured. His gut twisted with guilt.

She stared up at him for a few moments. "Adam, tell me why this was so wrong. Haven't you ever slept with the girls you trained before?"

"Of course."

"And I did say on the questionnaire you gave me that sexual contact was fine."

"Yes."

"Then why?"

He raked a hand back over his hair once more. *Keep it simple.* "I don't get emotionally involved with the girls I train."

"Who do you become emotionally involved with?" she asked, her

voice quiet.

"No one."

"I see." She paused. "But this was sex. I wasn't asking for anything more. So why was it wrong?"

"You weren't asking for anything more? Christ, Skye, every look you give me, every response to my touch, is asking for more."

The tears started again in her big brown eyes, and again guilt washed over him. "Look, I'm not saying that's wrong. It's me. *I'm* all wrong."

"You feel right to me. Is that...an illusion? Maybe I made it all up, because of what...because of the things we're doing together. Because of the intensity."

He had to stop and think about that. A lot of new submissives became attached to the people who played them well. But it did nothing to explain what was going on with him, why he hadn't been able to maintain the carefully held control he'd developed over the years he'd been involved in the BDSM lifestyle. He'd held himself back from having sex with Skye because he'd been aware from the first moment he'd seen her that he could easily lose control. The attraction had been too strong—insanely strong. So, why hadn't he just turned away?

Because he'd *had* to have her, touch her, make her his.

He was in big fucking trouble.

Even more so when she asked him, "What do you think made you this way? What is it that shuts you off from becoming emotionally involved? And I think, regardless of what you're saying, you're not completely shut off. If you were, you would have maintained control, wouldn't you?" She paused, bit her lip. "I know you don't want to hear this. And I don't know whether to be flattered or angry that it's happened with me. Because it's so...it makes it so much harder for me to keep any emotional distance at all, these tempting glimpses of what you have to offer, if only you'd let yourself."

She was right. But this was exactly the sort of thing he could not deal with.

"I can't explain myself to you, Skye."

"Meaning you won't."

Her mouth set in a stubborn line. He had to respect that in her, that she would argue with him like this.

She sat up, leaned in toward him, and he could smell her. Her faint smoky perfume, the scent of her arousal, the musk of sex. That leftover

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fragrance of him fucking her on the table. But it hadn't just been fucking for him, had it? That's what was freaking him out. Not that he'd done it, but his reaction to it. To her.

"Tell me, Adam. Tell me why."

He shook his head. He didn't talk to anyone about his past, about the things that had made him shut down. She was right about that. But he'd never discussed what he'd been through with anyone. Why did he want to tell her about it suddenly? Nothing was making sense anymore.

Skye reached out and laid her soft hand on his arm, said quietly, "Tell me."

He drew in a long breath, blew it out. Was he really going to talk to her about this? Even as the battle waged in his mind, he said, "There was an accident."

She just nodded, but he couldn't believe he'd said the words aloud. The rest wanted to come pouring out, as though through a crack in a dam.

"It was a long time ago. I was fifteen. My older sister, Beth, had picked me up from a party. It was late. I was drunk. I'd called her to come and get me, and my best friend, Clay." His heart was thundering like a freight train in his chest, but he made himself spit the rest out. "We were hit by a drunk driver. And she...Beth and Clay both died that night. But not me. I'll never know why I'm still here. Fuck, that sounds pathetic, doesn't it? So, yeah, I shut a part of myself down after that. A normal reaction, I'm told."

"It is." Skye stroked her fingertips down his arm. "But it's also a normal part of the process to let it go, eventually. How long do you intend to punish yourself, Adam?"

"That's not what I'm doing. The accident made me realize there were things I could do so that I never had to...go through that shit again. Look, we all have issues, our history to deal with. I'm sure you have something, Skye. What was all of that stuff about not wanting to use your father's name?"

"He was a drunk. He made me miserable. I left when I was eighteen. I don't speak to him. I don't particularly trust men because of him. That's why doing this with you was such a big step for me." She stopped, blew her hair out of her eyes. "So, is that enough information, or do you want to continue to divert the conversation from your own issues?"

She was strong. Smart. He liked that about her. He almost smiled.

"Look, it's not as if I never recovered. I did. That's why I had the phoenix tattooed on my back as soon as I turned eighteen. I understood even then what it represented."

"I want to see it."

He turned without another word, and Skye took in the brilliant colors, the flawless detail of a classic, Asian-style phoenix that covered his entire back. The feathered wings flowed over the muscular ripple of his shoulders, the body and the sweeping tail curved sinuously down his back to his waist. It was beautiful, the detail exquisite. The eyes of the mythical bird glowed like a pair of emeralds within the fire of the red, gold and orange plumage. She reached out to touch it, felt him shiver beneath her fingertips.

"It's magnificent. Rising out of the ashes..." She traced her finger lower, over the scar across his ribs she'd discovered earlier.

He yanked away. "Don't, Skye." His voice held a dark edge she'd never heard from him before.

"Why not? It's a part of you."

He turned back to her, his eyes blazing. "You don't get it, do you? This is a part of me I never wanted to expose to anyone. And you ripped it out of me."

"No, don't try to blame me, Adam. Some part of you wanted to tell me, had a need to, I think." Her heart was hammering in her chest. She had the sense something important was happening here, and the idea that she could lose him now scared her half to death. But she was angry, too. "I'm going home now."

He stood up, in all his naked, masculine glory. She had to look away. He was too beautiful, and it stung. "That's probably a good idea. Before we really hurt each other. I'll take you as soon as I'm dressed."

"I can call a cab."

"I said I'll take you."

Fire in his blue eyes. He was angry. But it was also about the power in him, the pure energy of who he was. She felt as though her heart was breaking. How was that possible? She'd known him less than two weeks.

She nodded, picked her clothes up off the floor and quietly put them on, holding back the tears that burned at her eyes, tightened her throat. Even dressed, she was shivering. With a kind of shock. With a deep dread that she may never see him again. That she shouldn't see him again.

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He was dressed now, too, making him seem even more remote. "You're cold. I'll get one of my coats for you."

When he went down the hall to his bedroom, she unlocked the front door and fled into the night.

* * * *

More than a week had gone by and Skye hadn't heard from him. Of course, he had every right to be angry with her after she'd run out on him like that. Terrible of her, she knew, but she'd had to get out of there. Curled up on her old, overstuffed velvet sofa, as she was now, she'd spent the entire week going over their conversation, dissecting it from every angle. But she always came to the same conclusion: Adam was incapable of real intimacy. He'd pretty much told her so himself, had even told her why. And he resented that she'd made him do it.

What sort of transformation would he have to go through before he could break through those old walls? If he was even willing to try.

No, he would have dumped her sooner or later, and the longer it took, the more attached she would have become, until his rejection would have been unbearable. It was nearly unbearable now.

She turned to look out the living room window at the cityscape she had always loved. But it looked bleak and lonely to her now. As empty as she felt on the inside.

She'd been drawing him all week. The table in her tiny kitchen was littered with sketches in charcoal and pencil. She'd tried to capture the musculature of his big body, the details of his strong hands, his tattoo. Mostly she'd tried to draw his face. But she couldn't seem to get the eyes right.

Finally, she'd set up her easel in the living room, close to the bay window, and painted, just a series of strokes in burnt umber and highlighted with white. The result wasn't very good. But it captured him a little better than the flatter sketches did. Still, his eyes refused to come alive for her.

She still had paint under her fingernails. She hadn't bothered to give her hands a good scrub. Hadn't bathed in a day or two. She wasn't really sure how long it had been since she'd done anything more than throw on an old pair of paint-splattered jeans and a warm thermal top, twisting her long hair up into a loose ponytail. She felt like a mess, inside and out. She couldn't get warm, no matter how high she turned up the furnace, no matter how many layers of clothing she put on. The cold came from deep inside her, like an internal stratum of ice.

So this was what a broken heart felt like. She didn't much like it. In fact, it was fucking awful.

She hadn't cried since she'd left his house. She hadn't been able to. Hadn't known anything other than this pervasive sense of pain that lay heavy in her chest every waking moment.

She dragged a pillow close and held it to her chest, telling herself to pull herself together. She had a gallery show next month and she was behind in her work. But she was completely devoid of inspiration.

She sighed, shook her head, and jumped at the knock at her door. Her heart leaped in her chest as she moved across the living room, into the hall, and opened the door.

"Hi...um...are you Skye Ballard? I think I got your mail." A gawky young man with dark-framed glasses and a Charlie Brown sweater stood there, several envelopes in his hand.

"Oh, yes, that's me." Why did her heart drop into her stomach? Had she really expected that he would come after her? "Uh, thanks."

She took the mail, turned, and swung the door behind her. It didn't close.

She could smell him. She'd know his scent anywhere. She whirled around, her legs going weak already, and he was there. Adam. She could hardly believe it.

The mail dropped onto the wood floor, but she didn't care. What could he possibly want? And why did he have to look so damn beautiful, making her head spin?

Oh, god.

She put a hand to her hair self-consciously.

"Skye."

Even the sound of his voice made her quiver all over. She had to get a hold of herself. "Adam. What are you doing here?"

"I had to see you, talk to you."

She couldn't figure out what to say, so she stepped aside and let him in. Her pulse was racing with fear, with a yearning so strong she could hardly stand it. She led him into the living room, gestured for him to sit down, but he went immediately to the painting by the window.

"It's me."

She bit her lip. "Yes."

"You're very good."

"It's awful. It's not...I can't get it right."

BREAKING SKYE

When he turned his gaze was full of emotion. Shocking, to see his face like that. "No, Skye. You had it right all along."

"What do you mean?"

Two long strides and he was right in front of her. He took her shoulders in his hands, held on tight. Her heart hammered as though it would pound right out of her chest. And she was going weak all over from his touch, his scent, from the nearness of him.

"Damn it, Skye, all the way over here I knew exactly what I needed to say to you. But now I'm here and...you're so fucking beautiful, I'm speechless. And that's never happened to me before."

Tears stung her eyes, but she had to laugh. "I look like hell."

He shook his head, his blue eyes dark, intense. "You look perfect. That's why I'm here. You are perfect, and I'm an idiot to pass that up. You are perfect for me."

"I don't understand."

"That last night...everything you said was true. I knew it. I was just too damn stubborn to listen. And what did that get me? A fucking miserable week without you."

"It's been eight days," she said quietly.

He nodded. "Eight long days with me driving myself crazy thinking about you, needing you. I know I'm an asshole, Skye. I'm sorry, I truly am sorry. And I know we hardly know each other. But we *do*. Do you know what I mean?"

"Yes. I know exactly."

She was beginning to warm up, finally. The heat started where his hands were planted on her shoulders, spread down into her belly. It was the intensity of the physical chemistry between them; there was no denying it. But it was something more, too. She could see it on his face. Felt it in every beat of her heart.

"Tell me what this means, Adam. Please."

"I don't know. This is all new to me. But I want to find out."

He stroked her cheeks with his thumbs, bent down and kissed her. His lips were the sweetest thing she'd ever tasted. And his hands holding her face felt safe and warm.

He moved her to the sofa, laid her down, lowered his body over hers. He was still kissing her, his tongue doing lovely things to her mouth, sending heat lancing through her body. Her breasts filled, ached, and when he crushed her body to his, she wanted nothing more than to be right there, with him.

"Touch me, Adam. Be with me."

"That's all I want, Skye," he murmured, taking her clothes off, raining kisses over her shoulders, her breasts, her belly.

This was new to her, too, allowing herself to feel this way about a man, wanting him to feel the same way about her. Even though neither of them knew exactly where they were going, they would explore the possibilities together.

In moments they were both naked, and he was poised over her body. She wrapped her arms around his neck and opened to him. Completely. And when he entered her, she was lost in his embrace. For the first time in her life, she allowed herself to be.

Adam had been right, in their very first conversation. She'd had to break control, to let it go. Finally, she'd found the way. With him.

About the Author

Eden Bradley writes erotica and sensual romance in between her duties as book review editor and member liaison at RomanceDivas.com, an award-winning romance writers resource website, where she has published several articles on writing love scenes.

Eden has been writing since she was old enough to hold a pen. While other children had imaginary friends, she spent her childhood with the characters in her head for company, creating stories for her entertainment. But it was only a few years ago that it occurred to her she should try to actually publish what she was writing. She embarked on the journey to publication, learning everything she could about the craft and business of writing along the way.

When not busy writing, she enjoys a sybaritic life of cooking, eating, gardening, shopping, traveling, lounging and reading everything she can get her hands on. She particularly adores sultry, sensual stories of love. Please visit her website at: www.edenbradleyerotica.com.

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