



SWEET VIBRATIONS

MELINDA BARRON

Loose Id

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Loose Id.®

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Author's Note

The world of BDSM is an intriguing place. Readers should remember that the world set up for Lucy and Lake is fiction. Before jumping into something, people should always consider safe sexual practices. Also, remember that all BDSM practices should be safe, sane, and consensual. Special thanks to Maura for reading, re-reading, and re-reading this manuscript, and for her open, honest appraisal.

MB

Chapter One

Lucy Travers pulled back the clutch and kicked the bike into fourth gear. The wind whipped around her face and a sweet shudder ran through her body. Straddling this bike was like riding into heaven. Tingly tendrils of power crept up her legs and shot straight to her core. For about the hundredth time that day she fought with her decision to sell the chrome beast humming between her thighs.

Just as soon as the idea appeared, though, she kicked it out of her brain. She already had three motorcycles of her own. She didn't need a fourth one. She especially didn't need this one, reminding her every time she looked at it that her uncle was dead. Well, he wasn't really her uncle, not technically. He was the brother of her stepfather, which would make him her step-uncle. Or he had been until her mother had divorced her stepfather and moved on to her next husband.

When Lucy had heard Craig Margouse had died in an accident she'd been devastated. During her mother's eight-year marriage to Craig's brother, Patrick, Craig had seemed like more of a father to her than Pat. He'd taken her under his wing, protected her from Pat's temper, and taught her to love the outdoors, especially riding motorcycles.

He'd taken her on her first ride when she was nine; taught her the finer points of braking when she was twelve; and let her pilot his Honda when she was fourteen. When she turned sixteen he presented her with the pink slip to that bike, and told her that no matter what, he'd better never catch her without a helmet on her head.

She still had that bike, sitting in her garage. When she'd heard about Craig's death, she'd jumped on it and ridden for hours, stopping only for gas, or to sit at a roadside table and cry. She'd been furious with him, madder than hell, when she'd found out that he'd crashed his bike, and had not been wearing a helmet at the time.

Her mother had been less than helpful in her daughter's grief, reminding Lucy that Craig wasn't even a blood relative. But Lucy didn't care. He was a blood relative to her. She went to the funeral and sat in the back, her tears flowing freely as his friends recited poems and told stories of Craig's life.

When the lawyer had called two days later to tell her she'd inherited everything, Lucy had been shocked. The shock quickly gave way to anger. She didn't want the responsibility of going through his personal effects and deciding what to do with what. That chore should have fallen to Patrick.

Then she'd gone to the lawyer's office and he'd given her a short letter written by Craig just two months before his death.

You're like the daughter I never had. Do with it all as you will. If you sell the bikes, please make sure they go to good homes. Behave yourself and take care. And always remember to wear your helmet. Oh, and take care of Fred.

Fred. Lucy exited the highway and shifted down into third. The damn dog had almost died right after Craig. The vet had said the dog was in mourning. Lucy thought he was just pissed because, not only was Craig gone, he now had to share his space with her two cats, Scarlet and Rhett.

Plus, he'd gone from a house-sized yard to a duplex-sized yard. For a large black lab, that was quite a difference. It had taken four months before the dog was back to normal. Now, eight months after Craig's death, Fred had settled in and become very submissive to Ashley and Rhett, until they left food in their dishes. Then, all bets were off.

Lucy came to a stop at the light and settled her feet on the pavement. She ignored a catcall from the idiot driving the car behind her and tried to remember how many blocks down she had to travel before turning left. She usually traveled to Margaret's new house from the other direction. Margaret had promised her that the man who was thinking about buying the bike was a good person, that he loved motorcycles, and would care for Craig's baby as if it were his own, which it would be, if he bought it.

What had she said his name was? Something different, Lucy remembered that. Tank? Frank? No, it was Lake. Lake Ross. Margaret said he worked with her at the hospital. Lucy figured he was a doctor, which meant he could meet the exorbitant price she was asking for the motorcycle.

"Hey, baby! Too busy thinking about me to watch the light? It's green!"

Lucy fought the desire to flip her fellow motorist the bird, popped the clutch, and sped through the light. The asshole sped behind her, following so closely that Lucy knew if she hit the brakes he'd slam into the back of the bike. She flapped her left hand behind her back in an effort to get him to back off. In return, he tooted his horn to the shave and a haircut tune.

Why did a woman driving a motorcycle seem to attract all the loonies? She had a few more blocks to go, and there was no other lane to get into. Besides, figuring this guy for the jerk that he was, she knew that he'd just follow her if she did change lanes.

She let off the accelerator and the bike slowed. A few minutes later she downshifted, then looked at the speedometer; she was now going fifteen in a thirty-mile zone. When the horn came this time it wasn't the friendly tune of shave and a haircut, but a loud bleeping sound that made Lucy grin.

“Move it, sister.”

“Back off, asshole!” She screamed the words, and then took the next left, this time shooting him the bird with her left hand pressed against her thigh where he couldn’t see it, but she could get the satisfaction of letting her feelings be known.

A few blocks later she took a right. She’d only been to Margaret’s new house one other time, but the gathering of motorcycles and cars in the street guided her to the right spot. She slipped the bike into the driveway and turned off the engine. She undid the strap for the helmet, praying the metal hat hadn’t done too much damage to her hair.

Once the bike was secured, she followed the noise to the backyard. When Margaret had said they were having a “small barbecue,” Lucy figured there would be five, maybe ten people. Judging from the number of bikes in the yard and street there were at least twenty people already here.

She stepped through the gate and surveyed the gathering. Make that twenty-five. She searched the crowd and found Margaret standing in a group of people she didn’t recognize.

Lucy greeted several of her friends as she made her way across the yard. She wondered which of the guests was her prospective buyer. Several of the men looked as if they were biker enthusiasts.

Margaret saw her coming, and broke off from the group to meet her.

“You’re late.”

“Sorry, I took the bike for a last spin. I changed my mind about selling it several times. But, here I am. Where’s my buyer?”

“Over by the trees. Look, if you don’t want to sell the bike, Lake will understand. He’ll be disappointed, because that’s all he’s talked about all week, but I think he’ll understand.” Margaret put her hand on Lucy’s arm and tilted her head, a sad look on her face.

Lucy thanked the powers that be for her high school friend, who had always been there for Lucy, through thick and thin.

“No, I have to do this. I can’t afford to keep paying insurance on four motorcycles and a car. The insurance on Craig’s bike is more expensive than the others. My bill almost doubled when I added it to my policy. So, in an effort to meet my bills, the bike has to go.”

“You don’t have to ride it. You could just leave it in the garage.”

“To leave that gorgeous bike in my garage would be a crime.”

“To my way of thinking, asking \$25,000 for a piece of metal with only two wheels is a crime.”

Lucy laughed. “It’s a fully decked-out 2000 Indian Chief. It’s a gorgeous bike that deserves to be taken care of. He needs to make sure it’s garaged and not left out in the elements, and that he rides it gently. It’s a show-quality bike. Are you sure this guy is reliable?”

“I’m sure. He was a doctor at the hospital, one of our best. He gave it up, though, because it took up too much of his time. He’s now a physical therapist. And he’s single.” Margaret wiggled her eyebrows and wagged her tongue.

“Did you bring me here to fix me up, or to help me sell a motorcycle?”

“Double duty. I told him you were minus a boyfriend, and loved to ride. He’s intrigued.”

“Did you tell him I’m fat?”

“You know I hate that word, and you are not fat. You’re voluptuous. Listen, Luce, he’s a cool guy. Give him a chance. Getting laid might improve your attitude toward life.”

“My attitude is fine, thank you very much. And what makes you think I’d sleep with this guy at the drop of a hat?”

“You’re attitude’s fine? Let’s examine the evidence. Who just got written up at work for yelling at a customer? Who turns down every dinner invitation she gets? Who hasn’t been to a movie, play, or party in more than a year? Don’t say it’s because you’re upset about Craig, because this started way before he died. You let Brandon get to you. Admit it.”

Lucy fought to keep her temper under control. Margaret was right, for sure, but having it pointed out grated on her nerves.

“He was my husband, Margaret. He left me with a crap load of bills. The only way I’ve been able to dig myself out is by selling Craig’s bikes. Now I have to sell the one I wanted to keep. And I’m here now, aren’t I?”

“Only because there’s the chance you could sell the bike. If I hadn’t dangled that little tidbit in front of you, you’d be at home. Admit it. You can’t keep yourself inside a bubble anymore.”

“You’re a witch.” Lucy shook her head and wrinkled her nose. She knew that Margaret was right, but she didn’t want to hear it. It had been well over a year since she and Brandon had divorced. It was time to move on. The problem, however, was Lucy didn’t think she would be able to. Brandon had put a stake through her heart, and left a huge hole in the center of it.

“Look, I’m not asking you to fall in love with Lake. I’m just asking you to give yourself a chance to have an orgasm with something that’s not battery operated.”

“Hey, little George and I get along just great. He never talks back, and he always hits just the right spots.”

“Yeah, but you can’t cuddle with him afterwards.”

“Brandon never wanted to cuddle, either. And George hasn’t walked out on me yet.”

Margaret shook her head and waved toward a crowd of people. Lucy turned to watch the man who now moved toward them.

“Holy crap. You didn’t tell me he was Hector reborn.” Well over six feet tall, with black, wavy hair that hit his shoulders. His eyes were a deep green. He had a neatly trimmed beard and mustache that gave him a very rugged look. She guessed he weighed about two hundred twenty pounds, but it seemed to be all muscle.

There was a grin on his face and he winked at her.

“Hi. Lake Ross.” He held out his hand.

“Lucy Travers.” His hand swallowed hers and Lucy quickly pulled it away. A confused look flitted across his face, and then he smiled.

“So, you’ve got a 2000 Indian you’re wanting to get rid of?”

“It’s more of a necessity than a want. It’s out front.” Lucy smiled at Margaret, then started toward the gate, praying that Lake wasn’t measuring her hips as she walked. Margaret was right. He was gorgeous. “It’s a five speed, black and red, decked out with lots of chrome. It’s a V-twin, and it drives like a dream.”

Lucy turned to see his face as the bike came into view. The grin that had been there earlier now stretched from ear to ear.

“I’ll take it. But we need to talk about that asking price. You know as well as I do that you inflated it.”

“Don’t you want to look it over first? Take it for a spin? I promise you it’s worth every penny that I’m asking.”

He cocked his head and shook it slowly from side to side. “I’m willing to go as high as twenty thousand, maybe twenty and a half.”

“Oh, please, you’re wasting my time.”

Lake walked to the bike and stroked the gleaming metal. His fingers strayed to the leather seat and Lucy felt herself go weak in the knees. It was as if he were stroking a lover. An image of him stroking her hips while she straddled the bike slipped into her mind. She bit her lip to stifle a moan as he stroked the fins.

When he threw his leg over the machine and gripped the handlebars she let the moan escape. This man was made for this bike. He looked like a Greek god straddling a horse, ready to go into battle.

“Key?”

She put it in his outstretched hand. The engine roared to life.

“This baby purrs like a kitten. Hop on.”

“No, you go ahead. I don’t ride bitch very well.”

“Really? We’ll have to work on that. We’ll just take it around the block. Besides, what if I try to steal it? Hop on.”

The idea was tempting. It had been years since she’d taken the submissive position on a motorcycle. She’d been riding since she was nine, and now, at age thirty-one, it had been at least eleven years since she’d ridden behind anyone.

“I’m not sure I’d know what to do anymore.”

“All you have to do is let me sit between your thighs. I’ll do the rest.” The look on his face made the proposition take on a positively nasty tone, and Lucy loved it.

“That sounds incredibly dangerous. And incredibly…” Lucy pursed her lips together to keep the word sensual from pouring forth. She could tell from the look on his face that he knew exactly what she was thinking.

“Come on, one little spin; then we can talk money.” He pushed her helmet toward her. She strapped it on and threw her left leg behind him. The seat was higher in the back, but still, he rested perfectly between her thighs.

Lucy felt a stirring inside her that she hadn’t felt in a year. Her nipples tightened and her clit twitched. *This is a bad idea. Get off! Get off!*

He pushed backwards, his ass coming into contact with her upper thighs. The tingle spread through her body. *Idiot! Get off now. Two more seconds like this and you’ll be flat on your back before nightfall.*

She moved her feet to the ground, then jerked them back onto the footrests when Lake released the clutch, turned the bike, and took off down the street.

Lucy put her hands on his waist, which was firm under her touch. When he got to the end of the block, he turned left onto a main road.

Lucy leaned in toward his ear. “This is more than around the block,” she yelled.

He answered by shrugging his shoulders and she felt him shake with laughter. She knew that just like her, he was in love with the Indian. When they pulled up to a light, he turned toward her.

“Twenty.”

“No way. Twenty-five.”

“OK, twenty-one.”

“No, I’ll go as low as twenty-four.”

Lake winked at her again, then took off as the light turned green.

The vibrations from the motorcycle, coupled with the warmth of a hunky man between her thighs, lulled Lucy into a dreamy state. Little George might have to have a rest tonight.

She leaned into Lake, her breasts pressing into his back. From the way he straightened up and pushed backwards, she knew that he appreciated the feel of her against him. Maybe, just maybe, she would let her guard down and enjoy Lake’s company, for just one night. The idea of having a real flesh-and-blood cock inside her had definite appeal.

Lucy pushed the idea out of her head. There was no way she was falling into bed with this man. He’d just use her and abuse her, the way Brandon had. She pushed back gently, aware that this seat didn’t have back support for the rider.

A few blocks up, he pulled into the parking lot of a grocery store. Lake parked the bike at the end of the lot and turned off the engine.

He twisted in his seat so he could look her in the eye.

“How about we split the difference and go for twenty-two and a half.”

“Cash?”

“I can have the money wire transferred to you tomorrow, if you can have the title for me at the same time.”

“I can do that.”

Lake stuck out his hand. This time, Lucy took it and didn't pull back. He grinned at her and she nodded, fighting the inner war that waged inside her.

Chapter Two

Lake slipped the truck into park and exited the cab. He looked for Lucy, but didn't see her. He was sure she'd said to meet him in the parking lot, and not in the bank.

A check of his watch showed he was about ten minutes early. He wondered if he was anxious to purchase the bike, or to see Lucy again. He decided it was a bit of both, heavy on the Lucy side.

Her behavior last night had mystified him. When she'd leaned into him on the bike, he'd known she was aroused. He could feel it in the way her body rested against his. Damn, he'd been hard since the minute he'd seen her walk into Margaret's backyard.

Medium height and curvy, with long auburn hair she'd pulled back into a braid for riding. Her lips were full and very, very kissable. Of course he'd fantasized about them doing other things to him last night. His cock had been hard all through the ride, and after getting home, he'd had to take matters into his own hands. The fantasy of Lucy in front of him, her lips wrapped around him, had fueled the fire.

She would be the perfect little sub, if he could just get her to open up and trust him. When he'd heard about her ex, and about her mother's six marriages, he knew exactly where

the hesitancy to let anyone new into her life came from. He had a few plans to work on that. Lucy was definitely someone he wanted to get to know better.

He leaned against the truck and waited. About five minutes later she pulled into the lot in an SUV that he knew probably cost her a pretty penny. What did Margaret say that she did? He racked his brain, and then snapped his fingers. She worked at a garden shop, one of many scattered around the New Mexico area. He couldn't believe that she could afford such a high priced machine on her salary.

She parked next to him and smiled tentatively as she exited the car.

"You're early," she said, and he took advantage of the time to watch her walk toward him. He used his doctor's training to pin her at about a size sixteen. She had large breasts and hips, with a smaller waist. A perfect hourglass figure. He felt his cock harden again.

"I'm anxious. Nice truck."

"It was Craig's. It's paid for, and mine wasn't. So I sold mine and kept his."

"Wow. What did he do for a living?"

"Delivery man for a trucking service."

Lake's eyebrows shot up and Lucy laughed.

"He also played poker at the casinos, quite successfully."

"Ah, I see. He must have been pretty good at it."

"He was. Shall we go inside?"

Lake nodded, then took her elbow as they walked across the parking lot. He felt her tense up, but she didn't pull away. That was a start. She'd left Margaret's house minutes after they'd returned from his test drive. She didn't even stay for the food, which surprised him. He'd been hoping to use that time to get to know her better.

They concluded their transaction very quickly, he transferring the funds and she signing over the title. Once it was completed, she planned to go with him to the DMV to make sure there were no hold-ups, since she'd signed a title with Craig's name on it.

“OK, I have the death certificate, and my power of attorney and the will. Let’s go and change it over.”

“Sounds good to me. Can I treat you to dinner tonight? Although, after the wad of cash you just received it should be the other way around.” He was grateful to see a smile crack through her hardened exterior.

“Thanks, but I have other plans.”

“Later in the week, then? Come on, I’ll drive the bike over and you can visit it. We’ll go for a ride and you can practice riding bitch. I know you didn’t want to get rid of it.”

“You’re right, I didn’t. But I needed the money. I’ll think about the offer and let you know. We’d best get down to the tag office. The line there is usually horrendous.”

“Fine, but you’re passing up a great deal. Trust me.”

“Trust you? I’ve heard that line before.”

“Yeah, but I’m a doctor.”

* * * * *

Lucy rolled the large clay pot onto the dolly, tied it down, and wheeled it toward the tourist’s car. She could tell by looking at the vehicle that the woman’s trunk would not hold the pot and be able to close. Before she could voice her opinion the woman’s husband objected, saying that they would have to have the item shipped to their home in New York.

“No way. I don’t trust those services.” The woman stomped her foot and put her hands on her hips.

“Well, we could put it in the passenger’s seat and tie you to the roof.” The husband’s voice was harsh.

Lucy bit her lip to hide a smile. It was obvious this couple had been on an extended trip and were getting on each other’s nerves. As they argued, she checked her watch. An hour and a half until Brownlee’s closed and she could jump on her Harley and go home.

Thoughts of the motorcycle brought up an image of Lake Ross. It had been four days since he'd purchased the Indian. He'd given her his card and said that she should call him. He'd made no bones about what she should call him for. She'd practically worn out George's batteries thinking about his offer.

The man was gorgeous. Even though he was a doctor, he hadn't said anything about her needing to lose thirty pounds. Instead, he'd eyed her breasts and hips with appreciation. She'd been so very tempted to go home with him that day. Only the idea of being crapped on again held her back.

She'd just started to help the customer's husband load things from the trunk into the back seat when the distinct sound of the Indian reached her ears. She turned and watched Lake pilot the bike next to her own, park it, and take off his helmet. Their gazes locked as he unzipped his jacket. He licked his lips and ran his fingers through his hair. And Lucy almost had an orgasm on the spot.

"Watch it! You drop that and you'll buy us another one!" The annoying husband shot her an angry look.

"Sorry, sorry." She bit back a nasty retort, grabbed the pot, and lifted it into the trunk. The husband scoffed at her and was still arguing with his wife when their car drove off.

Lake had propped himself against his bike, watching her carefully as she walked toward him. *He looks at me like he knows what I look like naked. And why am I suddenly wet? You know why, Lucy. George just isn't going to hack it for you tonight.*

"Hi. You put a new seat on the bike. Cool."

"Yeah, it's got support for my rider. Which, hopefully, will be you. When do you get off?"

"A little over an hour." Her stomach rolled and her clit twitched. It wasn't a bad feeling, except that Lucy knew that Lake knew the effect he had on her.

“Good. Meet me at the picnic area about twenty minutes from here, off I-25 on the way to Santa Fe. You know where I’m talking about?”

Lucy nodded.

“I’ll meet you there after you get off work. Don’t be late.”

He stood and strapped on his helmet.

“You’re awfully sure of yourself.”

“Well, you didn’t call me back, so I figured I’d have to dangle a carrot in front of your nose.”

Lucy’s brow furrowed. “What carrot?”

“Something I found taped to the underside of the seat when I changed it out. I’m guessing it belonged to Craig, and that you’d want it back.”

“Yeah, I do. Just give it to me now instead of all this cloak and dagger stuff.”

Lake straddled the bike and grinned. “I always loved detective shows. See ya in an hour and a half.”

He revved the engine and drove off, leaving Lucy standing with her hands on her hips, and a smart-ass answer on her lips.

* * * * *

She found the picnic site with little effort. It was back from the road, sitting in a cove of trees. Lake sat on the table, chewing on an apple. She parked and took off her helmet.

“Can I have what you found?”

“Nice to see you, too. Some fruit? I brought apples, pears, and some grapes. I also bought some cheese and some green tea. I would have brought beer but I never drink and drive. I’ve stitched up too many wounds from the dumb asses who do.”

Lucy hitched her rear onto the table and grabbed a pear. She took a bite and licked the juice from her chin.

“What did you find?”

“I’m not sure. I didn’t open it.”

He pulled a letter-sized envelope from his pocket.

Lucy took it and frowned. The number eight, followed by thirty-two in parenthesis, was in the left hand corner. In the middle of the envelope Craig had written three-nine-seven-four. She tore open the seal and a key fell into her hands.

“No markings,” she murmured. “I have no idea what this means.”

“It means something, or else your uncle wouldn’t have hidden it on the bike. Do those numbers mean anything to you?”

“Nothing. I’ve gone through everything that was in the safety deposit box, and in his house. The lawyer didn’t give me anything with this on it.”

“Hmm, it’s a mystery, then. I’ll help you solve it, if you like.”

Lake finished his apple, then threw the core into the trees. He picked up a pear and mimicked Lucy’s early movements. When his tongue touched the juice on his chin she felt her knees weaken. She stared at the area his tongue had caressed, her mouth watering at the idea of tracing her tongue over the exact same spot.

“I feel the same way, but you’re a tough nut to crack.” His voice was low and sensuous.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.” Lucy put the key in the envelope, folded it, and put it in her back pocket.

“Come on, the attraction between us is obvious. Why won’t you at least let me take you to dinner?”

“Isn’t that what we’re doing now?” Lucy finished her pear and threw it in the same place as Lake had tossed his core.

“Hardly. I’m talking steaks and potatoes, or chicken, fish, Mexican, Italian...you name it, and I’m there.”

“With sex for dessert?”

“I’m not opposed to that idea.”

“Look, I appreciate the offer, but...”

“I know, Margaret told me.”

Lucy jumped from the table. “She told you what?”

“Come on. I was curious, so I asked. She told me about your lousy ex leaving you with all those bills. It doesn’t mean that every man is going to dump on you.”

“Yeah? Well George and I get along just fine, and all I have to do is supply him with batteries.”

She started to walk toward her bike, but stopped when his voice reached her ears.

“Tell me, when you’ve been playing with George the last few nights, have you been thinking about me? Have you imagined me above you, behind you, beside you? What have I been doing, Lucy? Sucking those beautiful breasts? Fucking you? Did I tie you up and do all sorts of nasty things to you? Did you come hard?”

She turned toward him, her chest heaving. “How dare you?”

But she stood, rooted to the spot. Her words held no conviction. They stared at each other for several minutes; then he gathered the fruit and set it on the seat of the table.

“Come here.”

“No.”

“I’m not going to do anything. I just want to prove a point. Come here.”

“What point?”

“A little leeway, please?” He held out his hand.

Lucy shook her head. She should hop onto her hog and head home. But the pull between them was too much. Damn, but she wanted him. She straightened her shoulders and walked toward him.

“Lie down on the table.”

“Don’t I need to put on a gown first, Doctor?”

He grinned and winked.

“Lie down.” The command in his voice was obvious. It sent ripples of desire running through her body.

Lucy did as he asked, her chest expanding more and more as her nerves hit overdrive.

“Close your eyes and listen, OK?”

Lucy nodded, the wonderful feeling of arousal taking over. Then, panic set in. She started to rise, and Lake gently pushed her back down.

“Relax. Each time I meet a new patient, I have to develop trust. I have to remember that this is a person who’s been hurt, usually through no fault of their own. They have to trust me to help them, trust me to recover what they’ve lost.”

His fingertips touched her hair, combing gently through down to the braid.

“And is this how you get them to trust you?”

“No, we talk and get to know each other. Sometimes I do it by giving them a massage. But you’re not one of my patients, and if I start to massage you, my hands are going to go places they probably shouldn’t be...just yet.”

Lucy moaned lightly. This was the most impetuous thing she’d done in ages. And she was loving it.

“Tell me what you like, Lucy. Tell me what makes you hot, what gets you off.”

“Don’t you think you should buy me dinner, first?” She was so turned on right now that she wanted to scream at him to bend her over the table and fuck her. She tried to relax as he moved his hands back up to her forehead and traced them through her hair again.

“Tell me. Tell me how you’d like me to top you. Tell me how you’d like to submit to me, to give your body to me.”

Her body tensed. *I'm gonna kill her. I'm gonna kill her.*

She swallowed her anger against her friend, who she knew was just trying to help Lucy out of a bad time.

“Margaret told you.”

“That you’re a sub? Yes. Did Margaret tell you that, even though we work at the hospital together, we met at Tygers?”

“Oh, shit.” Lucy sat up, and Lake pushed her shoulders back down. His touch turned her nipples to hard little pebbles. Brandon had been her top, and he’d dumped on her. What made her think this man would be any different just because he was Margaret’s friend?

“I’ve topped her several times, all under the watchful eye of her husband. The kind of topping I want to do with you, however, involves more than things that happen at Tygers. But I’m willing to start there.”

“What if I’m not?”

“Your body tells me you are. Meet me there at nine tomorrow. I’ll be in one of the private rooms. Just ask downstairs.”

He traced his fingers along her lips, then picked up his helmet, straddled his bike, and took off. Lucy sat up on the table and stared at the mountains. She was going to kill Margaret. She could have at least warned her that Lake was a Dom. She’d been set up.

She laughed and shook her head. Maybe an intense session with Lake would do her good. Trust was the main aspect in a D/s relationship. If Lake could help her recover her ability to trust, then it would be worth it. She’d been lonely for the last year, with Brandon leaving and Craig dying.

She pulled the key and envelope from her pocket.

“So, Craig, since you’ve left me this little mystery, tell me what this means?”

She lifted her eyes to the sky. The only sounds that hit her ears were far off car engines and animals scavenging for half eaten fruit cores.

Maybe I can get Lake to help me with this later, after I meet him at Tygers. The idea that she'd so readily accepted the invitation made her very nervous. A breath of hot air left her lips. The idea of submitting to Lake was very intriguing, but also very disturbing. It had been more than a year since she'd been to Tygers. She hoped she had the courage to walk through the front door, much less submit to a man she'd known for less than a week.

Chapter Three

Tygers was hopping, as always. Lucy parked the SUV near the back of the lot and stared out across the sea of vehicles. She examined each car until her gaze lit upon Lake's truck. Her stomach lurched.

Part of her had hoped that he wouldn't be there, although she knew that he would be. A glance at her watch showed that it was twenty minutes before nine. She had time to sit here and rethink her decision.

Of course she'd done nothing but think about it all day, and all last night. She hadn't even taken George out, because she knew that it would only leave her wanting more. Only leave her wanting Lake.

She should have screamed after him before he'd mounted the bike yesterday. She should have told him that, while she'd appreciate a hard screw, she wasn't up for opening herself up to submission. The idea was too risky, too scary.

She'd always loved being submissive, loved the way it made her feel and the pleasures it brought. Loved it at first. As their relationship had progressed, Brandon had changed all that. He'd shown her people were not to be trusted. She'd known him for years before he'd dumped on her. Why did she think Lake Ross would be any different?

Lucy closed her eyes and tried to channel her anxieties out of her body.

She knew she didn't want to be the type of person who pushed everyone away, who lived alone, ate alone, and did everything alone. She needed to have human contact. But she was too nervous to submit to Lake tonight.

"No, no, I can't do it." She reached for the key and turned the engine back on. She shut it off almost as quickly. She should at least go inside and tell him that yes, she was intrigued, but she just wasn't ready for a new Dom. He had to give her some time.

She took a deep breath and exited the car. At the front door she took another calming breath, then pulled it open. A smile lit her face. The place hadn't changed.

The building that housed Tygers had originally been a warehouse on the outskirts of Albuquerque. When the owner had gone bankrupt, several investors had snatched it up and opened Tygers. The club wasn't advertised anywhere in town, but those in the know knew it was a BDSM club.

At the second set of doors, a bouncer waited. He turned to her with a frown that quickly changed to a smile.

"Lucy! Damn, girl, welcome back."

"Thanks, Chess, nice to see you too."

She laughed when he swallowed her in a hug. No one but the regulars would guess that the hulking Chess was a sub, whose Mistress and Master were part owners of Tygers.

"Where have you been?"

"Oh, you know. Around." She tried to gently push herself away from him.

"Yeah, well, we've missed your smiling face. You meeting someone here?"

"Yes. Lake Ross."

"Wow, moving up in the world. The doc is in room four, second level. But I didn't know it was you he was waiting for."

When she passed in front of him he whispered, "Have fun," and winked at her.

Inside, the sounds of the club met her ears. The main room was reserved for newbies, those who were curious but nervous about getting started in the BDSM world. An assortment of men and women in various stages of undress roamed the room and sat at the bar, talking to the more experienced members of the club who offered advice and guidance.

Smoke filled the air and Lucy hurried through it to the second door, where another bouncer that she didn't recognize asked who she was meeting. She gave Lake's name and he admitted her to the private area.

The main room in this part of the building was for public topping by members, mostly for whippings and floggings. Lucy had never been a fan of either activity, although Brandon had always made her take part. She enjoyed getting a good spanking; she just didn't want to do it in front of others. The subs in here were required to wear collars, many of them attached to leashes held by their Dom/Dommes.

She stopped at the desk and smiled at the unknown woman sitting behind it.

"I'm going upstairs," Lucy said. "To room number four."

"Lucky you," the woman replied. "The doc said to give you this."

Lucy took the package and nodded.

"He also said to tell you not to put the collar on; he wanted to do it."

It felt like a boulder had been dropped on her head. She knew that if she went upstairs it wouldn't be just to tell Lake she had changed her mind. He was expecting her for a session, and he would talk her into it.

She bit her lip.

"Nervous?" The woman's voice was soft. "This your first time?"

Lucy shook her head.

“I see. Just your first time with the doc. Well, half the women in this room would give their ovaries to be in your place. The doc is a favorite, but very, very picky. If you want, I’ll go in your place and you can watch the desk.”

The woman did an imitation of a dog begging, and Lucy laughed.

Lucy started toward the stairs, laughing as the woman muttered, “Figures.”

At the doorway to room four she paused again. She knew now that she’d come too far. She might have told herself earlier that she was just coming inside to say she didn’t want to be topped, but she knew differently. There was no way she was turning back. She wanted this. Needed this. She pushed into the outer chamber and knew she was wasting time, and she was already late.

She quickly shed her clothes and put on the long, gossamer black gown that had been in the package. The gown tied up the front, from her breasts to her knees. She pinned her hair on top of her head and picked up the collar.

Her chest rose rapidly as she fought to overcome her panic. When she pushed open the inner door and stepped inside, she stopped for a minute to allow her eyes to adjust to the candlelight. The main lighting in the room was off. Two large candles were in each corner, giving off a soft glow.

She could make out the stone table in the middle of the space. She searched for Lake, jumping when his voice hit her ears from behind her.

“You’re late. I was beginning to think you wouldn’t come.”

“I almost didn’t.”

He stepped in front of her and she gasped. He was wearing tight jeans and a white linen shirt that was unbuttoned, revealing a very muscular chest.

They were so close she could feel the heat off his body.

Their gazes locked and she licked her lips before lowering her eyes submissively.

“Tell me why you were hesitant about coming. I thought we had a connection.”

“We do. But it’s been so long, and I...well, I don’t want to get shafted again.”

She hissed when he gently caressed her cheek.

“How sad would your life be if all you did was stay locked away from everyone? Rebuilding trust has to start somewhere.”

She nodded. When he leaned down and kissed her forehead, she knew there was no way she could leave.

He took a step back and held out his hand.

“The collar?”

Lucy gave it to him.

“You know this is just for now. When I collar you for real, there will be a lock on the clasp. Did Brandon collar you?”

“Not really. There was never a ceremony or anything. He just gave it to me and told me to wear it when he was around. He was more a wannabe, or so Margaret always said. I’d wear a collar here because the rules demanded it, but never at home.”

“I’m for real, Lucy. If you wear my collar, you’ll wear it all the time, whether we’re together or not.”

She nodded.

“Show me that you want what I’m offering. Show me you want to submit to me.”

He put the leather in front of her face.

“Kiss the collar.”

The leather was cold under her lips, and when Lake reached up with a free hand to gently caress her hair and whispered, “Good girl,” she shivered.

He fastened it around her neck and Lucy resisted the urge to pull against it. Twice she started to raise her hands toward it before lowering them back to her sides.

“It’s all right,” Lake said. “Get used to the feel of it. I know it’s been a while. Kneel down and get your emotions under control.”

The stone floor was cold against her knees. She wanted to lay her head against his thigh. From this vantage point she could see his rock-hard cock bulging against his jeans. If he’d been Brandon, she’d already have that cock in her mouth. Brandon had always been about instant gratification.

He stood in front of her, unmoving, his hands clasped in front of his stomach. Finally, he reached out and stroked her hair.

“Feeling better?”

“Yes.”

He crouched down in front of her, lifting her face to his with his forefinger. His eyes widened in question.

“I mean, yes, Master.”

“Very good. Now, go and lie on the table.”

“The robe?”

“Leave it on and fastened.”

At the table, she looked nervously at the restraints on all four corners. She tried to ignore them as she climbed on top and lay down, setting the robe under her so that the material was not pulled against her body. Her pussy was dripping wet. She’d shaved it last night for the first time in months, knowing that Lake would want it that way.

She tried to imagine exactly what he had planned for tonight. Whatever it was, she knew that it would be totally different from anything she’d ever experienced. She flattened her palms against the table at her side, and waited.

* * * * *

Lake shifted his hard cock and muffled a groan. He'd jacked off before coming to Tygers so he wouldn't be in such a hurry to take Lucy. But that had been three hours ago, and he could tell now it hadn't worked. The minute she'd stepped into the room he'd wanted to fuck her.

He knew he couldn't, though. She'd think he only wanted her body, and that wasn't true. She intrigued him, and he wanted all of her.

He walked to the table, stood at the end, and looked at her.

"I'm not going to fasten the restraints, Lucy, unless I have to. You're on your own here to be a good girl and lie still. Do you understand me?"

Her murmured, "Yes, Master," made his cock twitch more. He thought about leaving her there while he went to the outer room and took care of things again, but decided against it. The added tension of his hard-on would increase the intensity of what he had planned for her tonight.

He moved to the side of the table and placed his hand about an inch away from her calf. He moved up her leg, not touching her body.

At the juncture of her thighs, he moved his hand over her pussy, not touching, just letting the heat from his palm soak down into her body. Through the thin material, his gaze caught a hint of gold at her pussy and his cock began to pound painfully.

Damn, the little minx has a pierced clitty. He lowered his gaze and saw a hint of gold there too, her inner labia was pierced too, probably on both sides.

He fought the need to touch them.

"You're wet."

"Yes, Master."

"I like that, already wet for me."

When she moaned softly, he grinned and moved his hand to her stomach. He made quick work of the area, hovering but not touching, moving up to her breasts and putting a

palm over each round globe, inches away from her hardened peaks, which were also pierced. He could see the tiny gold rings resting against her skin.

He smiled as he watched her struggle to remain still. He knew she wanted to be touched, to be caressed, but tonight wasn't about that. Not totally. There would be contact, but not as much as she wanted. Tonight was about calming her fears and building a bond.

He moved his hands back down to her stomach, then over her pussy again. He went lower to her leg, then rounded the table and started back up the other side. This time, when he reached her pussy he stopped.

He made slow work of the ties between her knees and thighs, then the ones up to her stomach, pushing the material away so that her pussy was bared to his view.

"Good little subbie," he whispered. "All freshly shaved for her Master."

His fingers lightly traced the gold ring that decorated her bellybutton.

"Did you pierce yourself for Brandon, or for you?"

"For me. I was already pierced when we met."

"Even your clitty and nips?"

"Yes, Master."

"Good. I imagine they vibrate very sweetly when you're riding your bike."

"Yes, Master, they do."

"I like that idea. My new subbie's a naughty little girl." He traced his fingers over the material still covering her breasts. He tugged lightly on each nipple ring and enjoyed the moan.

"Does my subbie like to be punished?"

"Yes, Master."

"Good." He quickly undid the rest of the ties and pushed the robe away from her body. In the candlelight, she looked soft and sweet.

He tugged on each nipple ring, holding them both high until she groaned.

“I’m going to make you mine, Lucy. You’ll belong to me in every sense of the word. Do you understand what I’m saying by that?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Then tell me what it means. Tell me *exactly* what it means.”

Lucy’s body was heated from where Lake had traced her with his hands. The small places where he had touched her were on fire. Now, he was pulling on her nipple rings, just enough to cause friction that tightened the buds further. The sensations shot straight down to her clit, which throbbed in anticipation.

“Your word is law, Master.”

“Very good. What else?” He pulled more on the rings and she moaned, lifting her back from the stone to ease the tension.

“Lie still.”

The tension grew as she lay back down.

“Master, please.”

“What *else*? Answer me.” He increased the pull on the rings and her nipples began to throb.

“My body belongs to you.”

“That’s right.” He released the nipples so swiftly, her breasts jiggled.

He moved to the bottom of the table. “Put your ass on the end of the table, right here.”

She moved down and sat where he indicated. Maybe he was going to fuck her now. She knew both of them needed it. She was wet as a river, and she knew his cock was hard, bursting to get out of his jeans.

When she was positioned at the end, she lay back as he’d told her.

“Spread your legs. Show me your pussy.”

There was barely enough room on the table for her to put her feet on the stone and spread her thighs apart. She felt as if she was on display for the whole world to see.

“Spread your lips.”

She slid her fingers along her slit and then opened her pussy. It opened easily, the air cool on her wet heat. Lucy fought to stay in position when he lowered his face to get a better look.

She could feel him between her thighs, his head not touching, just lingering there as he examined her.

When Lake’s breath hit her clit she almost came, her hips lifting off the table. His chuckle unnerved her. She lay there for what seemed like forever with him just examining her pussy.

She hissed when his fingers traced the bar of her hood piercing, trailing down to the slave ring that encircled her clit. Then he tugged gently on each ring that ran through her labia.

“Very pretty, Lucy.”

“Thank you, Master.”

“You may get back in your original position now. And take off the robe.”

She exhaled in obvious disappointment, and he laughed.

“No fucking yet. It’s much too soon for that.”

When she was naked and lying back on the table, she turned her gaze to him. He’d wandered over to the far wall, where all sorts of whips, chains, floggers, and other items hung. Her stomach clenched as she wondered which one he would choose.

Would he be a cruel Master? She hoped not. She wasn’t into to heavy pain. Small punishments were fine, but not whippings. Would he choose something to tease her? Something to tantalize her body?

She heard the clinking of chains and she swallowed a groan. He went toward the door and hit a button. A chain lowered down above the table. Oh, crap. He was going to tie her to the ceiling. The idea scared the wits out of her, but she stayed in place.

He came back to the table and attached a small chain between her nipple rings. He trailed the chain down to her belly button, but didn't attach it. Instead he moved to her clit. His fingers brushed the excited nub when he attached the chain to her slave ring.

OK, OK. He's not going to chain you. He just lowered the chain from the ceiling to keep you on guard. Mind games. You can handle this.

She gasped when he attached a second small chain to the first one, then linked that chain to the one from the ceiling. All of her rings lifted up, pulling against their new restraint; Lucy moaned.

"Silence."

"Master, please."

He slapped her pussy. "I said, silence."

She lifted off the table in an effort to ease the pressure on her sensitive nipples and clit.

He moved to the top of the table and put his mouth near her ears. His voice was deep and held just a tinge of irritation.

"Do I need to restrain you?"

"No, Master."

"Then lie still. One more move and I'll put the cuffs on. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Master." Lucy lay flat against the stone, biting back a moan when Lake went to the wall and moved the chain higher. He crossed back to the table and began to gently caress her stomach.

"Let me tell you the rules, Lucy. You knew the first two. Here are the rest. You will not orgasm without my permission. You will not play with George without my permission. You

will obey me in all physical things. And you will submit to me in every way I see fit. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Master." She could hear the trembling in her voice. The pull on her rings was becoming uncomfortable, producing a dull throb that Lucy knew would provide a heady orgasm, if he allowed it.

"Master." The word sounded like a plea.

"I know, Lucy. In good time I'll let you come."

He went to the wall and decreased the pressure on the chain. Lucy sighed, but she didn't know if it was in relief, or disappointment.

When he was back at the table, he put his hands down near her hips and ran his gaze up and down her body.

"You're so beautiful."

"Thank you, Master. Please let me come."

"No. Not yet."

He continued to examine her. Finally, he gave an appreciative murmur. "This is just a little 'get acquainted' session. I wanted to see your body. Would you like to see mine?"

"Yes, Master."

His eyebrows lifted in amusement; then he shook his head. "I think not."

"What?" Lucy sat up, realizing as she did so, she had broken his latest edict. She lay back down and murmured that she was sorry.

"Anticipation is everything. I want to make sure you want my cock fully before I give it to you."

"I do." She bit her lip and quickly added, "Master."

"No, all you want right now is to fuck. And I wasn't going to fuck you tonight anyway."

“Why?” She could hear the desperation in her voice and it pained her. “Have I not pleased you?”

“Oh, you’ve pleased me very much. Except for the fact that you rose up.”

He gave her a look, then moved and fastened the cuffs around her wrists.

“Master, please. Don’t.”

He attached the ones around her ankles, then patted her thigh.

“You’ve been a fairly good girl. But you don’t trust people, Lucy, and I want you to trust me before I fuck you.”

He went to the wall and tightened the chain. Lucy fought not to buck against it. She expected him to return, to touch and caress her as the tension on her rings moved through her body. Instead he sat down in a chair against the far wall, so she couldn’t see him. She heard his zipper come down and she closed her eyes, the image of his untouchable cock almost too much to bear. The unmistakable sound of him stroking his dick almost drove her insane. She struggled against her restraints as the sounds of his heavy breathing increased.

“Can I trust you to be a good girl?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Then lie still. Close your eyes and listen to me.”

Lucy closed her eyes. She heard a bottle open and close. Seconds later, Lake’s moans of pleasure filled the room.

“My cock is hard for you, Lucy. But I’m not ready to let you have it just yet. Can you hear me stroking it?”

“Yes, Master.” The tension in her nipples and clit was beginning to throb again; a dull sensation that would soon turn to pain.

“Master, please. It hurts.”

“Lie still. Lie still and submit. Trust me. I won’t let it go too far.”

The bottle she'd heard must have been lube because she could hear his hand sliding up and down his oiled cock.

"Master, please."

"Submit, Lucy. Just a little longer. Do you trust me not to hurt you?"

"Yes, Master."

"Then lie still. Submit to what I want." Lucy heard his movements quicken. Seconds later, he groaned and she knew that he'd come.

He took several deep breaths; the sound of it music to Lucy's ears. She groaned softly as she listened to him clean up his cum, and then zip his pants back up.

Then, he was beside her again, gently caressing her temples.

Without saying anything, he tugged gently on each nipple ring, then on her clit ring.

"Very good," he said before crossing to the switch and releasing the tension.

"Thank you, Master."

"You're welcome, little subbie. You did very well."

He angled himself against the table, gently caressing her sides.

"Do you need to come, Lucy?"

"Yes, Master."

He slowly undid each restraint. Lucy knew better than to move. When he unhooked the chains she bit back a sigh of relief.

"Close your eyes and just lie there for a few minutes. It's not going to take long for me to be hard again."

She closed her eyes. The sound of him moving across the room reached her ears. He sat back in the chair and she sighed. If he were hard again, would he fuck her? Would he change his mind? Damn, she hoped so.

The longer she lay on the table, the more images ran through her mind. Of her and Lake, in many different positions, in many different scenarios. Today's session let her know that he could lead her into wonderful pleasures. She knew that when he finally allowed her to come, she would shoot off like a rocket.

But the longer he waited, the ansier she got. How long had she lain there? Five minutes? Ten? Why was he making her wait? She squirmed, and was met with a stern. "Lie still."

Finally, after a few more minutes of torture, she heard him shift in his chair.

"Would you like for me to let you have some relief now, Lucy? I bet you're throbbing to come."

"Yes, Master. Please."

"Stand before me."

She did, lowering her gaze. The bulge had returned to the front of his jeans.

"Spread your legs. Put one hand behind your back. Stroke your pussy with the other one."

"Master."

"Now."

She'd never enjoyed masturbating in front of anyone, not even Brandon. She tentatively spread her lips and dipped her fingers inside.

"Hurry up, Lucy; you're making me angry. If you continue this little game I won't let you come."

Her clit was warm under her touch, still throbbing from its treatment by the chain. She rubbed it gently, then threw her head back and moaned.

"Look at me, Lucy. I want to see your face when you come."

She increased the pressure, her fingers sliding down into her wetness and drawing it back over her clit.

“Master, please.”

“Not yet. Keep playing. Tug on your rings. Make noise for me. I want to hear your pleasure.”

Lucy did as he asked, moaning and sighing as she fingered her clit and pulled on the rings.

“Master, I can’t wait anymore. Please!”

“Not yet.” His voice sounded harsh. “Move your other hand to your nipples. Ask me one more time and you won’t get to come at all tonight.”

Lucy thought she would go crazy. The sensations were building to a level she’d never felt before. She could feel Lake’s eyes on her. She bit back the urge to beg, instead moaning and sending him pleading looks. Each time he shook his head and encouraged her to tug harder, or rub faster.

Finally, when she thought she could stand it no more, he said softly, “Come.”

And Lucy did. She flew over the edge, losing her balance, and dropping to her knees as wave after wave of pleasure rolled through her body.

“Master. Master. Master. Oh, I, oh...”

Aftershocks ripped through her as she continued to stroke her aching clit. She was vaguely aware of Lake praising her, telling her she was a very, very good subbie. *His* very, very good subbie.

“Come back to me, Lucy.” She could hear the amusement in his voice. “Clean your fingers and then come and suck me.”

Their gazes locked as she licked her fingers clean. At his nod, she crawled to him. He slowly undid his jeans, staring at her with his penetrating gaze.

“Release my cock.”

She shivered as she touched his hardness. He was long and beautifully thick. When he was all out, she stroked him gently.

“May I suck your cock, Master?”

“Hands behind your back.” She did as he demanded. Then he nodded his assent and she took him inside her, his thickness pulsing as she gently sucked him up and down. She felt him tug at the pins in her hair. It fell down her back and he buried his hands inside it.

She wanted her own hands, wanted to stroke the part of him that wasn't in her mouth, wanted to lightly caress his tight balls. She knew from the way they looked that he wasn't going to last long, and she was right. His moans, with little murmurs of her name, made her feel wonderful, connected.

Minutes after she'd taken him, he told her to push back. She knelt with her hands behind her back, and watched as he stroked himself and shot his cum over her breasts. It was warm and gave her the most amazing, intimate feeling.

When he was done, he crouched in front of her and massaged his seed into her breasts, lifting his palms to her face for her to lick clean. He didn't have to tell her to do it, he just held his hands in front of her face and it came to her naturally.

Then he stood and pressed her head into his thigh.

“Feel better, little Lucy?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Good. I'm the happiest man in this whole place right now.”

She laughed as he continued to stroke her hair as she rested against his jean-clad thigh.

“Thank you, Lucy.”

She lifted her gaze to his. “Me? Why thank me?”

“For your gift of submission. You've been a very good girl.”

He winked at her and she felt her body flush. Brandon had never thanked her. In fact, he always expected her to be grateful to him.

“Dinner tomorrow night. I’ll pick you up at your house around seven-thirty. Be naked when I get there, but have a dress ready to wear to dinner.”

He helped her stand, her legs trembling under her.

“And, Lucy? No George. Keep your fingers off your body until we’re together again. Do you understand me?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Good. ’Cause I’ll know if you’re naughty and need punishing. Never forget that.”

Her body shivered at his words, and she sighed when he dropped his face to hers, lightly touching their lips together in a half kiss.

Chapter Four

“You’re in a good mood.”

Lucy stopped stocking the shelves and turned to her friend Marcy, who set a new box of pots next to the half empty one.

“I was. Thanks for bringing me more work.”

“No problem. So, what’s put such a smile on your face?”

“Just a beautiful day.” Lucy turned back to her task to hide her grin. *That, plus a fantastic orgasm at the hands of an absolutely incredible Dom, who wants me again tonight.*

“Right. I haven’t seen you like this in ages. What’s his name? And does he have a brother?”

Lucy laughed. “I hate to tell you, but I don’t know.”

Marcy’s eyebrows shot up. “You don’t know his name, or you don’t know if he has a brother?”

“The latter. His name is Lake.”

“Does he retain water?” Marcy giggled.

“Very funny. Actually, he’s a doctor.”

“Well, look at you. I’m impressed, and now I want to know if he has any doctor friends.”

“I’m sure he does, but I haven’t met them yet.”

Marcy glanced over her shoulders, and then started handing pots to Lucy to put on the shelf.

“What’s he like in bed?”

“Marcy!”

“Well, for you to smile like that, it must have been incredible. You’ve been grinning since you rode up. I’m surprised there weren’t any bugs in your teeth.”

“That’s why I wear a shield on the highway. Listen, no hard feelings or anything, but I don’t want to talk about it. Let’s just say he’s a nice guy.”

“Spoilsport.” Marcy tossed Lucy another pot.

Lucy caught it and put it on the shelf. They made quick work of unloading both the boxes, then walked to the storeroom.

“Marcy, can I ask you something?”

“Wanna know how to keep Lake’s Mr. Happy, *happy*? It has been a while for you.” Marcy raised her eyebrows hopefully.

“No. I think we can handle that. If you were trying to figure out what a key belonged to, how would you go about it?”

“A key?” A look of confusion crossed Marcy’s face. “Like a house key, or a car key?”

“It’s neither, it’s smaller. I’m thinking it’s to a lock, or something like that.”

“A safety deposit box? Did this belong to your uncle?”

“Yes.” Lucy’s eyes turned soft. “I sold Lake one of Craig’s bikes. He found it taped to the underside of the seat.”

“Wow, a mystery. Cool. Let’s see it.” She held out her hand.

Lucy dropped the key on to her palm and frowned.

“There’s no markings, no anything. Not even a brand name to show where it was made, or what type of lock it came with, if it did. It’s confusing to say the least.”

Marcy held the key up to the light, then quickly palmed it when a deep voice sounded behind them.

“Break time? Those boxes aren’t going to unpack themselves, you know.”

“Sorry, Briscoe,” Lucy said, shooting her boss a guilty look. “My fault.”

“Just get busy. We have another shipment coming tomorrow and I’d like to have today’s out before you two leave.”

They both nodded at their boss. Marcy handed the key to Lucy.

“Was it just taped to the seat?”

“Actually, it was in an envelope, with some numbers written on it. But the numbers make no sense, either.”

“Well, I’d love to be your Watson, Sherlock, but I have a date tonight. I’ll give it some thought, though.”

While waiting on customers that afternoon, Lucy tried to focus on how she could decipher the mystery of the key, but her thoughts kept turning to Lake. Her body still hummed from last night’s session at Tygers. It had been fantastic. The waiting had been hard, but the buildup had provided her with the most incredible orgasm she’d ever had in her life.

Looking back on it she wondered why she’d been so reluctant. An image of Brandon flitted by. *That’s why*. Brandon, for all that she’d loved him, at first, was not a true Dom. He liked to play at it, but he was always more worried about what he would get out of the session than what the two of them would get.

He’d always pushed her to try things she was uncomfortable with, then berated her if she didn’t enjoy it, saying it was her fault. After last night, she knew that Brandon just hadn’t wanted to take the time to lead her in new directions. He’d only been worried about himself.

Lucy had no problems believing that Lake could lead her past her comfort zone, and she'd love every minute of it.

She had just finished waiting on a customer from Britain, who wanted "real Southwesty things" to take home when her cell phone rang. She recognized Lake's number on the ID and flipped the phone open.

"Hello."

"Sore?"

"A little."

"Good. That means you're thinking about me."

"I have been, yes."

"Excellent. What gauge are your piercings?"

Briscoe stopped in front of her and frowned. He put a finger near his ear, and one near his mouth in the classic phone symbol and shook his head.

She nodded and mouthed, "Sorry, emergency."

He circled his finger round and round and she nodded. When he was gone, she said, "Fourteen."

"All of them?"

"Yes."

"All right. Get back to work. I'll see you tonight, and remember my orders. Bye, Lucy."

She flipped the phone shut and pursed her lips. As if she could forget. The idea of being naked when he arrived unnerved her. Last night the room had been dark, with only candlelight for illumination. Tonight he would see the real her. She hoped it didn't change his mind.

* * * * *

"Who's your new sub?"

Lake turned toward the doorway of Destiney's and grinned.

"Shouldn't you be at work, Eric?"

"I am. I'm a cop, we're always at work. I was driving by and saw your new bike." Eric's gaze drifted to the counter. "Damn, she's pierced? When do I get to meet her?"

"Not now."

Lake turned to Destiney and smiled. "Good work. Thanks for getting it done so quickly."

"No problem, Lake. If you want me to make a special collar for her just let me know. I can do something to match these colors. Something special she could wear while she's out in public."

"Thanks, sweetie. Design one for me and I'll take a look at it."

Destiney winked at Eric, and then went to answer the phone.

"Damn, thinking of a permanent collar already? How long have you known this woman?"

"A week."

"You've lost it. A week? She must be one hell of a fuck."

"I haven't fucked her yet."

"Then I *know* you've lost it." Eric shook his head. He leaned closer. "You're buying jewelry and planning collars and you haven't been inside her pussy? Where did you meet this woman?"

"She's a friend of Margaret's, and she sold me the bike."

"Oh, that's different. I was afraid she was someone you'd picked up at Tygers."

Destiney returned and took Lake's credit card. She crossed to the register to complete the transaction and Lake frowned at his friend.

"When have I ever picked someone up? I'm more careful than that, and so are you."

“Yeah, but some cute little subbie might have gotten under your belt, so to speak.”

“She has, yes.” Lake signed the slip, and took his package. They both gave Destiney a kiss on the cheek and left. Out on the sidewalk, Lake turned to Eric.

“Let me ask you a cop question. If you had a key and you didn’t know what it opened, how would you start to find out?”

“Ask the owner.”

“He’s dead.”

“You didn’t kill him, did you?”

“No. He’s my new friend’s uncle. Or I guess I should say he was her uncle.”

“OK, if you’ve tried it on everything in the house, then go through his financial records, see if he paid for a safety deposit box, or a storage unit somewhere.”

“Good idea.”

“That’s why I make the big bucks. So, when do I get to meet her?” He lifted his brows to show exactly what he meant by meet.

“Not yet.” Lake shook his head.

“Why not? We’ve shared before, several times. Remember Alex? Damn, I love me a pierced woman.”

“Then go and find one. You can’t have mine.”

Lake straddled the bike and started it up.

“I gotta go; I’ve got a date.”

“Does she have a sister?” Eric yelled over the noise.

In reply, Lake revved the engine and grinned. When he drove off, Eric was laughing and shaking his head.

Chapter Five

When she got home, Lucy fed Rhett, Scarlet, and Fred. She sorted her mail, thankful to see a smaller stack of bills than she had for the past year. Her inheritance from Craig had helped to pay off most of Brandon's debts.

She took the key from her pocket and placed it on the table.

"Talk to me, Craig. Tell me what this means. Where does it fit?"

Fred barked in return and she rubbed his ears.

"Do you know, boy, huh? Did he ever tell you anything?"

Fred barked again, and then ran for the sliding glass door that led to the backyard.

"OK, you've just gotta pee. I get it."

She let him out and checked her watch. She had a little more than two hours until Lake arrived. She made a quick decision to use a little of the time to Fred's advantage. She went out back and picked up his favorite chew toy, throwing it to the far end of the yard for him to chase and bring back to her.

After they'd played fetch for about ten minutes, Fred went to his water dish and lapped up most of the offering. Lucy went to refill it with the garden hose, stopping near the garage that housed the motorcycles. She filled the dish, then went inside and flipped on the light.

The area looked empty without the Indian, but sitting near the back were boxes of things she'd brought from Craig's house.

There were about fifteen of them, full of books and other things that she thought Patrick might want one day. Although he'd never shown any interest in them. She briefly considered taking a few into the house and going through them, to see if she could find some clue to the key, but decided against it.

Only three of the boxes held records of any kind, and she didn't think there would be anything that said, "key," on it. Fred barked from the doorway. When she turned her attention to him, he grabbed his toy and growled around it in an effort to gain her attention again.

"OK, boy, but just for a bit. I have a date tonight." She could have sworn the dog gave her an "I don't believe you look," and she laughed.

"It's true. With a real live man. You'll get to meet him one day and I hope you like him."

Fred dropped the toy and barked. Lucy figured it either meant "hurry up and play with me," or "I'll believe you have a date when I actually see him."

They played fetch for a few more minutes before Lucy went inside the house to shower. Since she didn't have to dress, getting ready was easier. She did her hair and makeup and then laid out her favorite purple dress on the bed. It was loose and flowing, with a very full knee-length skirt, and always made her feel special when she wore it.

She picked out shoes and jewelry, and put them next to the dress on the bed. Rhett jumped up to investigate, and she shooed him away.

"I don't need cat hair on my dress. Stop that!" Scarlet jumped to the top of the bed and watched with barely concealed amusement.

Lucy had just told the cat to behave herself when the doorbell rang. She ran to the front, clutching her robe around her and checked the peephole before opening the door to Lake. He stood there with a sack in his hand and a smile on his face.

“Hi,” she whispered.

He stepped inside and kissed her forehead. “Disobeying me already? I thought I told you to be naked.”

“I am.”

Lake looked pointedly at the robe and Lucy looked away. “I’m uncomfortable with being naked.”

“You should follow your Master’s directions, Lucy. Take it off.”

“Lake, it’s so light in here, I just...”

“Take it off. I’m already going to punish you for breaking my command. If you don’t take it off now, there will be two punishments this evening.”

She bit her lip and waited.

“Lucy, do you want to submit to me?”

“You know I do.”

“Do I? Because if you did you would follow my orders without hesitation.”

Lucy nodded, then slowly dropped the robe to the floor. She gathered her arms around her waist and shivered.

“Corner.”

“Excuse me?”

“Find a corner. Put your nose in it. Hands behind your back, legs spread.”

“Is that my punishment?” Lucy put her hands on her hips defiantly and took a step back.

“No, that’s you standing in the corner while I decide what to do. If you’re not careful, this evening will turn into one huge punishment. Corner. Now.”

Lucy threw up her hands in disgust and looked around. She found an empty corner in the dining room and got into position, her face burning with embarrassment. Why had she done that? Lake had been nothing but nice to her, and here she was, goading him.

After a few minutes, she heard the beep of a number being dialed on a cell phone. Lake’s voice rang loud in the room.

“Hey, what’s up?” There was a pause, and he laughed. “Listen, can you meet us at Tygers around eleven?”

Lake paused again.

“I know, but I need help with a punishment. Great. We’ll see you there. Bye.”

The phone clicked shut.

“Come here, Lucy.”

She moved in front of him. “You can’t be serious. You’re going to share me? After one night? You’re a pig! I should have *known!*”

She pushed against his chest and he grabbed her hands.

“Did I say I was gonna share you?”

“You just called someone to meet us at Tygers. That sounds like sharing to me.”

“Why would you assume that so quickly? Did Brandon share you a lot? Did he make you do things you didn’t want to do?”

Lake cocked his head and Lucy looked away. Finally, she whispered, “Yes.”

“I don’t work that way, Lucy. I thought you understood that. I’m not going to share you tonight. I can’t promise that I never will, but we’re not ready for that stage. I would like an audience, however, to use as a punishment.”

“This man watching is my punishment?”

“He’s going to watch your punishment. It’ll be both of them in one fell swoop. This will take you way out of your comfort zone.”

Lucy bit her lip and tapped her foot.

“If you don’t want to do this, tell me now. I’ll leave and it will be over. No questions. No hard feelings. I enjoyed last night immensely, and it will be a great memory if you decide to stop.”

“You would do that for me?”

“Any good Dom would, Lucy. Domination is not about forcing someone to do something. Domination is about consensual activities, trust, and bonds, and taking people to new levels.”

Lucy nodded.

“Listen, we didn’t talk about a safe word last night, and that’s my fault,” Lake said. “If, at anytime, you decide you want out, just say the word, and it’ll be over, whether it’s just the scene we’re in, or the whole thing. What would you like the word to be?”

She glanced up at him.

“How about swoop?”

“Done. All you’ll have to do is let me know if it’s just that scene, or the whole arrangement. Understand?”

“Yes.” Lucy paused and then said, “Master.”

“Good. Now, for your presents.” He held up the bag.

“I still get my presents?”

“Of course you do. I’ve been looking forward to this all day. Hop up on the table here and sit on the edge, with your legs spread.”

When she was in position, he traced the slit of her pussy.

“I love that you’re pierced, and that you did it for yourself. But I wanted to give you new rings.”

“But...”

“Hush. New nipple rings. A new bar for your hood piercing, complete with slave ring, and new labia rings. All from me, and all fourteen-carat gold, since I know your old ones are gold and didn’t bother your skin. I bought them today and took them home and made sure they were thoroughly cleaned. Now I’m going to change them out.”

“You’re going to change them?”

“That’s right. And you’re going to sit still like a good little subbie. Understand?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Good girl.” He opened the bag and took out two boxes. Lucy raised her eyebrows.

“What’s in the other box?”

“You’ll see.”

The first box held glittering gold rings.

“Your job is to lie still. No movement at all, understand?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Good.” He pinched each nipple and Lucy pressed her lips together to stifle a moan. He gently popped the ball from the left ring, and then the right one. When he’d slid the ring from the piercings, he gently traced her areoles. Lucy gasped, then swallowed another moan when Lake said, “Lucy. Behave.”

He continued to trace her areoles and nipples, trailing his fingers back and forth over the peaks. Lucy thought she would come right on the spot. She’d never had anyone do something so very erotic to her.

He was content to touch her, teasing her skin until goose bumps began to rise.

“Master. I...”

“Hush. Such pretty little nipples.” He tweaked each one, then slid the new rings through, attaching the balls and tugging on each one as if to make sure it was on properly.

Lucy’s pussy was on fire, and he hadn’t even touched her there. She could feel wetness pooling beneath her and when he leaned down and sucked first one, and then the other nipple into his mouth, Lucy moaned.

“Test run,” he said when he was done. “Spread your legs wide for me.”

It was sweet torture when he tugged on her labia rings, his fingers teasing her swollen lips. He quickly unscrewed the balls and removed the rings, replacing them quickly before leaning over and inserting two fingers into her wetness.

“Master, please. Can we...can I...? Master.”

Lake remained silent. He pumped her quickly with one hand, the other tugging alternately on each labia ring. Lucy tensed to keep from pumping her hips, his order not to move running over and over in her mind.

When he pulled back from her she wanted to beg him to return, beg him to come back. Instead, she followed his order to stay still and silent.

When he gently traced the bar of her hood piercing she shivered.

“I’ll give you that one,” he said. “The bar I bought has two large beads. We’ll put the larger one against your clitty. It’ll be heavier and provide a different sensation for you, or so Destiney said.”

“She’s the one who pierced me. Did you tell her these were for me?”

“Yes. She remembered you. And she worked something up for me today that will work with your piercing to provide greater stimulation.”

Lucy moaned when he unscrewed the ball at the top of her bar, and slid the bar out of the hood, quickly replacing it with the new one. The new ball felt heavy against her clit.

“I think I’m gonna come.”

“You’d better not. No orgasm until I say so.”

“Master.”

“Lucy.” The warning in his voice was clear.

“I won’t, Master. I won’t.” She repeated the mantra in her head, willing her clit to calm down.

When he was done, he caressed her thighs. He leaned down and ran his tongue along the bar. Lucy hissed and clasped her hands into fists. His tongue traced the bar over and over and her clit throbbed in response. She just knew if he touched it she would come.

“Master, please!”

“Not yet. Get up and walk around, take it for a test drive.”

Lucy gasped when she stood. Her first few steps sent sweet thundering vibrations through her body. Her clit felt like it could explode at any minute.

“Oh.” The word came out as a hiss and Lake laughed.

“I take it the gifts meet with your approval.”

“They do. Thank you, Master. Makes me wonder why I never tried a larger ball before.”

“Good. Now, come back here and sit so I can give you the final part of the present.”

Lucy walked back toward the table, her clit throbbing. She sat down in the exact same spot and glanced at Lake.

“What is it?”

Lake opened the box and held up a thin chain.

“For your nipples, a little chain to go between them, with little locks on each ring to hold it in place. I’ll have the keys, of course.”

“Will it show through my clothes?”

“Shouldn’t. If it does it should just be the outline. Nobody should be looking that closely at your nipples except me.”

He snapped each lock in place and the chain swung between her nipples.

“Wow.”

“Feel good?”

“Yeah. I mean, yes, Master.”

“You’re doing fine. Now, for the finishing touch. Clit jewelry that will rest against the bar, and provide you stimulation all night.”

He held up a piece of jewelry. The clasp was small, and Lucy was sure that it was meant to fasten around the upper part of her clit hood bar, held in place by the new larger bead at the top. Hanging from each side of the clasp were two strands of delicate chains, studded with tiny stones. At the bottom of each strand were larger stones.

“Oh, I…”

“You’re gonna love it. Now lie back and relax. Your Master commands it.”

Chapter Six

“The lady would like the seafood pasta, and I would like the lasagna. And could you bring us extra bread, please?”

The waitress flashed Lake a smile that Lucy knew was about more than bringing extra bread. When she’d walked away, Lucy scoffed. “Geeze, why do skinny little bitches have to act like that? Doesn’t she know that we’re together? We’re sitting close enough.”

“Relax, baby,” Lake said. He leaned in and kissed her cheek. “How’s your clitty?”

“Aching.”

“Be a good girl and I might let you come during dessert.”

Lucy stared at him, then shook her head.

Be a good girl? Who was he kidding? Damn, her clit felt like it was on fire. The jewelry, coupled with the new bead against her nub, stimulated her each time she moved. It was almost like having a tiny vibrator attached. It didn’t help matters that the tiny padlocks attached to her nipple rings added weight and more sensations there, too.

They were in one of the most romantic restaurants in Albuquerque. The lights were low, the music soft and sensual. They were sitting close together in the booth, their bodies not quite touching.

The waitress returned with the bread and Lucy fought back a growl.

“Jealousy doesn’t become you,” Lake said. He took a bite of his bread. “Tell me about Brandon.”

Lucy, who had been in the process of taking a drink of tea, nearly choked. “Excuse me? You want me to ruin my appetite?”

“No, but I’m concerned about what he did to you. I want to know exactly how screwed up he was.”

“Do I have to? I mean, can’t you just go with the explanation that he screwed me over?”

“No. I want to really know you, Lucy. I want to know what makes you tick.”

“Not Brandon.”

Lake laughed. “Maybe not now, but he did at one point. And he hurt you very badly. So spill the beans. I’m all ears.”

“Can I have a glass of wine?”

“One. I want you fully alert for our session later.”

He signaled the waitress and ordered a glass of blush. After it was delivered, Lucy took a huge drink and sighed. “Brandon and I were the same age. We met when we were twenty-six through mutual friends. At first it was nothing more than friends. Then, a few years later we got together. We married. We stayed married for a year. We divorced. End of story.”

Lake made the sound of a buzzer. “I didn’t ask for the digest version; I want the whole story. If I have to pull it out tooth and nail, I will.”

“Fine.” Lucy took another drink. “We’d been friends for two years when we went to this party together. He got me toasted, and we slept together. I liked it. He was gentle and sweet. Then, he introduced me to BDSM. And I loved that.”

“What sort of an introduction did he give?”

“Bondage, spankings, that type of stuff.”

“Tame. You said he was a poser. How did you figure that out?”

They fell silent as the waitress appeared with salads. When she was gone, Lucy shifted in her seat and groaned. Lake chuckled.

“Just hold on a little longer. Tell me how you figured it out.”

Lucy swallowed a bite of lettuce. “It was Margaret who figured it out. I knew she and Chad were into it, so I asked her some questions. She told me about Tygers, and Brandon was all freaked out to go. We went as Chad’s guests. After a few visits, she’s the one who told me he was a selfish wannabe.”

“How did she come to that conclusion?”

“Brandon told me that a sub did what she was told, with no questions asked. If she didn’t like it, she just had to tough it out; that was her job.”

“Bastard. Gives us a bad name.”

“We were already married by then. I started to ask questions, wondering why other subs seemed to like things better than I did. He got very angry. He didn’t hit me, but I knew that he wanted to. He told me that if I didn’t like it, I could get out of the house.”

“The house you’re in now?”

“No. This was a house we’d rented. We were young, and we were stupid. We accepted a lot of those ‘you’re pre-approved’ credit cards. Brandon handled all the money, and I never saw the bills. I didn’t use the cards that much, and had no idea he’d run them up to the limit. Then, creditors started to call, and things got worse for us. One night I told him that I was tired of arguing, and of his bossy nature. I woke up the next morning and he was gone. I

haven't seen him since. We did the whole divorce through lawyers. After that, he disappeared."

"And that was?"

"Two months before Craig died. Craig helped me file for divorce and get a new house. He suggested that I file for bankruptcy, but I didn't want that hanging over me. Then Craig died. And now here we are."

The waitress cleared the salads and delivered the entrees. Lucy stared daggers at her when she smiled at Lake.

After she was gone, Lucy took a few bites.

"Tell me," Lake said. "What made you decide to come to Tygers last night? Because, honestly, I thought you wouldn't."

Lucy looked at him. "I almost didn't. But I talked myself into it. It took a lot, let me tell you."

"Are you sorry?"

"No. It's just that I..."

She twisted her hands in her lap and looked away.

"Relax. Finish what you were going to say."

"My mother married and divorced, over and over. She's on her seventh husband." Lucy laughed. "When I was with Brandon, I kept thinking things would get better. But they didn't. I would watch Margaret and Chad and think, 'I want that.' I want someone who cares about me. Not that I'm saying you will be that man, I just...crap, I'm not doing too well on this."

"Surely I wasn't the first guy to ask you out in a year."

"No. But you were the first one who was so persistent. The others all took no for an answer and left. When I found out you were a Dom, I was curious to see how you differed from Brandon."

“And?”

“It was incredible. Brandon would never have done what we did last night. He wasn’t worried about bonds and trust. He was just worried about getting his rocks off.”

“I get that idea.” He turned to her and gently stroked her thigh. He leaned in to whisper in her ear. “I hope you understand why you’re being punished tonight.”

“I do.”

“I want to talk about your reasons for not being naked.”

“Right now?”

“Right now.”

“Lake, I’m just not comfortable with my body. I just knew you were going to…”

Lucy looked up at the waitress, who appeared to take away their plates.

“How about some dessert?”

Lake continued to stare at Lucy.

“One tiramisu, two spoons. With some strawberries on the side, baby?”

“Yes, darling.” She leaned over and kissed him on the chin.

When she was gone, Lake turned to Lucy. “Now, you knew I was going to…?”

“I’m not exactly model-thin.”

“But I’ve already seen you naked.”

“In the candlelight. I was nervous about full lighting.”

The waitress appeared and delivered their dessert. This time she didn’t give Lake any sensuous looks. Instead, she smiled at them both and left.

“Then tonight’s punishment is the perfect way to deal with your nerves. Now, sit on your hands so I can feed you.”

Lucy blushed, but one look at Lake’s face told her not to argue. She slipped her hands under her thighs.

“You’re so beautiful, Lucy,” he whispered in her ear. He moved closer to her in the booth, sliding his left arm behind her, his knee pushing against her thigh.

“Rub your thighs together. Feel that ball against your clitty. Feel those jewels against your wet pussy. I know you’re wet. I can smell it.”

Lucy shivered and nodded. The slight movement of her thighs sent desire rushing through her body.

She was barely aware of Lake lifting a bite of tiramisu on a spoon. He dipped the rich concoction into the strawberries and then placed the spoon in front of Lucy’s mouth.

“Open.”

She took the spoon into her mouth and closed her lips around it. Lake slowly pulled it out of her mouth, his eyes full of passion.

Lucy chewed slowly, her gaze following his hand as he put a bite of the creamy treat into his own mouth. They went back and forth for a few bites; each time Lake would slowly slide the spoon from her mouth, then lean in and whisper for her to increase the pressure on her clit.

Lucy clenched her thighs together. She was right on the edge, and more than a little embarrassed about coming in a public place. But she knew it was inevitable, and she knew that she had to trust Lake, and follow his edicts.

Each bite he gave her was like a caress, a soft stroking of her skin. Her breath came in short, shallow gasps and she knew her breasts were rising up and down in steady rhythm.

When he picked up a Lady Finger and coated it in the tiramisu, she knew what was coming. She was thankful for the low lighting in the restaurant as she took the long sponge cake into her mouth and sucked.

“Pretend that’s my dick, Lucy.” His voice was low in her ear. “Come while you’re sucking tiramisu from my dick.”

Lucy tightened up her pussy muscles, and she came, sucking harder on the dessert as she closed her eyes in ecstasy. She just knew that every person in the restaurant was looking at her, her chest heaving in exertion, her pussy throbbing for more attention. She opened her eyes and looked at Lake, who gazed at her with satisfaction written all over his face.

“You’re a hot little vixen, Lucy. You just need the right man, and that’s me, to guide you. Did you enjoy that?”

“Very much. Master.” She whispered the last word.

“Good. I’m glad, because in about an hour and a half, you’re not going to like me very much.”

Chapter Seven

The closer they got to Tygers, the more Lucy felt the desire to scream her safe word. She'd never been very good at punishments, because Brandon's usually involved pain. And she just wasn't into pain. The pulling of her rings last night had been uncomfortable, bordering on pain, but not painful.

She had a feeling tonight's scene would involve pain.

When Lake pulled into the parking lot, she grimaced.

"Can we talk about this?"

"You want to negotiate your punishment?"

"Um. Yes."

Lake's laugh was low.

"Sorry, baby. This is non-negotiable."

Lucy pouted. "I didn't expect punishment so soon."

"I didn't expect you to disobey me so soon. I can't just let it go, Lucy. You know that."

"I know." She looked down at the floor.

"You have to trust me."

The silence grew thick in the car.

“If I let this slide, where would we be?”

“With me trusting you?” She knew that wasn’t true, but it was worth a shot.

“No, with you thinking that you could disobey me and I would never punish you. Punishments don’t always add up to pain. You’re in a whole new world now.”

“I know.”

“It doesn’t mean you’ll never get spanked, it just means that there are other ways to punish, and you need to be aware of them. Now, let’s go inside.”

Chess greeted them at the door, a huge smile on his face. He winked at Lucy as he opened the door.

“Welcome back Master Lake, little subbie.”

Lucy smiled back, even though her stomach was in knots.

At the inside desk, the girl from last night gave Lucy a look of envy.

“Master Lake, I prepared the room as you asked.”

“Thank you.”

He took Lucy’s hand and led her upstairs. Once there, he opened the door, and ushered Lucy into the outer chamber.

“Strip. Then come inside.”

“No gown? Is he waiting in there? Your friend?”

“Do as I say, Lucy.” Lake went into the other room.

She overcame the temptation to scream, “hell no,” and quickly undressed. She’d had the best orgasm of her life in this room last night. She prayed that tonight, she wouldn’t have the worst experience ever.

* * * * *

Lake sat in the chair and glanced at his watch. By his way of thinking, Lucy was either trying to decide whether to follow orders, or she was already downstairs, asking Chess to call her a cab.

He hadn't expected things to move this fast, but when she'd disobeyed him today, he'd had no choice. He hoped this didn't damage what he was trying to build with her. On the other hand, if he ignored her behavior, it would certainly damage what he was trying to build. It was a no-win situation.

He knew Eric was downstairs waiting, because their gazes had met and Eric had oh so subtly raised his eyebrows in appreciation when he saw Lucy. He glanced at his watch again. Another minute had gone by. He'd been sitting in the chair for almost fifteen now. One more minute and he'd go into the other room to see if his perfect little sub was gone forever.

He sighed deeply, then bit back a smile as the door opened and Lucy walked inside. Her eyes widened at the sight of the bondage swing hanging from the ceiling.

"You've been in one before?"

"No."

"Good. Come over here and I'll strap you into it."

"It won't hold me."

"You and I are going to have to talk about this weight issue, but not tonight. It will hold you. Come over here and sit down."

He eased her back into the chair, instructing her to hold the bar above her head. He ran his hands down her arms and then locked each wrist to the bar. He moved to the bottom and placed each leg in the hold, strapping them down to the satiny material.

When Lucy was fully tied to the swing, he went to the wall and hit a switch. The swing rose until Lucy was about five feet in the air. Her legs were spread about three feet wide, opening her pussy for a perfect view of her piercings and the jewelry he'd bought her. She thrashed against her bonds and whimpered that she wanted to be let go, to be let down.

“Relax, little vixen. That’s what you are, my little vixen. Vix for short. That’s your name now, when you’re with me. Who am I, Vix?”

He watched her fight against her fears, her arms and legs pulling against her bonds. His cock twitched when she said, “You’re my Master.”

“Very good. Relax. Just relax.”

When her breathing had calmed a little, he walked behind her and stroked her hair.

“Breathe deep.”

“I’m trying, Master.”

“I know.” He attached the collar around her neck, then leaned down and kissed her forehead. “Are you ready, Vix?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Why did you disobey me?”

“Nerves. I said I was sorry.”

“You did, and now it’s time for your punishment.” He looked down on her and smiled. Then, he gently tied the blindfold over her eyes.

“Master! Please, no, no!” Lucy felt as if her heart would beat right out of her chest. Visions of the punishments Brandon would devise popped into her head.

“Please!”

“Vix, hush. If you want to use your safe word, do it now before we start.”

Lucy seriously considered screaming out “swoop,” but quickly discarded the idea. Memories from last night appeared...warm and sensuous, and orgasmic. Tonight probably wouldn’t be that way, but other nights would, she was sure of it. She had to learn to trust Lake.

He massaged her temples. “Are you using your safe word?”

“No, Master.”

“Good girl. Relax while I find our guest.”

“Yes, Master.”

“And Vix, be polite to our guest.”

“I will, Master.”

The door opened and closed, and Lucy took several calming breaths. Somehow she doubted she would be whipped tonight, but if it did happen, she was prepared to handle it. Maybe, just maybe, he'd spank her. She could handle that. But if he'd had that in mind, she'd be lying on her stomach.

The door opened and two, deep male voices echoed against the walls.

“I'm back. This is our guest. You can refer to him as Master X.”

“Good evening, Lucy.”

“Hello, Master X.” Her breathing kicked up a notch. She was naked, on display, and she felt very, very vulnerable.

“Lake, I'm jealous. She's extraordinary.”

“Thank you. I think so.” Hands cupped her breasts and tweaked her nipples. No one spoke, but Lucy recognized the softness of Lake's hands. Of course Master X could have equally soft hands. She swallowed a gulp.

“Destiney did a great job on the jewelry,” X said as the hands continued to caress her nipples. Was it one of them touching her, or both of them? X's voice was on the right side of the swing, but it could very well be his hand caressing her.

“Didn't she? It made my little vixen come hard tonight, didn't it?” Lake's voice sounded from the left of the swing.

“Yes, Master.” Lucy squirmed. She hated being on display in front of someone she’d never met, much less not knowing if Lake’s “guest” was touching her in such an intimate manner.

“But that’s not why we’re here,” Lake said. “My little vixen was a bad girl tonight, and needs to be punished.”

“May I ask what she did?”

“I told her to be naked and she wasn’t.”

“Tsk, tsk, tsk, naughty little Lucy.”

“Yes, she was.” Lake’s voice held more than a tinge of disappointment and Lucy cringed. “Since Lucy’s uncomfortable being naked, I thought the proper punishment should take her out of her comfort zone. I’m going to spank her pretty little pussy while you watch. You don’t mind, do you, Master X?”

“Not at all, Master Lake.”

Lucy’s mind reeled. She hadn’t figured on this. She let out a gurgling noise and someone, she presumed Lake, gently stroked her cheek.

“Do you want to say something, Vixen?”

She swallowed panic and shook her head. She was already naked, and the “mystery guest” had already seen her. She knew that what she had done was wrong, and now she must be punished. It didn’t mean she had to like the idea, though.

“I can’t hear a headshake. Do you have something to say?” There was no anger in Lake’s voice. He sounded as if he were having a normal conversation with someone on the phone.

“No, Master.”

“Good. Now, I hope you enjoyed your orgasm at dinner, Lucy, because you won’t get another one for twenty-four hours. That’s part of your punishment.”

Hands left her body and Lucy felt strangely bereft. She wanted those hands back. It was a bizarre feeling, considering she was about to be spanked, and not on the place she'd thought her first spanking from Lake would be. And, it was happening in front of a stranger. Would Lake take the blindfold off when the punishment was over? Would he let her see who Master X was? Or would she never find out? Would she look at each one of his friends and wonder if he was the man who had witnessed her first punishment at Lake's hands?

The room fell silent and Lucy's feeling of vulnerability increased. She knew that Lake wouldn't leave her there, unable to break free of her bonds, but still she was nervous. That was part of his plan; she was sure.

She jumped when the sound of a chair moving closer broke the silence. She knew that X had taken a spot where he could watch the punishment. Her body flushed and she tried to control her breathing.

Silence prevailed for a few more minutes and she wondered where Lake was. Was he over at the wall, choosing a paddle? Or would he use his hand?

The silence stretched out and Lucy wiggled. Finally, she felt as if she could take no more.

"Master?"

"Hush, Vix. We'll start when I'm ready and not before."

"Yes, Master."

The silence stretched on, and then Lucy felt the heat from his body between her legs. She almost sighed in pleasure. When he stroked the soft leather paddle over her pussy she stifled a gasp.

"You've brought this on yourself, Lucy," Lake said. "I hope you think about it when you consider disobeying me again."

He rubbed the paddle back and forth, the friction heating up her pussy. Then he smartly smacked it down.

Lucy bit back a groan as the paddle hit again, this time lower. Three more swats landed in quick succession, the leather biting against her sensitive skin.

“How many swats should I give you, Vixen? Ten? Fifteen? Twenty? How many do you think your little show of disrespect is worth?”

Her mind reeled at his question. Brandon would have never asked. He would have just spanked her until his arm was tired, and she would have felt it for days afterwards. The fact that Lake was a different kind of Dom, one who actually cared about her feelings, solidified in her mind.

“However many you think I deserve, Master.”

“Very good answer, my subbie.” Lake’s voice was thick with desire. “We’ll start with ten and see what I think from there. Count them for me, Lucy.”

He delivered the swats quickly, varying the intensity of the paddle. By the time Lucy called out ten, she felt like she was on fire.

She heard Lake’s friend get up, felt his heat beside her as the swing gently rocked.

Lucy hissed when Lake traced the edge of the thin paddle down her slit.

“She’s wet,” X said.

“She is indeed,” Lake replied. “Have we learned our lesson, Lucy?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Do I need to deliver more?”

“No, Master.” Even Lucy could hear the doubt, and desire in her own voice.

“What if I think you need more?”

Lucy struggled with an answer. Finally, she sighed.

“That is your decision, Master.”

Lake continued to trace Lucy's slit with the paddle. He took a huge breath and then mouthed, "Fuck," to Eric.

If Lucy hadn't been so vulnerable, so in need of love, he'd have both of them fuck her right here and now. But he knew that would send the wrong message. He took a step away from her and bent over, clasping his knees as he tried to rein in his desires.

Finally, he stepped toward her and smartly slapped her pussy with the paddle. He delivered four more swift strokes, then ran the leather across her thighs. He was only using a small paddle but he knew it still stung. He was proud Lucy hadn't called out for him to stop, or used her safe word. That meant she felt a connection to him, and it made his heart swell.

He was sure, now, that Lucy and he would be together for a long, long time. He just had to convince her of that.

"You won't disobey me anymore, will you, Vix?"

"No, Master."

"When I tell you to be naked, you'll be naked, won't you?"

"Yes, Master."

"Good girl."

He looked at Eric, who pointed toward his chest and jerked his head toward the door.

"Master X is leaving, Lucy. Thank him for watching your punishment."

His cock swelled more when she murmured thank you. He followed Eric to the door.

"Fuck. I'll ask again. Does she have a sister?" Eric's voice was low.

"Don't think so. Thanks for your help."

"Are you kidding me? Geez, I hope Mandy's still at the desk. Jacking off's not going to hack it after this."

Eric shut the door behind him and Lake moved toward Lucy.

"I'm proud of you. I know that wasn't easy."

“May I get down now, Master?”

“Not yet.” He stood above her head and removed the blindfold. She blinked several times, then looked toward Eric’s empty chair.

“Part of the punishment is not knowing who he was, Lucy.”

“Will I ever?”

“Maybe. Maybe not. I haven’t decided yet.”

“Master? Did you mean it when you said I couldn’t orgasm for twenty-four hours?”

“Yes.” He looked at his watch. “It’s almost midnight. So, we’ll just go from midnight to midnight tomorrow night. And I expect you to be honest with me. If you come, I’ll punish you again. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Master.”

He stroked his cock. He knew he’d never make it twenty-four hours, but for him to come in front of Lucy would add insult to her punishment and he didn’t want to do that. But then again he didn’t want to leave her tonight, either.

Her skin was soft under his touch.

“Come home with me, Lucy.”

Surprise dawned in her eyes and he bit back a smile. He hadn’t expected to make the offer, but he was glad that he did. He wanted her warmth beside him, wanted to wake up next to her in the morning.

“Don’t trust me not to play with George?”

“No, I want to sleep next to a naked Lucy, wearing nothing but my collar.”

“My animals...”

“Then we stay at your house. I don’t care. I just want you next to me.”

Several emotions passed over her face, and he had trouble reading them. When she finally said, “I like that idea, Master,” his cock pounded.

* * * * *

Lucy placed the towel and lube on the couch. She took a few steps back and looked down at Lake.

“Undress and kneel in the center of the floor, arms behind your back.” His voice was deep and it sent shivers up her spine. She did as he asked, proud that she only hesitated a moment before dropping the last of her clothing and dropping to her knees.

She lowered her gaze and remained silent. They sat there for a few moments; then he cleared his throat.

“Would you like to suck my cock?”

“Yes, Master.”

“I’d like it too.”

She bit back a smile.

“But, until you learn to mind, you’ll only get to listen.” He undid his jeans and pulled down his zipper. Lucy bit her lip at the thought of his cock, hard and thick, bursting free of his jeans.

“Spread your legs. I want a good view of that dripping pussy.”

She did as he asked. “Master. I’ll be good. Please, may I have your cock?”

“You may not. Lift your gaze and watch me, Lucy. Watch me stroke what you want.”

She lifted her gaze in time to watch him stand and push his jeans to the floor. His cock burst free and her mouth watered. She wanted to taste him, feel him swell between her lips.

He ran his hand up and down the length several times before bending down to retrieve the lube. He coated his cock and increased his strokes.

“Tell me how you’d like to submit to me, Vix.”

“By obeying.”

“Really? I’d like that. What else.”

It was hard to concentrate on his words, since her eyes were focused on his cock and his hand.

“Answer me.” He picked up the tempo, his breathing matching his strokes.

By trusting you.”

“That would be nice, too. Where would you like my cock?”

“In my mouth, Master.”

“And?”

“My pussy.”

“And?” His hand was moving faster now, his hand stroking from the plump head to the base of his balls in quick fashion. She could tell he was close to the edge, ready to come. Their gazes locked and he grunted, swallowing hard as if to control himself.

“Answer me.”

She took a huge intake of breath. “My ass.”

Her pussy was more than dripping now. Her clit pounded with need.

“Master, please. Don’t deny me.”

He slowed his strokes, his breathing calming with the slower caresses.

“Let me tell you what I’d like. I’d like a sub who wants to submit to me. Who wants my cock in her mouth, her pussy, and her ass. But more importantly, I want a sub who enjoys what she’s doing. Who is confident in her ability to please me, and who knows that I want her.”

He increased the strokes again. The head of his cock swelled more and she licked her lips.

“Master. Please.”

He ignored her and continued to stroke.

“Do you understand, Lucy?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Can you be that sub?”

“I can try.”

“No. I don’t want you to try. I want you to do it.”

His hand moved faster. After a few moments, he stepped toward her.

She closed her eyes, praying that he’d changed his mind...that he was going to let her finish him with her mouth.

He stopped in front of her and put his free hand on her hair, stroking it in time with his cock. Then, abruptly, he moved back to the couch and sat down.

Without saying a word he picked up the towel sitting next to him, then laid his head on the couch. He came within seconds, placing the towel over the top to catch his cum.

“Fuck, yeah. Oh, fuck. Oh, fuck. You have no idea how I wish I were coming inside you right now. All it takes is obedience. Do you understand me, Lucy?”

“Yes, Master.” Her pussy ached with need but she knew she would receive no relief tonight.

She whimpered when he said, “Let’s go to bed, little subbie. Maybe tomorrow you can come.”

She returned his nod, knowing that sleep would be a long time coming.

Chapter Eight

Lucy turned a sausage and opened the refrigerator door, a frown on her face. She didn't know how Lake liked his eggs. How could she? She'd known him for a week. But still, she'd let him sleep in her bed last night, let him hold her tight while she wore nothing but the leather band around her neck. The leather band that marked her as a submissive. His submissive.

Her hands went to the collar. Last night had been a huge step, and she knew that each step she took drew her closer and closer to Lake. When the relationship ended, it would hurt like hell. And relationships always ended.

Her sexual frustration didn't help matters. She knew that Lake was a Master of his word, and she would have to obey to get to play. She'd obeyed him this morning. She was naked except for the robe she was wearing to protect herself from splattering grease.

"The sausage is burning."

"Oh, crap!"

She ran to the stove and turned the flame off.

"Don't cook much?"

“No. My mother wasn’t exactly the homemaker type. And she didn’t pass any skills along to me.”

“Well, no time like the present to learn.” Lake stood behind her, reached around, and turned on the burner. “Keep the heat at medium, and don’t move away for too long.”

He patted her behind, then walked to the table and pulled out a chair.

“I enjoyed sleeping with you last night, Vix.”

“Me too,” Lucy said. “Master.”

The last word was an afterthought and he laughed.

“You’re getting better. How’s your clitty?”

“Throbbing, Master.”

“Good. I hope this punishment is effective.”

“It will be, Master.”

Lucy removed the burned sausage from the pan and set it aside to cool. It wasn’t so burned that she couldn’t feed it to Fred. She added new patties and adjusted the heat.

“How would you like your eggs?”

“How about scrambled. With some toast.”

Lucy nodded in approval. Scrambled was easy. She put bread in the toaster and put jam and butter on the table.

“I talked to a cop friend of mine about the key.”

“And?” Lucy flipped the patties, then turned her attention to Lake.

“He asked about financial records, to see if Craig had rented a storage unit, or safety deposit box.”

“I don’t remember anything like that. I did keep a lot of his records, just in case something came up.”

“Maybe we should go through the boxes, see if we can find anything. What time do you have to go to work today?”

“One. Then I work until eight when the store closes.”

“My first appointment isn’t until one, so we have some time. Do you remember what boxes they are in?”

She told him she’d marked the boxes as “records” and stored them in the garage.

He stood and came up behind her, lifting the robe to rub his jean-clad cock against her bare behind.

“I’ll go and get them.” He smacked her butt on both cheeks, then picked up the burned sausage and headed for the backyard.

His “Hey, Fred, how’s it going?” warmed her heart. After an initial barking fiasco, Fred had taken to him last night, and they’d sat in the backyard and played fetch with the dog while they talked and enjoyed the cool air. She had felt warm and comfortable with him.

She laughed when he teased Fred with the food, and Fred barked playfully.

She’d just finished putting breakfast on the plates when he carried two boxes into the house. He went back outside and carried in one more, putting all three of them into the living room.

“Smells good,” he said as he came into the living room. He lifted his eyebrows at the sight of the two plates.

“Take off your apron and have a seat,” he said.

“You want me to eat naked?”

“I’m going to feed you naked,” he replied as he scraped the food from one plate on top of the other. “Go and sit.”

“Master...”

“Do you want to wait another twenty-four hours to come?”

“No.” Lucy’s voice was harsh.

“Then do as you’re told. Now.”

“No. I can feed myself.”

Lake took a step back from Lucy. He crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the counter.

“Am I hearing you using your safe word, or just refusing to follow my orders?”

“I can feed myself. Lake, I...”

“On your knees, Vixen. But first, take off the apron.”

Lucy frowned, then slowly stripped and dropped to her knees. On his command, she spread her legs and clasped her arms behind her back.

“I know why you’re disobeying me, Lucy. If you think it’s going to drive me away, you need to think again. Do *you* know why you’re being bad, stacking up punishment after punishment?”

Lucy nodded.

“Tell me.”

She remained silent and he let out an angry breath of air.

“You’re afraid to give me control in this little area, yet you submitted to me two nights in a row, one of them for punishment. Why?”

“I don’t know.” Her voice was soft.

“Do you truly want to submit to me? Because I’m beginning to think that you don’t. Are you just playing a game in hopes that I’ll fuck you, and then you’ll scream out your safe word?”

“No!”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, Master!” *But it would be so much easier the other way. She wouldn’t have to worry about the eventual end. She could just take the fuck and be done with it.*

“Let me tell you what I think is happening here. You’re nervous, yet willing, to submit to the sexual side of this, because you know the pleasure it can bring. But when I do something like feeding you, you balk. Because you know that feeding you is about caring for you. And that little act of caring would leave you vulnerable. Am I right?”

Lucy nodded, fear gripping her belly. She didn’t want to be vulnerable.

She lifted her gaze enough to watch Lake take the plate from the counter. He took a few bites, then forked up some eggs and sausage and put it in front of Lucy’s mouth.

“Open.”

She thought about telling him to go to hell, decided against it, and slowly opened her mouth. He inserted the fork gently and she took the food, chewing softly, and swallowing while he took several more bites.

By the time he’d given her several more bites, she’d calmed down somewhat.

Why had she done that? Why was she fighting him? Was he right in saying that she knew it would build intimacy and that’s why she’d said no? Deep down, she knew he was right.

When the plate was empty, he handed her a glass of orange juice. She drank it down and handed it back to him.

“Thank you, Lucy.”

She nodded.

“You know I have to punish you for this.”

“Yes, Master.”

“Where’s your toy box?”

She lifted her gaze to his. “There are a few items in the bedroom, in a box under the bed.”

“You wait here.” She heard his bare feet pad across the tile; the same tile that was now biting into her knees, as she held back tears. He knew her better than she knew herself. She just hoped that he could lead her past her own fears.

* * * * *

Lake laid the box on the bed, then sat down and ran his hands through his hair. He’d thought things were going so well, and then bam, disaster. He’d instantly recognized her disobedience for what it was, fear of doing anything that would build a bond.

Obviously the asshole she’d been married to had used her sexually and not given a damn about Lucy’s feelings. She’d learned to separate sex and intimacy, could open herself up that way, be nervous about it, but still close herself off. But try to do something like feeding her and her behavior went off the charts.

He was going to have to think long and hard on some exercises to get her to open up to him.

Inside the box he found a few vibrators, only one with batteries.

“George, I presume,” he said as he picked it up. There were also three anal plugs, in varying sizes, and a bottle of lube. He sat the lube and the medium-sized plug on the bed, then went to the bathroom and got a towel.

He went to the kitchen and found Lucy in the same position he’d left her in.

“Come to the bedroom.”

She stood and followed him, her eyes widening at the sight of the plug.

“Bend over the bed.”

When she was in position, he spread her cheeks and examined her little rosette.

“How long’s it been since you’ve taken anything here?”

“A while, Master.”

“More than a year?”

“Yes.”

He could hear the nervousness in her voice.

“OK. By my way of thinking, we have about three hours before we both have to get ready for work. You’ll wear the plug for two hours, while we examine the boxes. It’ll be uncomfortable enough to remind you that you’re being punished, but it won’t be painful.”

She nodded against the bedspread.

“Tell me why you’re being punished.”

“Because I disobeyed you.”

“Remind me why you did.”

“Because I’m afraid.”

“Very well. Do you accept the punishment?”

“Yes, Master.”

“I hope it’s more effective than last night’s. You’re still being punished, yet you gained another one. Soon I’m going to have to think of more creative ways to punish you.”

* * * * *

Lake’s words rang through Lucy’s ears as she felt the cold trickle of lube against her anus. She’d never enjoyed taking things anally, and felt lucky that it hadn’t been a favorite of Brandon’s either. The plugs had only been used once, when Brandon had invited another couple over, where Brandon had enjoyed watching the wife use them on her subbie husband.

When the couple had left the next day, Lucy had thrown out the ones the couple had used, put the rest in the box, and Brandon had never noticed.

She felt the cold tip of the plastic against her bud. “Relax, Vix.”

She breathed deeply, fighting back the urge to cry out when the tip of the plastic worked past her ring of muscle. Lake paused and twisted it around gently. When her body relaxed a little, he pushed it further inside.

The stretching was uncomfortable and Lucy squirmed.

“Hold still.”

“Master. I’m sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me.”

“I do, and I’m sorry, too, Lucy. But that’s not going to stop your punishment.” He pushed the plug in more, and she heard the bottle of lube open and close. Lake’s fingers brushed her skin as he rubbed more gel on the plug and pushed it in deeper.

When it was fully seated inside her, he patted each cheek.

“Stand up.”

As she stood, she winced at the uncomfortable feeling in her behind.

“Does it hurt?”

“No, Master.”

“Good. It’ll be just enough pressure to remind you that you’re being punished.”

She turned to him and he kissed the tip of her nose. “Let’s go look through the boxes.”

An hour and a half later, Lucy squirmed and sent Lake a pleading look. The prickly feeling was growing, and she felt like she was stuffed full. Plus, he hadn’t let her dress, so her vulnerability was high.

“A half hour,” he said, setting aside a box of Craig’s bills.

“I don’t see anything here about the key,” Lucy said with a sigh. “We still have one more box to go through, but it’s mostly check stubs, and duplicates.”

“It might hold a key to the key,” Lake said with a grin. “Seriously, I don’t know. We could take the key to a locksmith, have him look at it, and see if he can figure out what it goes to. Or we could go to a medium and see if they can contact Craig.”

She laughed. “Knowing Craig, he’d be stubborn enough to ignore her.”

“So that’s where you get it from.” He looked at her in amusement.

She blushed in return. They repacked the first two boxes and opened the third one.

“Hell, this could take all day,” Lake said. “Maybe we should leave this one until tomorrow.”

“What’s it going to tell us? Except that Craig still wrote checks for bills? I vote for the locksmith idea.”

“All right. Give me the key and I’ll take it by one this afternoon. I have a break around five. Does that work for you?”

Lucy nodded. “It’s in the bedroom, still in the envelope.”

They walked back together, Lucy walking in front of Lake and wondering if he could see the edges of plastic resting between her cheeks. During the first twenty minutes she’d been embarrassed about her punishment, but the longer it had gone on, the more she’d relaxed. Until the throbbing had started.

She’d hated to admit that the feeling, while uncomfortable, was still a bit of a turn on. She didn’t know if it was the plug, or the fact that her clit was still being denied, and letting her know its disappointment. Each time she looked at Lake her clit had throbbed. She was sure the bud had thought the anal play was meant to be foreplay, and was disappointed when it had turned out differently.

“Let’s do that box in the morning,” Lake said, interrupting her thoughts. “Bring me the key and the envelope.”

She went and retrieved the items from her bedroom, giving them to Lake, who was now sitting on the couch, and then letting out an oath of surprise when he pulled her onto his lap.

He held out the envelope and read off the numbers again.

“So, we have an eight and a thirty-two in one corner. Then, separated from that, we have a three, a nine, a seven, and a four. Or put together we have three thousand nine hundred and seventy-four. You’re sure there was no safe in the house?”

“Unless it was buried in the backyard, no. I boxed up everything I wanted to keep, hired movers to bring it over here, and then had an estate sale. I found no safe.”

“What’s in the other boxes in the garage?”

“Books, a few knick-knacks. Mostly things that I’d made for him when I was a kid.”

Tears swelled in her eyes and she looked away. Lake brought her face closer to his and gently wiped away the few that slid down.

“I’m sorry, baby. I know this must be hard for you.”

“He was the only person who ever really cared about me.”

“Not anymore.” He traced her hairline and then smiled at her.

The tears fell and Lucy shuddered when he pulled her closer.

“I’m sorry about earlier,” she whispered.

“Me, too. I keep hoping we’ll develop a bond. I know I feel it. Don’t fight it, little Vixen.”

“I’m trying. Can we end my punishment now?”

She bit her lip as he glanced at his watch.

“Yup. Then we can shower and you can help me with this.”

She looked down the erection that pressed against his shorts.

“That’s just mean. You get off and I don’t?”

“Yeah, but it’ll reinforce the fact that you need to behave, won’t it?”

Lucy stood and crossed her arms over her chest. Lake pushed up from the couch. And lowered his face to within inches of hers.

“Won’t it?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Good girl. Now, let’s go before we’re both late for work.”

Chapter Nine

The New Mexico sun beat down on Lucy as she sat on the picnic table outside Brownlee's and finished her dinner. Lake hadn't called with any information about the key, or the numbers on the envelope. A glance at her watch showed that it was after six, so he was sure to be back at work now.

She smiled when she remembered their shared shower. She'd hoped that Lake would give in and let her come, but he hadn't. Instead, he'd let her give him a hand job, not allowing her to take him in her mouth. His words still rang through her ears.

"Penetration of any kind, oral, vaginal or anal, implies trust. We're not there yet."

When she'd reminded him that she'd taken him in her mouth the first night, he'd laughed.

"True, and I loved it. But I let it get out of hand. And I'm not backing down on this."

After the shower, Lake had insisted that he load the last box into the truck with him, in the hopes that he might have some free time between appointments to go through some of it, and see if he could find a clue.

She racked her brain to think of anyone who might know what the key meant, or why Craig had hidden it under the seat of the Indian. It seemed a strange hiding place. But then

again, it had proven effective, since she hadn't found it when she'd gone through Craig's belongings.

She remembered the names of a few of Craig's friends, Rodney Baker and Jeff Black, both of them very nice men who'd offered to do anything for her when Craig had died. Then there was his boss, Alan Malfee, who ran Roadrunner Deliveries.

A quick call to information provided numbers for all three men.

Rodney's wife was polite, and happy to hear from her, saying that Rodney was out of town on a bike run with friends but would call when he got home. Lucy left her number, chatted with the woman for a few minutes before hanging up.

Jeff had been polite, but sounded confused when Lucy said she'd found something in Craig's things that didn't make sense to her. He'd pressed her for details, which she refused to give, then got mad and said he couldn't help her identify something if he didn't know what it was.

Finally, she told him it was a key and he'd laughed.

"Could be anything. Maybe it's the key to some chick's apartment."

Lucy had never thought of that. She'd thanked him for the idea and hung up. She thought about it for a few minutes, and knew that the key was too small to belong to an apartment.

Her final call, to Alan Malfee, had been just as unproductive. The man had been distantly polite, saying that he missed Craig, who had been one of his best drivers, but he had no idea what the key was for.

"I'll take it, though. Maybe it's to something up here."

Lucy had politely declined, and agreed to let him know if she found anything out.

When Briscoe came outside and looked pointedly at his watch she went back to work, stocking pots and moving trees and plants. She helped load a truck with sacks of gravel, and by quitting time, she was covered in dust.

A quick glance at her watch showed that she had a little more than an hour before she was supposed to meet Lake at Tygers. She planned on being a good girl tonight, very submissive and very eager to please.

She barely had enough time to go home and shower, then take the truck out to the club. She might be late, but at least she would be clean. She strapped on her helmet and straddled her hog, loving the way it felt as she started down the road. The larger ball on her piercing had definitely increased the stimulation she felt when she rode the bike, and this morning she'd thought she would come before she got to work.

The feeling had been a double-edged sword. She would have been breaking Lake's edict, but it would have released the pressure she'd been feeling for the past day. She'd fought the orgasm down, but now that she was back on the bike, the feeling returned.

"Soon," she whispered to herself. "Very soon."

It was just dusk when she pulled into the driveway. She parked the bike and went into the back gate. Fred bounded across the yard and barked out a happy greeting.

"How's it going? Need some water?" She refilled both his dishes and patted his head. She ignored the toy he picked up, saying, "I'm already going to be late. Do you want to get me into trouble?"

She patted him again, then stepped toward the sliding glass door.

She stopped abruptly. The door was open. Not enough to let Fred into the house, just a few inches. She thought that she'd closed it and locked it that morning, but part of her wondered if maybe Lake had come outside and the door hadn't latched. Or maybe he was inside right now, to surprise her.

She pushed it open and then looked at Fred, who thumped his tail against the ground in happiness.

Lucy shook her head. Fred was the best security system a girl could have. There was no way he would let anyone in the backyard. She stepped inside the house, leaving the door open just in case, and set her purse down. Movement from the kitchen caught her eye.

“Lake?” She was greeted with silence. “Is that you? I thought we were...”

She took a step toward the kitchen, then stopped. The living room was in shambles. The boxes she and Lake had gone through were overturned, their contents thrown across the room. Furniture had been upended and lamps broken.

“Shit.” Lucy inched backwards toward the patio, then fell onto her back when a large man barreled through the dining room doorway and pushed her to the floor.

The wind left her body as the man landed on top of her, his knees holding her in place as his hands pressed her shoulders to the ground.

“Give it to me, bitch!”

She tried to focus on the face, hidden by a ski mask.

“What?”

“Now! I want it! Give me the key!”

“No! What key? Who are you?” Lucy screamed at the top of lungs. “Get off me!”

Fred’s angry bark filled the room. Seconds later the large black lab catapulted across the room and landed on the stranger, his bulk knocking the intruder off Lucy.

The man let out an exclamation of pain, accompanied by a fierce, “Fuck, Fred! Down, boy!”

Lucy tried to stand, her mind reeling as sounds of Fred’s snarling and biting filled the room. She turned toward the struggle in time to see Fred slam against the wall and let out a howl of pain.

“Fred! No!”

The man jumped up and knocked her down, and her head slammed against the floor, and then everything went black.

* * * * *

Lake looked at his watch and sighed. She was an hour late. He'd pushed her too hard today, tried to get too much out of her too fast. Now he was sure that she wasn't showing up.

She'd been a half-hour late the first night, so he hadn't been too concerned about it at first. But the longer he'd waited, the more he knew that she wasn't coming. It hurt his heart to think that he'd driven her away.

She'd seemed happy after the shower this morning, even if she hadn't had an orgasm. She'd teased him that he'd owed her more than one tonight. He'd informed her that she had to earn it, and, if she wasn't careful, she wouldn't even get her one. Things had seemed so perfect after the fiasco of the feeding incident.

When his cell phone rang, he snatched it up quickly and frowned as Eric's number appeared on the screen. He flipped the phone open.

"Hey, I managed to run..."

"Get your ass to Lucy's."

"What, Eri..."

"Now!"

The phone went dead and Lake took off for the door at a dead run.

* * * * *

"I'm all right. Leave me alone. Where's Fred?"

Lake's heart calmed a bit as Lucy's voice reached his ears. He could tell she'd been crying and was scared, but at least she could talk. When he'd rounded her corner and saw all

the emergency lights he'd barely been able to breathe. Not that he'd been able to do so since Eric's call. During the drive over, he thought he would hyperventilate.

The officer at the front door had let him in after calling out to Eric and seeing an ID. Lake followed the noise to the dining room. He saw Eric's blond head high above all the others.

"What the fuck?"

"Break-in," Eric said. "She's fine. But when the officer got here, she was unconscious. A neighbor called it in after hearing a ruckus. About ten minutes after the call, they ran her license and I recognized her name on the scanner and called you."

"Thanks." He took a step toward the paramedics. "I'm a doctor. Let me in, please."

Lake nodded at a paramedic he knew named Steve, who nodded back and moved away. Lake knelt down near Lucy and whispered her name.

"Lake. Oh Lake, he killed Fred." She collapsed into his arms, crying against his shoulder as he held her tight. "He killed Fred. Oh, Fred. Where's Fred?"

She repeated the phrases over and over as Lake held her close.

"Relax, baby, breathe deep. It's gonna be OK. I'll take care of you. Relax. I'm going to set you back so I can examine you, OK? Breathe deep for me." He gently pushed her back, then took a light from the paramedic and examined her eyes.

"Doesn't seem to be a concussion," Steve said. "I think she just got whacked pretty good. There's a hell of a goose egg on the back of her head."

Lake nodded, then ran his fingers through her long hair. He found the spot easily as his free hand wiped away her tears.

"I want Fred," she whispered, her tears still falling. "He saved me. I want Fred."

"He's a hero, then," Lake said. "Shush, it's OK, baby."

Lake glanced up at Eric, who nodded toward a wall where Fred lay motionless on the floor. A paramedic was checking the lab, so Lake knew that the dog wasn't dead.

“I found a number on the refrigerator door and called her vet,” Eric said. “And we’ve told her that. But she seems to be stuck on the idea that the dog is dead. There’s blood on the carpet, and trailing to the backyard so the dog must have mauled the guy pretty good.”

“What about the cats?”

“Cats? We haven’t seen any cats.”

“Then they’re hiding. What the hell happened?” Lake stood and moved toward his friend.

“Well, we haven’t been able to get anything out of Lucy. The neighbor said that he heard Lucy’s bike drive up about nine-thirty. He was in his backyard and heard her talk to Fred. Then, a few minutes later, he heard a fight. By the time he got over here to investigate he saw a large man, dressed in black, running for the alley. He found Lucy and called nine-one-one.”

“Shit,” Lake said. “I can’t believe this.”

“Let me through so I can treat the dog.” Both Lake and Eric turned toward the deep voice that sounded from the doorway.

“It’s all right,” Eric said, motioning to the cop standing guard.

The vet went immediately to Fred and started to examine him.

Lake knelt back down in front of Lucy. “Let’s go outside, baby.” He helped her stand, then lifted her into his arms.

“Stop that. I’m too heavy to be carried.”

Lake forced a smile. “You just earned a punishment,” he whispered in her ear. “Behave.”

He carried her to the backyard, where he sat her down on an outdoor barstool.

Eric followed, and introduced him to Jon Tyler, the neighbor who’d come to help.

“I wish I could tell you more,” Jon said. “The dog never even barked until Lucy got home, and at first it was a happy bark.”

“That’s odd,” Lake said. “The dog barked and barked at me the first night I was here, until Lucy told him it was OK.”

“The dog knew the intruder,” Eric said.

“He called him Fred,” Lucy said from her chair.

“What?” Eric asked.

“The man. When Fred jumped him, he said, ‘Fuck, Fred,’ and I’d never said his name.”

“Well, that helps narrow suspects down a bit,” Eric said. “If the dog knew him and let him into the backyard without putting up a fuss it puts a whole new spin on things.”

Chapter Ten

It was after three by the time Lake pulled into his driveway. Lucy dozed on the seat next to him, and the cats, who had scratched the crap out of him, were making a fuss from their respective carriers.

“Quiet down,” he said to them. “You’ll wake her!”

Eric pulled up next to him. Lake carried Lucy into the house; then he and Eric each took a carrier to bring Scarlet and Rhett inside.

He took the felines into a spare bedroom, set up a litter pan, and food and water with supplies he’d brought from Lucy’s house, then opened the cage doors and ran.

“Don’t scratch the furniture,” he yelled from the other side of the closed door.

He’d stretched Lucy out on the couch, and she’d barely stirred.

“You know, this has something to do with that key you told me about,” Eric said.

“Maybe. But I don’t know how someone would find out about it.” Lake grabbed a beer out of the refrigerator.

“Bullshit. You tell me about a key that a dead man left, and then a few days later the dead man’s niece is attacked. Someone wants that key. Did you figure out where it went?”

“No. We went through two boxes of stuff earlier today, and there’s one more box sitting in the cab of the truck.”

“Well, haul it in here and let’s take a look,” Eric said. “Cause I know you’re not going to sleep since you’ll be too busy checking on her.”

“That’s right,” Lake said. He did just that, gently stroking her cheek after he checked her eyes. Then went to the truck and hauled the box inside.

“I went through part of it tonight, but I didn’t find anything unusual.” He set the box on the table, opened it, and put the papers he’d already been through on the far end. He and Eric sat and started to sift through papers and duplicate checks.

Every twenty minutes, Lake went to the couch to check on Lucy, who slept quietly.

Around six, Eric gave a low whistle. “This might be something. A duplicate check dated about a month before he died, to Hungry Hippo Storage. I’ve never heard of it, have you?”

Lake reached for the phone and dialed information at the same time he shook his head.

He asked for a number in Albuquerque, and was told there was no listing. On a lark, he asked if there was a listing in Santa Fe. He quickly jotted down the number and passed it to Eric.

“Hmm,” Eric said. “Why would a person who lived in Albuquerque go all the way to Santa Fe to rent a storage unit?”

“I’d do it. If I was trying to hide something.”

“Exactly.”

* * * * *

The ringing phone woke Lucy. It took her several minutes to get her bearings and to realize she was someplace she’d never been before. Then last night came rushing back. The

image of Fred flying through the air and slamming into the wall, and the intruder's voice as he screamed at her to "give it to me."

She moaned and sat up, then focused on Lake as he came out of a doorway.

"Lie back down," he said. "I'm fixing breakfast. You just relax some more."

"Fred." The word came out as a whimper.

"That was the vet on the phone. Although he's not out of the woods yet, Fred's still alive."

Lucy gave a half laugh, half sob and buried her face in her hands.

Lake sat down next to her and gathered her in his arms. "He'll be fine, Lucy. You'll see."

"What can you tell us about last night?"

Lucy stiffened at the voice. She recognized that voice. Master X. She looked at the blond man who looked like a Viking and who now stood near the same doorway Lake had come through. He grinned at her sheepishly, and she blushed and turned away.

"Not much."

"Lucy, this is Detective Eric Neal, my best friend."

She nodded when Eric said, "Hi Lucy." Then she leaned into Lake and told them everything she could remember. When she was done, Lake helped her to her feet.

"OK? Feeling dizzy or anything?"

"No."

"Let's get some food inside you," Lake said. "Then we can tell you what we found."

"Can I pee first?"

"Sure. Second door on the right. Holler if you need me."

"I think I can handle it on my own."

"I meant if you get dizzy."

She went down the hall and quickly took care of business. She washed her hands and looked in the mirror. All she could think about was Fred. If it hadn't been for him, she would more than likely be dead right now. Fred had fought off her attacker. She said a silent prayer that her dog would survive, then went back to the dining room.

Both Lake and Eric stood as she neared the table. When she sat down, she realized she was starving. Lake placed a breakfast burrito loaded with eggs, sausage, and cheese in front of her. He put a jar of salsa on the table.

"Guess we're not worried about cholesterol, huh? Eating eggs two days in a row."

"Just eat," he said, placing a plate in front of Eric and taking one for himself.

They ate in silence for a few minutes, and then Eric cleared his throat.

"Tell me, Lucy, while you were going through your uncle's papers did you find a rental agreement for Hungry Hippo Storage in Santa Fe?"

"No. Why would Craig store stuff in Santa Fe?"

"That's a good question," Eric said. "But according to the manager that I talked to a few minutes ago, Craig came in about a month before his death and rented a unit, paying cash for two years' rental."

"You think the key goes there?"

"I would say so," Lake said.

"And, I'm thinking the numbers are the building and unit number, with the four digit code being a way into the gate," Eric said. "The manager says each customer has his own code to get inside. That way he can come and go after hours."

"Then let's go," Lucy said, standing quickly.

"Hold on, sport," Eric said. "This is a police matter now."

"I don't care what you think. Craig left it for me."

“Lucy,” Lake said. “This isn’t a treasure hunt. The person who broke into the house was looking for that key. Craig obviously knew something that person didn’t want known.”

“Do you think...oh my lord. Craig. They killed him.”

Lake’s eyes were full of sorrow. “We don’t know that, baby.”

“No, it makes sense. Craig never went without a helmet, until the day he died. He would never drink and ride his bike, yet the police said he was drunk. They killed him.”

Lake quickly stood and took her in his arms, holding her close. She wrapped her own arms around his waist and cried into his chest.

“Lucy,” Eric said. “I’m sure you’re right. And if they killed once before, they’ll do it again. The man who attacked you last night may have thought you were dead when he left. Your neighbor sure thought you were.”

Lucy nodded, sniffing. “We have to go there, though.”

“Not you,” Lake said, his voice full of authority. “You need to stay here and rest. That’s a pretty big bump you took.”

“Yes, me,” Lucy replied, pushing away from him. “I’m not going to sit here while you two run off and play Rambo, bump or no bump. I’m coming with you.”

“Lucy...”

“Don’t argue with me, Lake. I may give you control over my body, but not my actions when it comes to things like this. If I don’t go with you, I’ll go in my car, by myself. Either way, I’m going.”

“She’s a feisty one,” Eric said, humor in his voice.

“You have no idea,” Lake replied.

Chapter Eleven

Lucy twitched as she sat between Lake and Eric, who piloted Lake's huge truck down I-25. She couldn't believe what had been happening. In less than twenty-four hours her world had been turned upside down.

The silence was thick in the truck. She knew Lake was angry with her for not sitting calmly on the sidelines like a good little girl. She took a drink of the soda they'd bought with their fast food lunch and stared straight ahead.

Lucy shifted nervously in the dress she was wearing. She wasn't used to dresses, unless she was going out, but Lake had grabbed clothes for her before they left after the break-in. She wiggled a little and her clit twitched against the ball of her piercing.

"Who did you call yesterday?" Eric's voice sounded somewhat distracted, interrupting her thoughts.

"Excuse me?"

"Yesterday. Who did you call about the key?" He glanced at Lucy, then turned his attention back to the road.

"How did you know?"

“Something set the thief off, and the only thing that would do that would be a call from you about what he wants. The key. He probably thought he had it made, and your call shattered his world.”

“Two of Craig’s friends, and his boss. When we didn’t find information in the boxes, I thought maybe one of them would know.”

“Names.” Eric pulled out his cell phone.

“Rodney Baker, Jeff Black, and Alan Malfee. Malfee was Craig’s boss, and the other two worked for Roadrunner. Jeff was also a poker buddy.”

Lucy glanced at Lake, who sat ramrod straight as Eric called the police station and asked a cop to run the three names for him.

“Rodney was out of town,” Lucy said. “Jeff thought it could be to a woman’s house, and Alan wanted me to bring it to him.”

Eric’s eyebrows lifted.

“Start with Malfee,” he said. “Send a uniform out to see where he was last night.”

The sound of the phone closing echoed in the small space.

“Would Fred have known him?”

“Fred would have known all three of them,” Lucy said.

“Figures,” Eric replied.

Lucy put her hand on Lake’s knee and squeezed, running her fingers up his thigh toward his crotch.

“You can’t be mad at me for this.”

“Not as a Dom, maybe, but I can as Lake. You should be sitting at home, resting.”

“My head doesn’t hurt nearly as bad as it did. I’m fine.” She caressed him gently.

“Maybe. But that doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

“All right,” Lucy replied. She pulled her hand away from him and turned her attention to Eric. “How can we find Craig’s killer?”

“We have to make certain that his accident was no accident,” Eric said. “I’ve asked for the files to be put on my desk. I’ll look at them tonight after we get back.”

“I can’t believe a friend of his would do that to him.”

“People with secrets to hide are desperate, Lucy,” Eric replied. “If this secret was something illegal, Craig’s death would have assured his silence.”

“But why wait until now? Nothing happened when Craig died.”

“Maybe the person thought they were safe,” Lake said. “It wasn’t until yesterday that you started making phone calls about a key. Like Eric said, that would have set them off.”

“Exactly,” Eric said. He turned the truck onto the Cerrillos Road exit and turned back under the highway.

The car grew silent as Eric navigated the Santa Fe traffic and Lake and Lucy searched for the building. Lucy found it first, and Eric turned into the lot. She read off the numbers to him and then watched while he punched them in and the gate swung open.

“Building eight,” she said as Eric pulled through the gate. “Unit thirty-two.”

When they pulled up in front of the building, Eric stopped them from getting out of the car.

“Just hold up a second. I’m going to call a tech friend of mine to come and take fingerprints and document evidence, just in case we find something.”

“No!” Lucy shook her head, then moaned as dizziness took over.

“Easy,” Lake replied, lifting her face to his own and searching her eyes.

“Yes, Lucy,” Eric said. “If there is evidence of a crime here we need a tech to document it. If not, lawyers will find a way around using it in trial, and Craig’s killer could go free. Do you want that?”

“Of course not.”

“Then just sit tight.” Eric got out and dialed a number on his cell.

While he talked, Lucy leaned into Lake, who wrapped his arms around her.

“You owe me an orgasm,” she said softly. “I missed mine last night.”

“Vixen.” Lake shook his head. “I’d thought you’d stood me up. When Eric called, I was so worried.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault, baby. I’m just saying that I was really worried.”

“I, um, I...” She took a deep breath. “I was so happy to see you.”

He kissed her forehead and held her close.

“Don’t be afraid, baby.”

“I’m not. I don’t think they’ll be back.”

“That’s not what I meant. Don’t be afraid that you need me, Lucy.”

Their gazes locked and her heart went into overdrive as the meaning of his words sank in.

“I’m trying not to be. I know I can trust you, it’s just...”

“I know. And I’m here to help with that.”

He kissed her gently, his lips tracing over her own before he pushed down harder, strengthening the connection. They broke apart long enough to take a deep breath before their lips melded together again.

It was the first time he’d actually kissed her, and Lucy’s senses reeled. Her toes curled and her heart raced. It felt so wonderful, felt so right to be in his arms. How had he wormed his way inside her heart in such a short time? They hadn’t even technically had sex, but yet she wanted to stay in the safety of his embrace forever.

“Ahem. If you two are through playing kissy face, Diego is here.” She could tell that Eric was holding back laughter.

They exited the truck quickly, and Eric introduced her to Diego Fuentes, a medium-built Hispanic man with short black hair and warm brown eyes. Lucy liked him immediately.

“So, we have a warrant?” Diego asked.

“Don’t need one,” Eric replied. “Lucy’s uncle was the renter, and when he died she inherited everything.”

“Good enough for me,” Diego said. “If you’ll give me a minute, I’ll print the lock and the clasp on the mechanism. Then we can open it up and see what we got.”

Lucy admired the way Diego made quick work of taking fingerprints. He seemed very competent.

“I guess you work with the Santa Fe PD often?” She lifted her eyebrows at Eric.

“Some. Actually, Lake and I met Diego at Tygers, where he was helping train some new subs.”

Diego turned a wicked grin on Lucy and she blushed furiously.

Lake pulled her into his chest and chuckled evilly. “You’re surrounded.”

“So it would seem,” she replied.

When he was done with his work, Diego took the key from Lucy and removed the lock, placing it in an evidence bag along with the key. He lifted the hasp and pushed the bar open, allowing him and Eric to raise the door.

Lucy stared inside in astonishment.

“It’s empty. We drove an hour for an empty storage unit.” She stepped inside and walked toward the center, her hands on her hips. She heard movement behind her and knew the three men had followed.

“Um, baby?” Lake’s voice held a tinge of excitement. “Look behind you.”

Lucy turned toward the door. There, taped to the wall near the door was a large manila envelope, with her name written across it in bold, black lettering.

Chapter Twelve

“What’s taking him so long?” Lucy chewed on her thumbnail and tapped her foot.

“Stop that.” Lake pushed her hand away from her mouth. “Relax. Diego’s doing it by the book.”

“I want to read whatever’s inside.”

“You can’t read it if you faint from hyperventilation,” Eric said, smiling at her. “Lake’s right. Relax.”

The sound of tape being pulled from the wall made her straighten her shoulders. Diego walked toward them, the envelope in hand. When he was near, he handed Lucy a pair of gloves.

“I really should open it, but I guess we can forgo protocol just this once.”

When Lucy’s hands were gloved, he handed the envelope to her. She took Lake’s pocketknife and slit the seal, blowing the envelope open to peer inside.

She pulled out a single sheet of paper and started to read. Seconds later, her eyes welled with tears and she handed the sheet to Diego.

“You read it.”

He nodded and cleared his throat.

“Sweet, Lucy. I’m so sorry it had to come to this. I thought I could handle what I found out, but if you’re reading this I was wrong. Do you remember the trip we took when you were twelve? You and me on one bike, your mom and Pat on the other. Go there now, Lucy. I’ve left something for you. Don’t let them get away with it. All my love, Craig.”

“Where, Lucy? Where did you go?” Lake asked.

“Chama. We went to Chama, but I don’t remember the cabin exactly. It was Patrick’s cabin, and I would never be able to find it again.”

“We can call Patrick.”

“If you can find him. I talked to him after Craig’s funeral. He was so pissed that Craig didn’t leave him his bikes he threatened to sue. Then he fell off the face of the Earth.”

“Tax records,” Diego said. “Call the county offices. You can find the cabin from there.”

“True,” Lake said. “Patrick must still own it if Craig went up there not even a year ago.”

“OK,” Eric said. “We’ll find it from there and head up that way tomorrow. It’s a little over three and a half hours from Albuquerque.”

“Only two and a half from Santa Fe,” Diego said with a laugh.

They closed the storage unit and Diego put the letter and envelope in separate plastic bags.

“Lucy, it was a pleasure to meet you. Hopefully we can all meet under more pleasant circumstances sometime.” He winked at her and gave the bags to Eric.

The three of them loaded into Lake’s truck and went to the gate, then exited onto the busy street.

“I’m hungry,” Lucy said.

“Burgers? Fries? Tacos? Soft drinks?” Eric asked from behind the wheel. They decided on burgers, and pulled into a small restaurant with an outdoor eating area.

While Lake and Eric went inside to order food, Lucy sat on the bench and put her head in her hands. Things were moving so quickly that she felt like she was shooting through space.

She'd finally let Lake inside, admitted to him that she needed him. That was something she hadn't done in quite a while. It had been so wonderful to have him there last night, holding her as she cried about Fred. She'd felt protected and safe, even if she had still been frightened half out of her wits.

The image of the intruder flashed in front of her. Whoever it was hadn't planned on killing her. If he had, he wouldn't have bothered to cover his face. It was hard to imagine one of Craig's friends doing something to harm him, much less kill him. And it was harder still to think that Craig had discovered something illegal and not gone to the police about it.

It seemed as if that would have been the first thing that he would have done. Craig had always been honest about everything. What had kept him from disclosing what he knew? Had he been involved in whatever activities had gotten him killed?

Lucy shuddered at the thought. The Craig she knew wouldn't have done anything illegal. Of course, the Lucy she knew wouldn't have flat out lied to someone, either. Yet she'd done it not twenty minutes ago when she'd told Lake and Eric that she didn't know where the cabin was. She knew exactly where it was, could remember every detail of that trip because it had been one of the happiest times in her life.

She and her mother were actually taking a vacation with a man that her mother seemed destined to stay married to. Destined until three months later, that was. Still, the trip was etched on Lucy's brain, and she knew that she could find the cabin easily.

She just had to figure out a way to get past Lake and Eric. Guilt tore at her heart, and she hadn't even done anything wrong. Yet. But she knew she would, tonight. Somehow she needed to find a way to distract them so she could get away long enough to start for Chama without them knowing about it.

Tears welled in her eyes. She knew that when she did this, it would forever break any chance of a relationship with Lake. He would never trust her again. Could she give all that up? Maybe she should tell him now that she'd lied, and they could start for Chama right now, see what they could find together. After all, they were an hour closer here in Santa Fe. They could be there before nightfall.

Lake's approach pulled her back to the present. She shook her head to clear it. She had to do this, for Craig. He'd always been there when she'd needed him. He'd left the letter for her. He'd expected her to right the wrongs that had resulted in his death, and she planned on doing just that. Alone.

* * * * *

The idea came and went quickly, then came again. Lucy wasn't sure it would work, but she had to try. They were on their way back to Albuquerque. This time, Lake was driving, but she was still sandwiched in between them, their muscular thighs pressed against her own flesh, solid from years of riding motorcycles.

When they were a half hour out of Santa Fe, Lucy called the vet to check on Fred. She laughed happily when the vet said he was doing better, then riled the dog up enough so that he gave a hearty bark.

"He's going to be fine," she said. Both Lake and Eric expressed their relief.

Lucy knew, though, that she had to put her new plan in motion. She pushed away the regret she felt over what was about to happen, then put her fingers on the bottom of her skirt and started to inch it up. Eric noticed first, his eyes widening before he gave her a curious look.

When the skirt was almost to the juncture of her thighs, she pushed her hand inside and moaned softly.

"What do you think you're doing," Lake asked, his voice low.

“Playing with my pussy.”

“So I see. Did I give you permission for that?”

“I didn’t ask. I need an orgasm.”

Lake let out an angry growl and Eric whistled softly.

“Somebody’s being a bad girl,” Eric said.

“Get your hands away from your pussy, Lucy. You’ll come when we get to Tygers. Not before. I’m the Master, remember? You’re the subbie.”

She continued to rub, watching Lake as he moved his glance back and forth between her thighs and the road.

“Lucy, I’m warning you; don’t disobey me on this.”

For an answer, Lucy pressed the ball into her clit, gently rubbed it back and forth over her hard nub, and came. She moaned loudly as she rode out the waves of pleasure that ran through her body. She bucked her hips against her fingers and cried out Lake’s name.

“Son of a bitch,” Lake said. “Lucy, you’re asking for a punishment. Dammit. I mean it, Lucy. Move. Your. Hands. Now.”

Lucy continued to rub. Her second orgasm hit as quickly as the first. She put her left hand on Lake’s crotch and squeezed.

“That’s it. Eric, please move her hands away from objects that have to do with sex.”

“Sure.” Eric took her hands in his and placed them on his thigh. Lucy pulled her right hand free and licked her fingers.

“Crap,” Eric said. “She is a vixen. I’m so hard right now I could hammer nails.”

“Why are you doing this, Lucy?” Lake’s voice was full of anger.

“I told you, I wanted an orgasm.”

“I thought we had an agreement, you and I. It’s still a work in progress, true, but you’re the one who repeated the rules to me. What are the rules, Lucy?”

“You’re in control, Master.”

“Was I in control when you disobeyed me just now?”

“No.”

“How should I punish you for disobeying me?”

“Take me home?”

“Oh no. We’re still going to Tygers. Eric and I will think of something to overcome this little bout of disobedience.”

Lucy bit her lip. Shit. It hadn’t worked. She’d hoped that Lake would be so angry with her that he’d drop her at her house and tell her that he’d see her tomorrow. She mentally kicked herself in the butt for even thinking that he would do that. For one, her little outburst would have to be punished, quickly. And two, Lake would never leave her alone after the break-in last night.

That meant just one thing, and Lucy knew that it could not only get her into trouble with Lake, but with the law. Right now, though, she didn’t care. Each minute that she stayed away from Chama was more of a chance for Craig’s killer to get away. She had to put this new part of her plan into effect as soon as they got to Tygers.

* * * * *

It was almost one a.m. by the time they arrived at Tygers. Lucy had insisted that they stop at Lake’s house so she could check on her cats. Lake had agreed, giving her time to go upstairs and make sure the animals were settled and hadn’t torn anything up.

Now, he was ready to get things rolling.

“Room four.” Lake snatched the key from the sub manning the desk, then grabbed Lucy’s wrist and led her toward the stairs.

He was still angry, but he'd calmed down somewhat. He wasn't sure what Lucy was up to, but he knew that whatever it was, he wasn't going to like it. He figured it could be several things that had prompted her little outburst in the car.

First, she truly did want an orgasm and just didn't want to wait. He pushed that idea aside quickly. He figured it had more to do with the emotions that were running through her as a result of finding Craig's note, and the attack. But that didn't mean that she could just flat out disobey him and get away with it.

Their relationship was tenuous enough. If he ignored it; that would probably be the breaking point.

They entered the room, Lake stopping long enough to empty his pockets before they went into the main room.

"Maybe I should let you handle this alone," Eric said.

Lake exhaled heavily and ignored his friend.

"Lucy, I'm going to spank you. Not an erotic spanking, but a punishment spanking. A good old-fashioned butt burning spanking. I can't believe...I just... Shit."

He shook his head and looked at her.

"Tell me why you did that."

"I told you. I just wanted an orgasm."

"You could have asked. I might have said yes."

"Let's just get it over with." She walked to the table, lifted her skirt over her hips, and bent over.

Lake's anger flared back up. He undid his belt, taking it slowly from the loops. He made sure he was in Lucy's line of vision as he doubled it over.

Then, suddenly, he shook his head. Shit. The little vixen was topping from below, controlling the situation to her advantage. He took a step back and started to loop his belt back through his jeans.

“No. We’ll do this on *my* terms. You will stay here, bent over like that with your bare behind in the air. I want you to think about why you decided you were in charge. Eric and I are going downstairs to get a drink. When I come back, I expect an explanation. A damn good one.”

* * * * *

Lucy waited for a few minutes after the door slammed before standing up and pushing her skirt back into place. For a moment, she’d been afraid that it wouldn’t work, that Lake would spank her and be done with it.

She’d seen the look on his face the minute he’d realized what she was doing, and the minute he decided to take control again.

After straightening her clothes, she put her ear against the door. When she was sure he was gone, she went into the anteroom and picked up the keys to his truck. They were lying next to his wallet, right where he’d left them.

“I’m sorry, Lake,” she whispered to herself. “Please forgive me.”

Then she opened the door, and made her way toward the exit.

Chapter Thirteen

“Every time I think things are getting better, she does something that lets me know she’s never going to let me inside her.”

“She will. You just have to give her a chance.” Eric held up two fingers and the bartender nodded and opened two longnecks.

Lake reached back and shook his head. “Shit. My wallet’s upstairs.”

“So is mine,” Eric replied. He winked at the petite bartender. “Put it on a tab, little subbie.”

Lake signed the paper the bartender gave him, then took a pull on his beer.

“A chance? Eric, no matter how many chances I give her, she’s never going to open up. If I could find that ex-husband of hers, I’d beat the living daylights out of him.”

“She’s been through a lot this week. She’s gotten a new Dom. She was attacked by a burglar looking for evidence that could probably prove he’d killed her uncle. Her uncle knew about criminal activity and tried to hide it. Her dog almost died. The list goes on and on.”

“Are you saying I’m overreacting?”

“No, because she definitely needs punishing. But I’m saying the two of you are still getting a feel for each other. I think you expected a bond to form too quickly. Give it time.”

Lake took another drink. “You’re right. I just knew I had to get out of there earlier, or I would have done something I’d regret.”

“True.” Eric looked over Lake’s shoulder and frowned.

“What?” Lake turned toward the crowded room.

“It’s Ty, and he’s got Chess in tow. They both look a little stressed, so something must be up.”

Lake’s anxiety grew as Ty Kessler, part-owner of Tygers, moved toward them, elbowing aside people who got in the way.

“I’ve been looking for you for the last ten minutes,” he said to Lake. He pulled Chess closer.

“Tell them.”

“Master, I...”

“Tell. Them.”

“Lucy took the truck.” The big man lowered his head.

“What!” Lake pushed away from the crowd and ran toward the parking lot. He could hear Eric running behind him. When he pushed open the door into the cool night air, he stopped in his tracks.

The fantastic parking space they’d found near the front door was empty.

“Fuck!”

Eric joined him, with Ty and Chess coming outside seconds later.

“Tell me everything,” Lake said to Chess. “When did she leave?”

“She went outside about fifteen minutes ago. She told me she had to get something out of the truck. Another couple came in and I was talking to them. I saw her back out and leave. Master Lake, I’m so sorry. I didn’t know...”

Lake held up his hand.

“It took Chess a while to find me, and for me to find you,” Ty said.

“Which means she’s got a good fifteen to twenty minute head start,” Eric said. “You know where she’s going.”

“Fuck, yes!” Lake ran his fingers through his hair and paced the area. “She knew exactly where that cabin was, the lying little... She set me up. The whole friggin’ afternoon, she was setting me up.”

“What can we do to help?” Ty crossed his arms over his chest.

“I need a ride to the house,” Lake said.

“We need a ride,” Eric replied. “Listen, if she’s headed to Chama, she’ll have to take the main road through Santa Fe because of the truck. If we’re on the bikes, we can take the back roads and make up some ground. Less traffic. More speeding space. I can have someone wake the county clerk there and get the location of the cabin before we arrive.”

“Chess will take you anywhere you need to go,” Ty replied. He stepped toward his sub, who was several inches taller. “And then, you will come back here so we can discuss this matter. Is that understood?”

“Yes, Master,” Chess replied, bowing his head.

“Don’t blame him,” Lake said. “Lucy can be very convincing. Don’t punish him for what she did.”

“Chess knows the rules. No unaccompanied female leaves the building without an escort to her car. No exceptions. That’s what he’ll be punished for.”

“Forgive me, Master,” Chess replied.

“Take them to Lake’s house, and get right back here.” Ty turned to Lake. “Do you want me to report the car stolen?”

“No,” Lake said. “We’ll take care of it.”

Ty nodded and yelled for another sub to bring down Lake and Eric’s personal effects from room four. While they waited, he pulled Chess aside to talk.

When Lake and Eric had their wallets, they entered the car Chess had pulled around and took off. Lake gave Chess his address and the big man made record time to the other side of town. He dropped them off and left just as quickly.

“I’d say Chess is fixing to get his ass whipped,” Eric said as Lake opened the garage door and sorted through helmets.

“I’d say you’re right.” He handed Lake a helmet. “Here. I’ll even let you drive the Indian. But you wreck it, you buy me a new one.”

“On my salary? You’re the doctor. I’ve only got one bike, remember? I’m an underpaid public servant.”

“I’m a physical therapist who had to cancel all his appointments yesterday, and now today. I hope I’m not looking for a new job when this is all over.”

Lake went into the house, packed a bag with a few of his and Lucy’s clothing, then strapped it on the back of the bike.

“I packed enough for you,” he said to Eric. “We’re about the same size.”

They mounted the bikes and hit I-25. Lake was thankful that it was almost three in the morning, and there was hardly any traffic. They could make better time that way. He also knew Lucy would not encounter traffic, either. Hopefully, their little shortcut, even if some of the roads were unimproved, would get them there at about the same time as she did.

At Rio Rancho, they turned onto Highway 527 and kicked up the speed.

They’d been silent so far, so when Eric’s voice sounded in his helmet, Lake uttered an expletive.

“You know,” Eric said. “You’re going to have two choices here. You’re either going to have to give up on her, or punish her severely for stealing your truck and lying to you. I hope you’re thinking about that.”

Lake adjusted his microphone. “I am. I’m not giving up on her.”

“And the punishment will be...?”

“I haven’t decided yet.”

* * * * *

Lucy pulled into the cabin’s driveway and put the truck into park. It was almost six in the morning, and the cabin lay in darkness. No cars were parked in front of her, and from the looks of things, there was no one there.

She debated about calling Patrick and telling him she was in Chama, asking if she could go into the cabin. But she and Patrick had parted on less than civil terms and she was sure her request would be met with a resounding, “Hell, no.”

Even after her earlier confidence, it had taken her a bit to find the cabin, so she was later than she’d wanted to be.

She laid her head on the steering wheel and thought about Lake. The idea of him brought tears to her eyes. She had been looking forward to a decent relationship, and she’d ruined it. There was no way he would want to continue with her after this. He would dump her like yesterday’s garbage. She wanted to rewind the clock, go back to when they’d discovered the note, and tell him the truth.

Lucy put her head in her hands and sobbed. She’s ruined everything, she knew that now. She should have trusted Lake, told him about the cabin, trusted him to help her discover what happened to Craig.

Instead, she’d shut him out, pushed him away, and then run from him. Not only had she run from him, she’d stolen his truck. She’d worried the whole way up that a cop would

stop her and arrest her for grand theft. She'd passed several, but not one of them had looked twice at her.

That meant that either Lake hadn't reported the truck stolen, or he intended to do so in the morning. If he did it today, then when she drove back to Albuquerque later this morning, she would be stopped and arrested.

She would lose her job, she would lose her house, but worst of all, she would lose Lake. Of course, she was sure that loss had already occurred.

Once she was outside the truck, she sniffled and willed her tears to stop. Then, she took a deep breath and closed her eyes.

"Talk to me, Craig. Where did you leave it? What do you want me to find?"

No disembodied voice sounded in her mind, and no ghostly forms appeared in the dark.

"Craig, help me!" *Good lord, I sound like a moron!*

She walked toward the cabin and remembered the time they'd spent here, happily hiking, swimming in the pond, collecting firewood, and roasting marshmallows. The vacation was burned into her brain. Her mother and Patrick had kicked them out of the house a few times. Lucy didn't know why at the time, although she did now. They would have sex while she and Craig played in the woods, and near the creek.

What had Craig told her? She sat down on the porch steps and closed her eyes, just for a few minutes' rest.

Memories of the trip grew stronger. Then, Craig's voice sounded loud and clear, as if he were standing right next to her. She opened her eyes. He wasn't standing next to her, but the memory of him was inside her.

"Lucy, when I was a kid, we used to come here. My parents would fight like cats and dogs, and Patrick and I would go into the cliffs near here. There are some caves that we used to play in, pretend that we were Indians that lived in this area. We used to have such a great time."

Sounds from the highway drifted by. The cabin was only three miles off the road, and in the early morning quiet, car sounds had always drifted up. Lucy knew that the world was coming to life again. People who lived near here would be going to work soon, would be getting on with their lives.

She closed her eyes and concentrated on remembering Craig's words from her childhood. The cliffs, the caves. If Craig had left something for her here, it would be hidden in one of those caves. There were only three of them, as Lucy remembered. Searching for Craig's package shouldn't be too hard.

"Lucy." The voice was soft, yet full of urgency.

"I hear you, Craig. I'll go there."

"Lucy!"

She popped her eyes open and stared. Lake stood before her, his hands on his hips, his muscular thighs encased in motorcycle chaps, and fire in his eyes.

"You, young lady, are in a hell of a lot of trouble."

Chapter Fourteen

“Lake, I...” Lucy stood, then stopped when Lake held up his hands.

“Don’t, Lucy. Don’t try to come up with an excuse, or make this any less than what it really is.”

“I’m sorry.” Her heart lodged in her throat.

“So am I.”

“I had to do this, for Craig.”

“No, Lucy. You did this because you chose to do it. You did this because deep down, you didn’t trust me. You look at me and see Brandon. That’s why you did this.”

She bit her lip to keep from crying.

“Have you found anything?”

“I haven’t looked. How did you get here so quick?”

“Chess told us you were gone. He’s in trouble, by the way. Just so you know that your actions affect more than you, me, and Eric.”

Lucy gasped.

“Master Ty wouldn’t...”

“He would. Chess broke the rules by letting an unaccompanied female leave the building alone. Chess belongs to Master Ty and will be punished accordingly. I wanted you to know that.”

Lucy nodded, guilt washing over her body. The idea of sweet Chess being punished made her stomach roll. She knew that to protest about it would do no good. From the look on Lake’s face, things were pretty much done between the two of them.

The silence stretched on. Finally, Lake cleared his throat.

“You have somewhere you want to search?”

“Yes. There are some caves near here. I think that would be a good place to start.”

Lake nodded, then turned to wave Eric over to them. Lucy felt bad that she hadn’t even noticed that the burly blond stood near the motorcycles, letting her and Lake have time alone.

“I’m sorry I’ve ruined everything. I seem to be pretty good at that.”

“You’ve put a huge dent in it; that’s for sure,” Lake replied. “But I’m sure I can think of a proper punishment. Or two. Or three. Or more.”

“You’re not...”

“Don’t even say it, Lucy. Have you uttered your safe word? Hmm? Do you want out?”

Lucy shook her head furiously.

“Then hush. But I’m warning you, Lucy. This is it. You pull another stunt like this and I’ll whip your ass. And it’ll have nothing to do with Master/sub, and everything to do with good old-fashioned discipline, which you are sorely lacking. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes,” Lucy said softly.

Eric walked up and winked at Lucy. “Hey, car thief. I brought my handcuffs.”

“Good,” Lake replied. “We’ll need them later. Now, where are these caves?”

Lucy's heart beat painfully. He wasn't pushing her aside. She'd done about the worst thing she could do to Lake. She'd lied to him, stolen his car, and he was still standing by her. Did people like him really exist? All her life people had left. Her mother had always been there, until she'd found a new husband or boyfriend, then she'd let Lucy languish by her side until the man was gone, only to push her aside again when a new one came along. And they always did.

"The caves?" Lake asked, interrupting her thoughts.

"Over there." She pointed toward the north. "There's about three of them in the side of a mountain."

"Let's go," Eric said. "I've convinced my captain that I'm searching for evidence on Lucy's break-in today, but he has no idea where I'm at. I need to get my ass back to Albuquerque by the end of shift, which is in seven hours. And it's a three and a half hour drive."

"You can take the truck," Lake said. "Lucy and I will ride the bikes."

Lake walked back to the bike and retrieved two water bottles, and they started into the woods. It didn't take Lucy long to find the caves.

"No footprints," Eric said, bending down in front of each cave. "We'll have to search them all."

They explored the first cave for an hour before giving up after finding nothing. During a break for water, Lucy rolled her head from shoulder to shoulder.

"Maybe somebody's already found it, or maybe he never made it up here to leave anything."

"He did," Eric said. "There's evidence somewhere about something illegal. The person who attacked you knows that. And they want it."

They'd been inside the second cave for about ten minute when Lake's voice broke the silence.

“Something tells me this isn’t an Indian artifact.” He held up a black backpack. It seemed very flat.

“Where did you find it,” Lucy asked.

“Buried under the large L painted on that rock,” Lake said. “Some people might have thought it was a lover’s mark, like carving your initials in a tree. I figured it was L for Lucy.”

He handed the bag to her and she opened it quickly. Inside she found a letter, and another key.

“To Lucy Travers, or to whoever finds this. I have stored evidence of a crime in a safety deposit box at Western Bank in Santa Fe. This key opens that box. If you are not Lucy, please take this key to the Santa Fe Police Department.”

Eric checked his watch. “It’s a two and a half hour drive, and it’s almost noon. If we left right now we could just make it before closing without having to go to the trouble of getting a warrant. We’ll go faster on the bikes. We have a friend who has a cabin not far from here. We can leave the truck there, if that’s OK with you, Lake.”

“Of course,” Lake replied. “The truck’s already been stolen once today.”

Lucy winced and bit her lip. She was rewarded with a grin from Lake.

“Let’s get going,” Eric said.

They parked the truck about ten miles down the road, then took off on the bikes, Lucy riding behind Lake on the Indian.

“Lucky you brought an extra helmet,” she said to him through her microphone.

“Luck has nothing to do with it,” Lake replied. “I always carry a spare.”

Lucy settled herself closer to him. He felt warm and secure between her thighs, and it had nothing to do with sex, and everything to do with security. She wrapped her arms around his waist, tightening her grip, and placing her chin on his shoulder.

He gently squeezed her left hand with his own, and Lucy felt his heat spread through her body. She was grateful to Margaret for introducing them, for knowing exactly what Lucy needed in her life.

“Shit! Margaret. And Marcy. And crap, Briscoe. I was supposed to be at work by eleven today.”

“You’re late,” Eric said with a laugh.

“What I am is fired. There is no way Briscoe will allow this. He’s such a hard ass.”

“I’ll call him,” Eric said. “Explain everything to him.”

“Great,” Lucy replied. “I don’t think Briscoe will let me keep my job just ’cause I have a note from my mommy.”

“I’m not your mommy; I’m a cop. I had you in custody for stealing a car.”

“Then he’ll really fire me,” Lucy said.

“Probably,” Lake replied. “But, you know, I’m late for work too, Lucy. We could both be out of a job.”

“Really? Oh shit.”

Lake’s laugh was evil. “Not really. I called a friend at ten and asked him to cover for me.”

“That was mean of you to scare me like that.”

“No meaner than what you’ve done today,” Lake said. “By the way, Eric, know any good punishments for a car thief?”

“You mean besides jail time? I’m thinking a whipping.”

“I’m thinking you’re right. A big one. In the public room at Tygers.”

Lucy’s stomach plummeted. “Lake, please, no public.”

“I’m sorry, Lucy, but this type of behavior warrants public punishment. I’m sure that Master Ty will want to punish you, too, for breaking club rules.”

“You would let him punish me?”

“Yes, Lucy, I would,” Lake said. “Do you forget that your theft had consequences for Chess, too? Master Ty has every right to punish you. He practically has to, so that people can’t think they can do things like that at Tygers. And, I guarantee you, everyone knows what happened.”

“I don’t want to...”

“You have to trust me on this one, Lucy. If it doesn’t happen this way I can guarantee you that Master Ty will never allow you back in Tygers, even if you’re with me.”

They’d entered the outskirts of Española, about an hour from Santa Fe. Lake’s words had been like ice water poured all over Lucy. She’d thought that Lake had forgiven her; that he’d punish her for a while and all would be well with them. Now she found out that he was going to hand her over to Master Ty for punishment.

Not that Lucy could blame him. What she’d done was a terrible thing. But still, knowing that she would be punished, and by someone other than Lake, scared her half to death.

“I want to stop and call Diego, ask him to meet us at the bank,” Eric said. “Then we can go to the SFPD and examine whatever we find.”

They pulled into a convenience store long enough to top the tanks, make the call, and get something to drink, then started back off. They pulled up at the bank five minutes before closing.

Lucy had been prepared to fight for the right to get into the box. She silently blessed Craig when she found out her name was on the lease, too, and the bank gave her no problem. Inside they found notarized documents and two DVDs.

At the police station, Diego popped the DVD marked “one” into his computer and they all gathered around to watch.

When Craig's face appeared on the screen, Lucy began to cry. Lake pulled her backwards into him, the wall of his chest comforting to her as he wrapped his arms around her.

"It's OK, baby. Think of this as his legacy. He's going to right a wrong."

Lucy nodded, and wiped at her tears as Craig started to talk. He gave his name, his age, and the date. The DVD had been made two weeks before Craig's death.

"A little over a month ago, I found out that my boss, Alan Malfie, has been operating a drug smuggling ring out of his package pickup service. I found out entirely by accident, and when I confronted him, he offered to cut me in on the profits. Then, he told me, even though I might not have known it, I'd carried drugs on more than one of my runs."

Craig went on to discuss how the ring worked, how certain drivers would make trips on the books to cities near the Mexico border, make an unscheduled stop along the way, and load up with drugs. And on some loads, Craig said, drivers would pick up what they thought were legitimate hauls and not know that there were drugs in their shipment.

"I believe several of the drivers are in on it," Craig said. "I've enclosed a list of names on the sheets provided, along with an affidavit of my statement, given to a stenographer that I know in Albuquerque. In two weeks, I'm scheduled to make another run down state. I've convinced Alan that I'm in on the plan. When I pick my load up, I'm going to check it on the open road, to see what's there. If there are drugs, I'm going straight to the police station with them."

"I've made this recording in case something happens to me. The other DVD is a recording I made of Alan and Rodney Baker unloading drugs at the warehouse."

Lucy gasped. "Not Rodney. He was so nice to me when Craig died."

"Nice Rodney probably killed Craig," Eric said. "And, he probably attacked you, too, Lucy."

"No, I don't believe it."

“Lucy, we checked on Malfee. Alan Malfee was with his wife, at a party, the night you were attacked. And, he was in Las Vegas the day Craig was killed. I’m telling you, Rodney is his lackey. He does the dirty work, ’cause I can guarantee you that Malfee isn’t getting his hands dirty with the physical things. That includes killing Craig, and ransacking your house to try and find the evidence.”

“Rodney was out of town that night. His wife told me so.”

“He said he was out of town,” Eric said. “I think he was just waiting on you, thinking he could find what they wanted, and then they would be in the clear.”

“Fucking bastard!” Lucy started to cry in earnest, burying her face in her hands. When Lake turned her around and gathered her in his arms she didn’t protest. She grasped his shirt in her fists and sobbed.

She could hear muffled words around her, then the opening and closing of a door. Lake held her close, then lifted her face to his.

“It’s gonna be OK, baby. I promise.”

“I miss him so much.”

“I know. We can’t change the past, but we can make sure they pay. It will be Craig’s final legacy, and you will have helped him fulfill it.”

“You and Eric, too.”

“Yeah, well, you’ll just have to think of a suitable way to reward us, won’t you?”

Chapter Fifteen

Lucy sat on the cold chair, naked except for the collar that Lake had fastened to her neck. In the other room, he waited along with Eric and other high ranking members and owners of Tygers.

In a few minutes, the door would open, Lake would come in, and then he'd take her into the room and give her to Master Ty for punishment. Lucy tried to control her breathing. Her hands shook and she tapped her bare feet against the floor repeatedly.

She and Lake had discussed it last night. Master Ty wanted to do the punishment as soon as possible. They'd managed to keep the incident fairly quiet, except for all the owners, and a few of the members who had belonged to the club for some time. Those people were the ones who would witness her punishment. Witness her flogging, for that was what Master Ty had decreed was needed.

"I'm scared," she'd whispered to him. "Please don't do this."

"Lucy, you have to trust me on this," he'd replied. "It's a huge leap for you, I know. But it has to be this way. Do you understand?"

"Yes, but I don't have to like it."

“I’m not too thrilled with the idea, either,” Lake had replied. “But you have to understand Ty’s position.”

She’d nodded, and sighed. The discussion had come after an end of what had been a horrible day. After seeing the DVDs Craig had made, Lake had driven Lucy to work, where she’d fought hard with Briscoe, who agreed to give her a “trial” basis to prove once again that she was trustworthy. She’d made sure she was early to work that morning, had taken no personal phone calls, and had worked hard to make sure everything was done.

After work, she’d gone to see Fred, who’d thumped his tail in greeting. She’d cried as she laid her head on the dog’s shoulder and stroked his head. The vet assured her that Fred would be fine, but he wanted to keep him a few more days just to make sure.

Lucy had asked about the bill, and been surprised to hear it had already been paid, by Lake.

Today had been so much better. Until nine o’clock, when Lake told her it was time to go to Tygers. He’d taken her to the private room off the owners’ den, stripped her, and put a collar on her, then told her to wait.

Her hands were sweaty, and when Chess opened the door and motioned her out, she wanted to hug the big man, tell him that she was sorry that he’d been punished because of her. Instead, he’d given Lucy a sorrowful smile, and indicated she should step onto the platform in the center of the room. Large beams bracketed the platform, and Lucy knew she would be bound there. Lucy stood in place and looked at the audience. It wasn’t that big, really, only about fifteen people. Lake sat near Eric. Lucy was surprised to see Diego standing near the doorway.

She could tell by the look on Lake’s face that he wasn’t happy about what was about to happen.

Ty stood up, flogger in hand and Lucy fought the urge to turn and run. Lake was right. She needed to trust in him. If he thought this was best, then this was what needed to happen.

“Bind her, Chess.” Ty’s voice boomed out.

“Yes, Master.” Chess led Lucy to the platform. He attached chains from each of the beams together, then fastened a manacle around each of Lucy’s wrists and ankles, so that she was shackled in the center.

When he was done, Chess went and knelt next to Ty’s wife, Alexis, who gave him a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

Lucy took a calming breath, then focused her eyes on the floor just below Lake’s feet.

“Lucy, tell the group why you’re being punished.”

“Yes, Master Ty. I disobeyed my Master. I stole his car from your parking lot. I’m very sorry.”

“And you accept your punishment now? You accept the fact that your Master has given you to me to flog, as the penalty for your crime?”

“I do.”

Ty stepped onto the platform, moving to within inches of Lucy’s body.

“You must care for your Master a great deal, to put your trust in his hands and allow this to happen. You know you can use your safe word and opt out of your punishment.”

Lucy bit her lip. She knew that she could, but then, if she did that, her relationship with Lake would be at an end, and she couldn’t allow that to happen. She needed him too much. She lifted her gaze to Lake and smiled.

“I care for him very much, Master Ty. And I trust him with my body, my mind, and my heart. I accept this punishment as sentence for the wrong that I did him, and you.”

Ty moved off the platform and Lucy lowered her head. The room was silent and she tensed up, waiting for the first strike of the leather against her body.

Breathe deep, breathe deep. Relax. It will be over soon and you’ll be in Lake’s arms. The silence dragged on and Lucy wanted to scream at Ty to “get it over with,” but she couldn’t. She wouldn’t embarrass her Master any more than she already had. He’d done too

much for her. It was obvious he cared for her. How could she not trust a man who had proven himself to her over and over, even when she'd practically slapped him in the face?

Lake wasn't Brandon. That fact couldn't be any plainer to her. Lake was someone she could trust. Someone she could give herself to. Someone she could love, and who would love her back.

She lifted tear-filled eyes to Lake.

"I'm sorry, Master. Please forgive me."

"I do, Vixen." He smiled at her, and then nodded at Ty.

"Very well," Ty said. "Chess. Release her."

Lucy jerked her head toward Ty.

"What? I don't understand."

"You won't be punished, Lucy, at least not by me," Ty said. "This little exercise was to prove to you what you're feeling; to help you come to terms with it. You could not have done this if you didn't trust Lake. You knew it deep down, but he tells me you've fought it. We just forced it out of you. What you do with those feelings are your and Lake's concern."

Lucy groaned as the chains were released. She rushed to Lake and knelt down, putting her head on his thigh. He gently stroked her hair.

"I think you might need this," Ty said, handing the flogger to Lake. "And I believe room four is open for you. We just might have to rename it the Lake and Lucy room."

Lake pulled Lucy up and kissed her forehead. They started for the door, stopping at the sound of Ty's voice.

"Lucy, if you ever do something like that in my club again, you'll be banned. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Master Ty. I'm sorry."

He nodded, and Lake began to move again.

“Are you going to flog me?”

“Oh yes, I am,” Lake said. “And Eric’s going to watch. I believe he deserves to be part of this punishment, don’t you?”

“Yes, Master.”

When they were inside the room, Lake kissed her, gently at first, and then more demandingly, his tongue thrusting inside her mouth in long jabs.

“Who do you belong to, Lucy?”

“To you, Master.”

“And if I want to feed you?”

“I’ll eat.”

“And if I need to punish you?”

“I’ll take it.”

“And if I want to fuck you?”

“I’ll beg for it.”

He kissed her again, running his fingers through her hair, the strands of the flogger mixing in and streaming down her back.

“We were made for each other, Vixen. Soul mates, through and through.”

Lucy took a deep breath, opened her mouth, closed it again and then said in a rush, “I love you.”

Lake threw back his head and laughed.

“Considering how hard I know that was for you to say, I think I’m the luckiest man in the world right now. I love you too, Lucy. I’m going to collar you and keep you forever. Any objections?”

“None.”

“Good. Now, bend over the table and let’s wait for Eric, because before I do any of those other things, I have to punish you.”

She nodded and assumed the position that he’d indicated. She’d never been happier to wait for a punishment in her whole life.

Chapter Sixteen

Lucy was surprised that not only did Eric come in, but he brought Ty and Chess with him.

“I didn’t say I wasn’t going to watch,” Ty said. “A small test of your trust. And I thought it only fair that Chess got to see you get punished too, since he got his ass whipped for disobeying the rules.”

Lucy nodded.

“I’m so sorry, Chess.”

“It’s all right, Lucy. It was my fault. I disobeyed my Master.”

“No, I...”

Ty held up his hand. “Enough. We won’t mention it again after tonight.”

Lucy laid her head down on the table, facing the three men. When Lake moved up behind her and trailed the leather across her behind she willed herself to relax. She knew that tensing up would only make the strokes more painful.

When Lake finally trailed the leather over her behind, she closed her eyes and whispered, “I’m ready, Master.”

The first stroke stung and Lucy bit back a cry. By the fifth stroke, her eyes watered. Lake flogged her with even precision, the strands landing on her behind and the back of her thighs. Each strike stung a little more than the last one, and Lucy lost count. Lake hadn't asked her to keep track of them, and she wondered how many he would give her.

She closed her eyes and willed control over herself. It didn't matter how many he gave her. She deserved them. She'd done wrong. She'd not only disobeyed him, she'd embarrassed him in front of the club. She would take her punishment as he saw fit.

After a few minutes, the severity of the strikes lessened. The leather teasing her skin -- skin she knew must be red with marks. Then, Lake picked up the pace again, landing a few more heavy strokes before gently caressing Lucy's back.

"Enough, Vixen." His voice was tender and Lucy nodded.

She opened her eyes in time to see Ty kiss Chess's forehead, then move the sub's hand to his Master's crotch. After a minute of caressing, Ty stood and led Chess from the room.

"I'll leave you two alone," Eric said. "Call me tomorrow."

He left without waiting for an answer.

Lucy shivered when Lake caressed her behind.

"I want to fuck you, Vixen. Do you remember what you said you would do?"

"Please, Master. Please fuck me. I'm begging you. I'll be good."

Lake trailed his fingers up and down Lucy's back.

"Do you remember what I said when we started this?"

"Yes, Master, that penetration required trust."

"I think we have that now."

She could hear Lake undressing. She wanted to jump up, kneel in front of him, and suck him deep into her mouth. But more than that, she wanted him to fuck her, wanted to feel him pulsing deep inside her body.

“Lie back on the table.”

Lucy did as he asked. She grimaced as her sore behind came into contact with the table. When he centered himself above her, she bracketed his thighs with her own.

“Fuck me, please, Master.”

“Do you know how hard that earlier scene was for me? I wasn’t sure if it would work.”

“That was your idea?”

“Mine and Ty’s. I had to trust him to handle it just right.”

“You trusted him, and I trusted you.”

“Trust goes both ways, baby.”

He positioned his cock at the opening of her pussy.

“You’re so fucking wet for me.”

“Yes,” Lucy gasped, pushing her hips toward him in invitation. “Yes. Fuck me.”

He gently pushed inside her and pulled back when she giggled.

“What are you laughing about, huh?”

“Ty would kill us if he knew we were having sex in here. That’s supposed to be a no-no.”

“Well, I can guarantee you that Ty is fucking Chess right now, so I don’t think he’ll care.”

He pushed back inside her and gently kissed her lips.

“More.” Lucy bucked up against him.

Lake rewarded her by pushing in more, then pulling back out.

“Beg me. Just like you said you would.”

“Fuck me, Master. Fuck me, *please!* Make me yours. Fuck me, I’m begging you! Please!”

Lucy’s groans filled the room, and turned to sighs of pleasure when Lake pushed himself all the way inside her. He kissed her, and then began to fuck her with hard, swift

thrusts. Each time he plunged his cock further inside her until Lucy thought she would die of pleasure.

“I’m going to come,” she whispered against his chest.

“Don’t you dare. Not yet. You’re mine, Lucy, all mine. You’ll come when I allow it.” He thrust harder, sending Lucy’s clit into spasms of pleasure. Each thrust sent her clit into her piercing, increasing her pleasure until she thought she couldn’t stand it anymore.

“Master! Please!” She gripped his hips harder and when he groaned and said, “Now,” in a guttural tone she came with him, and she knew Lake was right. They were made for each other. They belonged together. And nothing would ever pull her away from him.

He collapsed on top of her and she kissed his shoulder.

“So good,” he whispered, trailing his lips across her neck. “So fucking good. My beautiful, little Vixen.”

He rose up on his elbows and their gazes locked.

“My strong, virile Master.”

“Do you want to move into my house, or sell it and buy a new one?”

Lucy blushed. “Your house is fine.”

“Good. We’ll move your things tomorrow. But we need to go and get my truck ASAP. I don’t want to leave it sitting for too long.”

“I’m off on Saturday, unless Briscoe fires me between now and then.”

“Saturday it is. We’ll get Eric to go and see if we can stay in our friend’s cabin overnight. That way, we can top you together. Would you like that, Vix?”

“Yes, Master. I’d like that very much.”

“Good. ’Cause I know just the perfect thing. Just the right mixture of pain and pleasure to get my Lucy off.”

“Your Lucy.” She felt his cock swell against her pussy.

“My Lucy.” He kissed her gently and then began to thrust his hips against hers. When he quickly stood up, she said, “No, Master, don’t leave me.”

“Up, Lucy. Come and bend over the table so I can take you from behind.”

She scampered into position. She heard the pad of his feet as he walked to the wall of toys. He was back seconds later, attaching a small weight to her slave ring.

“Oh, Master. Too much pressure. Please, no.”

“Hush. No talking.”

He thrust inside her, and soon, the only sound in the room was the hard slap of their flesh as he beat their bodies together in a steady, harsh rhythm. Each movement sent the weight jiggling, and drove sweet tendrils of torture through Lucy’s clit.

“I need to come,” she whispered.

Lake slapped her ass. “Did I say you could talk? Silence, subbie.”

He thrust harder, grasping her hips as he thrust deeper and deeper.

“Master! I can’t...”

Lake slapped her ass twice more and Lucy bit her lips to stay silent. He fucked her long and hard, until Lucy thought she would die of pleasure. Then, when she thought that he would last forever, he trailed his hand over the body and tugged gently on the weight.

“Come.” Lucy shot off like a rocket, gripping Lake’s cock inside her and pushing herself against him.

“More, more, more, more. Oh Master! More!”

She felt Lake’s hot seed spread inside her and was grateful for the second time that day that she’d never stopped taking the pill.

“All mine,” Lake whispered against her shoulder. “All mine.”

She turned her face to his and kissed him, plundering his mouth with her tongue.

“Are you always going to be so forward, Vixen?”

“Count on it, Master.”

“Good. More reasons for punishment.”

He turned her over and removed the weight from her ring. She moaned when his tongue gently lapped at her clit.

“Feel better?”

“Tremendously.”

Lake lifted his head and gave her a stern look.

“I mean, tremendously, Master.”

“Hmm. We’re going to have to work on that. Your obedience has been lacking of late.”

Lucy melted under his smile.

Chapter Seventeen

The cool feel of the wind snaked around Lucy's body. The breeze wrapped itself around her breasts, moved down her body, and caressed her pussy. She shivered and inhaled sharply.

"Be quiet," Lake said. "No sound whatsoever."

It was just after midnight and she was laying spread-eagle on the picnic table in Lake's backyard, her legs dangling off the sides, her arms held straight.

Lake sat nearby under a tree, watching her. She wondered how long she'd been there. She knew it had been at least fifteen minutes, but no more than thirty. Or had it?

The more time passed, the more excited she became. Her pussy tingled, wetness dripping from her slit. And her nipples were hard little rocks.

She focused on the twinkling stars above her. It was torture to lie here and know that he was nearby, but wasn't yet ready to touch her. She craved the feel of his hands, the warmth of his body, and the pulsing power of his cock buried inside her.

Finally, he cleared his throat.

"I want to talk about something. Are you relaxed?"

Was he kidding? She felt like a rattlesnake, coiled and ready to strike.

"Not really, Master."

“Then we’ll sit here until you are. You should breathe more deeply. Close your eyes and focus inward.”

The minutes dragged on and Lucy felt herself relax. Her body still ached with need, but she knew that Lake would take care of her. She briefly wondered what he wanted to talk about, then pushed the thought away. If she dwelled on it, she would never relax.

“Are you ready now?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Good. You’ve made several comments about your weight that we’ve never really addressed. I want to do that now.”

Stars above, here it comes. The “you’re too fat talk.” I knew this had been too good to be true.

“All right.”

“I want to start this by saying that I rather like your generous curves. Especially when they’re curved around me while you’re riding bitch.”

Warmth spread through Lucy’s body. “Thank you, Master.”

“But, I can tell that it bothers you, or else you wouldn’t have brought it up, more than once.”

“It’s just that people...”

“I’m not people, Vix. I’m your Master.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Good. Now, here’s what we’re going to do. I’m going to put a white board in the bedroom. Every time you say something that is derogatory about yourself, you’re going to put five marks on the board. At the end of the week, I’ll count them up and we’ll decide on a punishment.”

“But, Master...”

“No buts, Lucy. That’s the end of the conversation. We begin counting tonight, at this very moment, so if you mention it again, you’ll have to remember all the marks to put on the board once it’s up. Understood?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Good. Now, let’s play.”

He stood and quickly shed his clothes.

“May I sit up, Master?”

“I think...no.” He traced his fingers up and down her legs, sending shivers up her spine.

“I like watching you tremble,” he said. “Just enough excitement to keep you on the edge.”

He traced his finger up and down her slit. “So very wet. I must say, you took your punishment like a real trooper tonight. Sit up, Vix.”

She did as he asked, keeping her legs spread to either side of the table.

“Hands behind your back. I imagine your behind is very sore.”

“Yes, Sir.” Lucy kept her eyes down and her shoulders back. Her breasts were thrust forward and Lake reached out and caressed each nipple.

“Still, you got a good fucking afterwards, and you came hard.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“I think my Vixen needs to come again, though.”

“I’d like that, Master.”

“I’m sure you would.” He caressed each breast again, then stepped back. “Stay in position. I’ll be right back.”

Lucy sat, fighting the urge to put her fingers where Lake’s had been. Her clit throbbed in anticipation of more attention and she so desperately wanted him back. She loved the way

he drew things out, waited until just the right moment to make her climax, to bring them together. In the short time they'd know each other, he knew her body better than Brandon ever had.

Better than that, though, he knew her mind, and her emotions. She had to remember to thank Margaret one more time for introducing them.

"Stand up and bend over the end of the table."

His voice made her jump and he chuckled. "What were you thinking about?"

"You, and how wonderful it feels to be with you."

"I'm very glad to hear that. Do as you're told."

Lucy sat up, quickly taking up position. Lake moved behind her and caressed her aching behind.

"I bought something for you the day I bought your rings," he said softly. He caressed her slit gently, moving the wetness around. Then, something different slid along her flesh. It felt small and rounded and Lucy searched her brain. She didn't know what it was and the idea that Lake was introducing her to something new was very, very exciting. The device wasn't hard plastic, but was soft, making it flexible.

He moved the device over her clit and it began to vibrate.

"Oh, Master."

"You like your little egg?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Good. I have two them. One for your sweet pussy, and one for your tight little ass."

He moved the egg down and pushed it deep into her pussy. The vibration increased; Lucy gripped the side of the table. She heard the lube bottle pop open, then felt the cool gel dribble over her puckered opening.

Lake massaged it in, inserting one finger inside her and moving the gel around. He replaced his finger with the egg quickly, pushing it past her muscles and making her groan. Then, he came to stand near her face.

“Look at me.”

She turned her gaze toward him, then gasped when both eggs began to vibrate inside her. The sensation was incredible. They worked against each other, sending tendrils of pleasure over Lucy’s flesh.

“Remote control,” he said proudly. “Let’s turn it up more, shall we?”

Her clit throbbed in delight as the sensation increased.

“Master.”

“I’m going to fuck you while those are inside you, Lucy. But where to fuck? Your sweet pussy? Or your tight little ass?”

“I...I...”

“I’m thinking that pretty little behind. Just think, Lucy. Two eggs, one in your pussy and one in your ass, plus my cock. The eggs will increase stimulation for both of us.”

He traced her spine as he walked back down the table. The eggs stopped vibrating, and when Lake pulled the one from her behind, Lucy wanted to scream at him to put it back in. She heard the lube top again and laid her head on the table.

Besides the plug, it had been a long time since she’d had anal sex. Still, complete trust in Lake made her relax against the wood under her. She shut her eyes in delight when he massaged more lube into her back entrance, then put his cock at the ready.

“Am I invited here, Lucy?”

“Yes, Master.”

“And where’s here?”

“In my ass, Sir.”

“Ask me.”

Just do it already! “Please, Master, fuck me.”

He slapped her already aching behind and she jumped. “You know what I mean.”

“Please, Master --” She paused for a few seconds. “-- fuck my ass.”

“That wasn’t very convincing. Are you positive?”

“Yes, Master. I want your cock inside my behind. Please.” He pushed gently, grabbing her hips as she tried to pull away from him.

“Relax, Vixen.” He pushed more and Lucy whimpered out a “Yes, Master, please,” before pushing back against him.

“Shush. We need to take this slow. Relax.”

His unhurried progress almost drove her insane, but she knew that he was right. It had been too long for her, and a hurried entrance might do damage. When she felt the front of his thighs press against the back of her own she knew that it wouldn’t be long now before he was fucking her hard, making that part of her body his.

He turned on the egg in her pussy and they both groaned. His rocking thrusts were gentle and smooth, and after a few moments, he stopped. She felt the egg press against the opening of her behind and she squealed.

“I can’t. Too much. Too much.”

“Hush. You can and you will. Relax.”

He pulled back, then pushed back in. She felt the egg pop past her muscles, his cock carrying it into her ass along with its upstroke.

“Oh, Master. Lake, oh...”

He turned the egg on and Lucy came, shooting her hips back into him as tidal waves of bliss washed over her body.

“Oh my. Oh. Oh. Oh.” He turned the eggs up as he began to thrust in and out of her and Lucy came again, gripping the edge of the table. She’d never been so full, never felt such pressure, never felt such satisfaction.

“I’ll forgive you for coming without my permission,” Lake growled as he increased his thrusts. “Don’t let it happen again.”

Soon, the only sound in the yard was the slapping of flesh against flesh. The eggs vibrated inside her and Lucy knew that she could have another mind-blowing orgasm at any second. She held back, though, trying to concentrate on anything but the pressure building on her clit.

“You like?” His voice was gruff, and Lucy knew that he, too, was on the edge.

“Yes, Master. Yes. More. More. More. I want all of you.”

“The eggs stimulate me too. Feel so very good. You know what feels better than the eggs, though?”

“What, Master?”

“Being buried in your tight ass.” He thrust a few more times, then roared out as he came, bucking into her harder and harder.

“Come, Vix. Come with me.”

He turned the eggs up higher, his roar turning into a growl and Lucy came, tightening herself around him as she shattered.

“Master!”

“Mine. Mine. Mine.” He licked his tongue up her back, then pulled her hair back, his look almost feral as he gazed into her own.

“Who do you belong to?” The harsh tone of his voice made her shiver in delight.

“You, Master. Only you.”

His lips claimed hers in a harsh kiss. She could still feel his cock, buried deep in her ass, the eggs vibrating around it.

He pulled away from her long enough to take the eggs from her body.

“Take these inside to the bathroom,” he said softly. “There’s cleaner there. Then come and meet me at the hot tub.”

She quickly did his bidding, running back to the yard to sink into the water.

He held out his arms. “Come here.”

Once they were cradled together, he sighed. “We can’t stay too long. It wouldn’t be good if we fell asleep this way.”

“Imagine the headlines, ‘Sated couple drowns in tub.’”

He laughed. “Coroner says he can’t wipe smiles off their faces.”

“He’d be right,” Lucy said. “I don’t think the smile will ever leave my face.”

She sighed when he caressed her breasts.

“Mine either, Vix.”

She was almost asleep when she felt him shift behind her. She sat up and he got out of the tub, holding out his hand to help her over the side.

When he reached down and gathered her in his arms, she said, “No, I’m too heavy...” The words slipping from her before she slapped her hand over her mouth.

“Hmm. Five marks already. This little punishment could get interesting.”

He carried her to the bedroom where they found Scarlet and Rhett curled on her pillow.

“Great,” Lake said. “They need their own bedroom.”

He sat her on the bed and she shooed them away. Seconds later she was cradled in his arms again. She felt his body relax against her own and she sighed.

Chapter Eighteen

“So Alan surrendered?” Lucy shifted her weight behind Lake as he piloted the Indian back toward Chama.

Eric, riding his own Harley this time, glanced at them.

“Yup. He insists, however, that he had nothing to do with Craig’s death, or the attack on you. He’s adamant that Rodney killed Craig without his knowledge, and he “approved” the burglary because Rodney said he could find the evidence and get it back.”

“He didn’t know that Craig was smarter than him,” Lucy said, smiling.

“Much smarter,” Lake replied.

“But, Alan’s smart enough to be out on bond,” Lucy said, her smile disappearing.

“Only because he agreed to testify against Rodney,” Eric said. “Plea bargains are very good things. We’ll get Rodney for Craig’s murder, and he’ll go away for life.”

“I love the sound of that,” Lucy replied.

“I like the sound of you moaning,” Lake replied with a laugh. “You should have heard her last night, Eric. *Master, oh Master, more. Oh, please!*”

He’d raised his voice to a falsetto and Lucy gently slapped his shoulder.

“Watch it, Vixen,” Lake said. “You’ll earn yourself a punishment.”

Eric laughed. “I think she earned about twenty of them with the car stunt. If you give her too many more, she’ll never get out of the doghouse.”

“Mind your own business, Eric,” Lucy said with a growl.

Both men laughed, and Lucy felt warmth spread through her body. Alan was being charged, even if Rodney couldn’t be found. Fred was being released to go home on Monday, and she and Lake had finished moving all her personal items over to his house.

He told her that they would soon have a collaring ceremony to bind her to him, and her new home.

Right now she was wearing a beautiful gold choker that Destiney had made for her. It was inlaid with lapis and had a charm on it with entwined Ls. Many people had already complimented her on the new jewelry. Only a few of them knew what it signified.

One of those people was Margaret, who alternated between being pissed because Lucy had not let her know what was happening, to being thrilled that Lucy was binding herself to Lake.

“I knew you two would be perfect together,” she’d said. “But you’re a bitch for not calling me about the break-in, or anything else. I hate you sometimes.”

Lucy hugged Lake closer to her, wishing she could get her lips close to his neck. The vibrations from the motorcycle were sending sweet tendrils of pleasure through her body.

“Master, I need to fuck.”

“See, Eric. Sometimes, she thinks she’s in control.”

“Well, maybe to punish her, you shouldn’t fuck her tonight.”

“Excellent idea. A perfect punishment.”

“That punishes you too!” Lucy could hear the childishness in her own voice.

“Not necessarily,” Lake replied. “You’ve got a great mouth, too.”

Eric's evil laugh sent chills up Lucy's spine.

"You wouldn't. Master! Please!"

"Begging already," Lake said. "Don't you love it?"

Lucy straightened her shoulders as the two men continued to laugh. "You won't refuse to fuck me. You can't go without it any more than I can."

"We'll see, Vixen, we'll see."

They made their usual stop at a convenience store outside Española. Lucy went inside to buy drinks and snacks while the men topped off the gas tanks. Then, they drove ten miles up the road to a rest station.

The picnic table they chose sat several yards off the road, and once they were off the bikes, Lake patted a section of the table.

"Sit here, Vixen. Keep your ass right on the edge."

Once she was seated, Lake opened a package of potato chips, ate one, and then held one out for her. She opened her mouth and he placed it inside. She'd come to love being fed by him. It made her feel warm and wanted. They went through the bag together while Eric sat with his legs stretched out on the long bench, watching them in amusement.

"When we get to the house, the first thing you're going to do is strip," Lake said. "You're not allowed to wear a stitch of clothing the whole time we're there. There's a table on the deck. You'll go and lie down on it, spread eagle, and wait for further instructions."

"Outside? In the daylight?"

"Are you arguing with me?"

"No, Master."

"Good. I don't want to have to repeat myself. And just so you know, you'll go twenty-four hours without fucking the day we get back, as punishment for your little order back there."

“I wasn’t ordering. I was stating a fact.”

“Forty-eight.” Lake took a pull off a soft drink.

“Master!”

“Seventy. Would you like to try for more?”

“No.” Lucy pouted.

“Good. Behave yourself and I might consider knocking some time off the sentence.”

He held the bottle up to her mouth and she took a long drink.

“Let’s go,” Eric said. “We’re burning daylight and my cock’s hard now.”

“Mine too,” Lake said. “Goes along with someone’s wet pussy. Is your pussy wet, Lucy?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Good. Keep it that way. Make sure you keep pressure on your clit. Enough to keep you wet, but not coming. I like the idea that my little bitch-rider’s wet for me.”

She grinned. “I’m always wet for you, Master.”

“Hurry up!” Eric yelled. “Too much teasing gives a guy blue balls.”

“You? What about me? I’m the one who has to stay wet.”

“I know,” Eric said. “That idea is keeping me hard.”

“Me too.” Lake said. “Let’s go, let’s go. And remember, Lucy. Start stripping the minute you get off the bike.”

“Yes, Master.”

* * * * *

The wooden table felt cold under Lucy’s behind. It was round, and her feet dangled off, her legs spread wide. The sun was starting to set, and the air was turning colder. The breeze cooled her hardened nipples, and her aroused pussy. She wanted to beg for attention, but she knew better.

Lake would be angry with her if she did. The men were carrying in supplies that they'd brought. She wondered if she'd get to wear any clothes while they were here, or if Lake would keep her naked.

She didn't care either way. As long as they were together, she was happy. She tried to decide how long she'd been on the table. It seemed like hours, but from the way darkness had come, she'd say it was more like an hour.

Her body was totally cooled now. As a matter of fact, she was downright cold. She'd just thought about complaining when Lake came outside and caressed her thigh.

"Good. Follow me, Vixen."

Lucy followed Lake through the house. When they reached a staircase that went down, she frowned.

"Where are we going?"

"To the dungeon."

Once down the stairs, Lake opened the door and she saw that he wasn't kidding. They were in a true BDSM dungeon. Candles provided illumination and Lucy made out a St. Andrew's Cross, and a wall featuring numerous floggers, crops, and what even looked like a whip.

"Whose house is this?"

"Diego's," Eric said. "He has some fetishes. Bondage. Whipping. He's even pierced his cock."

"Really?" she whispered.

"Yeah," Eric said. "I watched him take a sub one time, in every possible way, if you get my drift. The woman loved it."

"On the table, Lucy," Lake said.

She lay down and put her arms out to her side.

“Very good,” Lake said. “What we’re going to do tonight is very intense. Some consider it edge play. This shows the ultimate in trust, especially when you have more than one Dom.”

Lucy’s breathing increased when Eric passed Lake a long, white candle.

“Ever played with wax?” Lake’s voice was deep with arousal.

“No, Master.”

“Relax, take deep breaths. You have to trust me, Lucy. Trust us. Just relax.”

Lucy wanted to shut her eyes, but she couldn’t take them off the candle in Lake’s hand. Several times he tipped it, as if to drop wax on her body. She’d tense up, and just when she thought he would pour the hot liquid on her, he’d pull back.

After three attempts at that, she thought that maybe, just maybe, he intended to just tease her with it. Then, the next time he tipped, and the hot liquid landed on her stomach.

She hissed and twisted at the same time Eric dripped wax onto her nipples, alternating between the two.

The pain was intense and quick, not enough to burn her, but enough to provide a heated sensation that shot straight to her clit. She wanted to beg for more as both of her Doms set the blunt edge of the candle on her stomach and caressed her gently.

Then, Eric took Lake’s candle, and Lake crossed to the top of the table. He covered Lucy’s eyes with a blindfold.

“Master.”

“You’re our canvas,” Lake said. “We’re going to draw whatever we want. The blindfold just takes it to a different level. You won’t know where the wax is going to hit now that you can’t watch the candle. The sensations will be much more intense.”

Lake caressed her temples as Eric poured the wax on her stomach and breasts, moving around her body as she moaned and wiggled.

It was erotic and it felt fabulous. When they started to peel the wax off, the sensations increased, her heated skin coming into contact with the cold air in the room.

“Lake. Master.” The words came out as soft moans.

“Hush,” he said. “We’re not anywhere near done.”

When her body was free of wax, they both moved away. Lucy felt an immediate sense of loss, both physically and mentally. She could hear them talking lowly so she knew they were still in the room.

Then, after what seemed an eternity, she could feel them both on either side of her. They started as a team, dripping wax in lines around her nipples and breasts, and then down to her pussy. This wax was hotter, more intense, and Lucy couldn’t help the cry of disbelief that came from her lips.

“Different types of candles have different melting points,” Lake said.

“We used plain paraffin at first,” Eric said. “This candle, a votive, is about five degrees higher. More sensations.”

“More pain,” Lucy said.

“Relax,” Lake replied. “Remember I would never do anything to hurt you intentionally. We know what we’re doing, baby.”

The wax dripped onto her pussy from both sides and Lucy bucked against it, inadvertently opening her legs wider so that the wax trickled down her slit. She moaned and thrashed, but noticed that Lake didn’t rebuke her. They trailed the warm liquid over her stomach in alternating lines, and Lucy thought she might come at any moment.

They moved up and down her body, concentrating on her torso until the wax felt like an extra layer of heavy skin, encasing her breasts, pussy, and stomach.

This time when Eric peeled the wax off, he didn’t use his fingers. She felt the cold of metal against her skin and she gasped.

“Relax,” Lake said. “It’s just a butter knife. Cold against hot. Do you like it, baby?”

“Yes.” *Had that word just come out of her mouth?*

“You’ve been such a good girl.” Lake leaned down and suckled a nipple while Eric peeled the wax from her pussy. “Would you like to come now?”

He peeled the blindfold back and smiled down at her.

“Yes.” She moaned when he took the other nipple into his mouth. “Yes,” Lucy said. “Yes.” Too many different sensations were hitting her body at one time. Hot and cold, desire and anxiety. It was a buffet of feelings that she didn’t quite know how to handle.

“Too much,” she whispered, even as her body screamed for more.

“Shush,” Lake said. “Deep breaths. Relax.”

She melted into the table under her as both began to massage her body, which still tingled from the heat of the wax.

She groaned when Eric straddled her face, his huge cock in his hand. She looked at Lake, who smiled and nodded. She put her hands on either side of Eric’s hips as he went onto all fours, giving her better access to take him into her mouth, sucking him down and loving the sounds that her ministrations produced.

Lucy closed her eyes and concentrated on his cock. He tasted warm and salty, manly. His cock was not as full as Lake’s, but it still felt wonderful, erotic. Eric ran his fingers over her stomach and she sucked harder.

She’d just gotten into an easy rhythm when she felt Lake’s tongue against her clit. He gently jabbed at it first, barely touching the hard nub before pulling back, over and over and over.

“Clit tease,” Eric laughed.

“Yum,” Lake replied. “So very tasty.”

Lucy wanted to beg for more, but Eric continued to fuck her mouth. But, when Lake lifted her slave ring with his tongue she groaned deep in her throat. He pulled harder and she felt like she would die. The pressure and pleasure was incredible, and Eric didn’t let up.

He continued to pump her mouth as Lake let go of the ring and began to circle her clit with his tongue.

He laved at it, the cock in her mouth keeping her from voicing her approval. When he moved down and stabbed her opening with his tongue, Lucy sucked harder on Eric.

Seconds later, Lake replaced his tongue with his cock, and Eric leaned down. His tongue began to bathe her clit, sucking her ring into his mouth the same way she was sucking on his cock. Lake pounded into her, and the twin sensations of sucking and fucking almost drove her over the edge.

Lucy loved the erotic sensations that raced through her body. She'd been part of a ménage à trois before, but never anything that had made her feel so fantastic, both inside and out. The things she'd done with Brandon had always left her feeling used, and somewhat degraded.

With Lake and Eric, she felt needed, and loved. Light and airy. Warm. Attached.

After a few minutes of loving, the men left her.

"No, please. I want more."

Lake's chuckle filled her ear. She heard the ripping of a condom package, and seconds later her pussy was filled again, this time by Eric. She turned her head toward Lake, who watched them with an amused smile on his face.

"Feel good, baby?"

"Yes, Master."

"You still hungry?"

"Yes, Master."

Lake took Eric's original position, and Lucy swallowed him greedily. When his mouth captured her clit she thought she would spin out of control, but she fought it back. Eric pumped her hard as Lake sucked and nipped at her clit.

When he sat back up, she moaned.

“Deep throat me, baby. You can do it. Move your neck back just a little.”

Lucy followed Lake’s directions, relaxing her throat muscles. Seconds later he slid deeper inside her. She’d only done this a few times, and she hoped she got it right, and didn’t embarrass herself in front of her two Doms.

Lake’s muffled, “Oh, fuck,” told her it felt as good to him as it did to her. She sucked with her throat muscles, knowing that like most men, he wouldn’t last long.

And he didn’t. Seconds after she’d started, he lifted up and came, his warm liquid filling her as she grasped his hips and thighs, encouraging him with her hands. Eric pumped harder, his hands gripping her own thighs as Lake filled her throat.

When he lifted off her, he bent back down and started in on her clit again.

“Master,” Lucy whispered. “Please?”

“Not yet,” Lake said. “I like watching this.”

Her legs were spread wide, with both men lavishing attention on her. She knew from Eric’s increased intensity that he was almost there. At Eric’s first cry of release, Lake pushed his thumb down on Lucy’s clit and said, “Now.”

Lucy’s hips shot off the table, Eric sliding into her deeper as he pounded out his own orgasm. Lake’s fingers continued to stimulate her, almost, but not quite, to the unbearable point of pain.

“Look at my Vixen soar.”

“Yes, Master. So good. Thank you. And thank you, Master Eric.”

“I should be thanking you, Lucy,” Eric replied. “I enjoyed that very much.”

“Let’s go upstairs,” Lake said. “We can go for a quick soak in the hot tub and take a nap before dinner.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Eric said. “Then we’ll be ready for round two.”

Lucy grinned and wiggled her eyebrows. She could hardly wait.

Chapter Nineteen

Lake stood in the doorway and watched Lucy sleep.

He watched her chest rise and fall softly and wondered again how he'd gotten so lucky. His thoughts quickly clouded over with the danger that she was in. Soon after they'd gone to bed, Eric's cell phone had rung.

Alan Malfee was dead, shot by Rodney Baker, according to several men at the shop. Then, a half hour after Malfee's murder, Lucy's neighbor had reported seeing a strange man lurking in the backyard of her now vacant house. He'd identified Baker from photographs.

Eric had proposed, and Lake had agreed, that it was safer not to let the hot-headed Lucy know what had happened just yet. Better to keep her here, buried away in Chama, while they hunted for Baker.

"Fuck her a couple times. I sure wish I could stay and play."

"I can handle that." Then, Erick had hopped into Lake's truck and roared out of the driveway. That had been almost four hours ago, so he knew Eric was already back in Albuquerque.

He put his hands on the top of the doorframe and leaned inward.

“Lucy.” He whispered the word and watched her fidget and moan softly. “Lucy, wake up.”

She sat bolt upright, her breasts jiggling.

“Hello, sunshine.”

“What time is it?”

“Around nine. Let’s fix something to eat. I’m starved.”

She stood and stretched, and Lake felt his dick harden.

“Where’s Eric?”

“He had to go home. Emergency.”

“Nothing bad, I hope.”

Lake weighed his answer carefully. “With Eric’s work, it’s usually bad. Come to the kitchen.”

He walked away before she could ask another question. She padded behind him, buttoning up his shirt as she entered the room.

“No. Naked.”

“Master.”

“Now.”

“Tell me what happened.”

“What happened is I have a subbie who doesn’t like to obey her Master. I told you earlier that you’d be naked the whole time we were here. Did you think that would change because Eric left?”

“No.”

“Good. That might make me jealous. Lie down on the table while I cook dinner.”

“Diego might not like it that I’m naked on his table,” Lucy said as she stepped onto the chair and lay down.

“Diego would be jealous he wasn’t here to see you naked on his table. He’s a horny little bastard. I’m surprised he hasn’t shown up.”

Lake turned toward the stove, and watched Lucy through lowered eyes. She glanced nervously at the doorway and he smiled. There was no way Diego was showing up uninvited, even if it was his cabin, but Lake liked to keep her on her toes.

“I’m making some green chili stew,” he said. “How does that sound?”

“Delicious.”

“Good. Come and peel some potatoes.”

She jumped from the table and he licked his lips, appreciating the view of her body as she walked toward him.

“So, did we stop at forty-eight hours for the no fucking punishment, or sixty?”

“You were serious?” She stared at him, potato and peeler in hand.

“Very. Now that you belong to me, I take punishments very seriously.”

“You took them seriously before.”

“True, but now they will remind you that you’re mine.” He traced his finger around the choker. “A collared sub. My Vixen.”

A smile warmed her face and his cock twitched.

“Hurry and peel.” He watched her finish the chore, then wash and cube the potatoes.

“Kneel, over by the table.”

He finished making the stew, setting it low enough to simmer, then walked over to her, gently stroking her face.

“Let’s go outside for a while.”

He took her hand and helped her to stand. They crossed toward the motorcycles.

“Are we going for a ride, with me naked?”

“Of course not, Lucy. That would be dangerous. Come here.”

She walked gingerly across the ground toward him, and he cursed himself for not remembering that she wasn't wearing any shoes.

When she was near him, he stepped back.

"Straddle the bike. I'm going to ride bitch behind you, and you're going to ride my cock."

Lucy shook her head.

"That's Craig's bike."

"This is *my* bike, Lucy. It's the reason we're together. It's got a new seat, new grips, and new saddlebags. I've made it my own. Come on, baby. Straddle it."

Lucy was almost ashamed of the fact that she was so wet. She'd always wanted to have sex on the bike, but Brandon had always refused, saying it was cliché, too trite.

She felt weird about the fact that the bike was Craig's, but then again she knew Lake was right. The bike was his now. Lucy had to stop thinking of the past, and move forward.

She threw her right leg over the bike and balanced herself on her feet.

"I'm wet," she whispered.

"I know, baby. Go ahead and sit down."

"I'll stain the seat."

"And I'll think about fucking you every time I ride it."

His zipper came down, and his low groan let her know he'd released his cock. He slid into position behind her, lifting her up enough so that she came down on his cock, her pussy engulfing him in one swift stroke.

"Ride me hard, Lucy. Fuck me." His words made her shiver and she began to move, bouncing on him as he yelled out his approval, his hands on her hips as he brought her down harder and harder and harder.

“Come, Lucy. Come over and over and over for me.”

He grabbed her hand as she reached for her clit.

“No. Come from fucking only. You can do it. Be nasty for me, Lucy. Fuck me hard.”

She bounced harder, losing all sense of reasoning as she rode him. He was right, she didn't need her hand. His cock hit her in just the right spot, and she came, screaming out his name to the cool night air. She felt deliciously naughty as she rode him, his breath hot against her back, his breathing as labored as her own.

“Will you be everything for me, Lucy?”

“Yes, Lake.”

“Will you be my lover, my sub, my nasty little Vixen?”

“Yes, Lake, oh lord, yes.”

She felt him explode inside her.

“Will you be my wife?”

She gripped the handlebars and tried to get her breathing under control.

“What?”

“You heard me. I've thought about it a lot, and this isn't exactly how I had this planned. But I want you to marry me, Lucy. Be my wife; be bound to me in the eyes of the law. We can be bound to each other.”

He lifted her from him and she turned toward him.

“Lake...”

“It's kinda fitting, don't you think, that I ask you on the bike, since it was on this bike that I got the first inkling that I wanted you in my life.”

“Really?”

“Really. So, what do you say? Will you accept my very unromantic, very spur of the moment proposal? I don't even have a ring.”

He pulled her back into him for a long, deep kiss that Lucy thought would sear off her toes.

When he finally let her up for air, their gazes locked.

“Well?” He caressed her cheek with his thumb.

“Yes. I’ll marry you.” Lucy blurted out the words before she could think about it too long. Thinking about something too hard could prove treacherous and if there was one thing that she knew, she loved Lake Ross.

Chapter Twenty

“I can’t believe you lied to me.” Lucy pushed away from Lake. He sat astride the Indian, an innocent look on his face.

“I didn’t lie.”

“You lied by omission. You should have told me why Eric went back the other night. And then, you turned around and got me to agree to marry you.”

Lake’s face turned serious. “Are you changing your mind?”

“No, I just...ugh! You’re so frustrating!”

“Hey, I bought you a great ring, didn’t I?”

Lucy held up her left hand and stared at the diamond on her finger.

“Yes, you did. But...”

“No buts, Lucy. We did what we thought was best to keep you away from Baker. He’s disappeared again, so until he’s caught, you’re in my custody. I’m dropping you off at work, and I’ll be back at seven to pick you up. If you leave without me, I’ll be forced to punish your little ass, do you understand me?”

“Say it again.”

“What, punish you?”

“No, little ass.” She stuck out her tongue and grinned, then made a mad dash for the building.

From inside, she heard the Indian roar off. She was getting quite used to riding bitch. In fact, she was beginning to love it.

She stared at her ring again, then put on her apron and stuffed several pairs of gloves in the front pocket. It was a Monday, usually an uneventful day, but when they’d driven up, the parking lot had been full.

Lake had reminded her not to wander off by herself, and to make sure that she took someone with her if she had to go to the greenhouses or storage sheds that were behind the main store.

She started her assigned tasks of unpacking boxes of pots and knickknacks that attracted the tourists. Every so often she would stop and look at her left hand, admiring the diamond that sparkled back at her.

Her life had changed so quickly. Two months ago she’d told herself that she’d never marry again, that she would be alone, with no one but George to keep her company at night. Now she had Lake, the most wonderful man she’d ever met, the most loving man she’d ever met, and hell, yes, the hottest man she’d ever met.

She laughed, then hissed a “come here” at Marcy when her friend walked back. Marcy shook her head and mouthed “later,” and Lucy wiggled her ring finger at her.

Marcy’s mouth dropped open and Lucy threw back her head and laughed. Briscoe, however, picked that moment to remind Marcy that she was behind. The woman’s hound dog look made Lucy laugh harder, and it was after six before the two of them found time to sneak to the back room so Marcy could look at Lucy’s ring.

“Geeze Louise,” Marcy said. “It’s huge. I want a doctor. Can I have one too?”

“You can’t have mine.”

“I can’t believe it happened so fast.”

“Me neither. I keep waiting for the other shoe to drop.”

Marcy giggled. “Well, I want to meet the doctor. I have to tell you, I worried at first that he was that creepy guy that came in here on Saturday looking for you.”

Lucy’s blood ran cold. “What guy?”

“Some dark-headed guy. He came in here on a motorcycle, so I thought maybe it was the doc, but then I remembered that you and the doc were in Chama together. This guy was seriously creepy.”

Lucy swallowed hard. “What do you mean?”

“Well, it wasn’t that he was ugly, or anything, he just looked, um, scary. His eyes were creepy. When I told him you wouldn’t be back until today, he lit out of here like his ass was on fire.”

“Did you talk to him?”

“Yeah, ’cause like I said, he was on a bike and I thought he might be your doc. I wanted to meet him.”

“Marcy!” Briscoe’s yell made them both jump. Marcy moved toward their boss, and Lucy went to the storeroom doorway and looked around. She checked her watch. It was after six-thirty, and Lake would be here any minute to pick her up. There was no doubt in her mind that it had been Rodney looking for her on Saturday. And Marcy, trying to be helpful, had informed him that Lucy would be here on Monday.

Not that she could blame Marcy. Lucy, always a private person, had not told her friend about anything that had happened the past week, other than the break-in, which everyone thought had been random. She’d told Marcy that she’d missed work to look for a new house.

“Is something wrong?”

Lucy checked her watch again. “No. Everything’s fine. I’m just tired. It’s been a long day, and I think I’m going to sit back here for a while.”

“OK,” Marcy replied. “But if Briscoe catches you, you’re up the creek. You’re already in the dog house with him.”

Marcy hugged Lucy tight. “Congratulations.”

“Thanks.”

When she was gone, Lucy moved to the back of the storeroom and pulled out her cell phone. She dialed Lake’s number, her hands shaking. If he’d ridden the bike to pick her up, then he wouldn’t be able to answer. She knew that coming here without a means of transportation today was a bad idea, because job or no job, right now she would be hauling ass back down the highway. The phone rang four times and went to voice mail.

Another glance at her watch showed that ten more minutes had passed. She pulled out her cell phone and dialed Lake’s number again, willing him to answer. This time the phone went straight to voice mail. She tried Eric’s number and got the same response.

“Shit!” She pocketed it, then headed for the back door. No one but employees were supposed to be in this part of the store or the grounds. She hated to look like a coward, hiding from Rodney when it wasn’t even a certainty that he would show up. Eric had assured her that they thought he’d probably left town after Malfee’s murder.

Of course him showing up here on Saturday proved otherwise. She took a few tentative steps outside, looking around to make sure no one was in sight. She stepped into the sunlight and headed for the southern tip of the building, where she could watch the road for Lake’s arrival.

Her heart was doing triple time, and her hands were shaking. Sweat formed on her brow.

She was seconds away from seeing the road when Rodney stepped around the building. He looked as surprised to see her as she did to see him. His surprise quickly turned to anger.

“Fucking, bitch. I’m not going to prison because of you.”

“You’re right,” Lucy said slowly, inching backwards. “You’re going because of yourself. You killed Craig. You bastard.”

“Prick wouldn’t mind his own damn business. If he didn’t want the money he should have just turned his nose the other way, like the others did. But he had to be Mr. Goody Two-shoes. He got what he deserved. The only thing that really pissed me off was he died too fast.”

Anger clouded Lucy’s judgment. An image of Craig’s smiling face filled her mind, and she launched herself toward Rodney, clawing at his face and bringing her knee up to his groin.

He was too fast for her, however, and he sidestepped the knee. Her nails found their mark, though, and he howled in pain. His backhand sent Lucy reeling. She screamed out in rage as he straddled her and put his hands on her throat.

“I’ll make this one last,” he said as he tightened his grip. “Maybe, if there’s justice, your bastard uncle’s watching and will feel the pain, too.”

“Lucy!” Briscoe’s voice rang out from the storeroom doorway. “Get off her!”

She could hear his feet pounding against the dirt.

“Briscoe! Albuquerque PD. Let her go!”

She’d never been so happy to hear Eric’s voice. Baker tightened his hold and Lucy moved her hand from his grip, reached out, and grabbed a handful of dirt and threw it in his face. He coughed and sputtered, letting go of her neck, and falling backwards on his knees.

Lucy gasped as Briscoe grabbed her arms and dragged her away from the angry man, who was spitting dirt and screaming expletives at her.

“Down, Baker!” Eric screamed. “Get down on the ground!”

“Fuck you! I’m going to kill the bitch!” Baker turned on Eric, his arms flailing in the air. Suddenly, his body jerked.

Lucy realized that the sounds she'd just heard were gunshots as Baker toppled to the ground.

She was vaguely aware of Briscoe pulling her shaking body up from the ground and rushing her toward the building, of Marcy pulling her close, of Eric yelling for everyone to get back, and the sounds of distant sirens growing closer.

After a few minutes, she pushed away from Marcy and looked toward Eric. He sat on the ground near Baker, his gun dangling from his hands.

"Eric."

"Lake had a last minute appointment," Eric said, his voice devoid of emotion. "He asked me to come."

"Drop the gun, now."

Lucy turned toward the sheriff's deputies who rounded the building, guns drawn.

"I'm with the PD," Eric said softly. "I'm putting it down."

He dropped the weapon and, following the other officer's instructions, slowly pulled his badge from his pocket. One officer examined it while the other one bent down to examine Baker.

"He's dead," the deputy said. "We're going to need a crime unit."

Chapter Twenty-One

Lucy jumped up from the wooden bench and ran toward the grand jury room door when it opened. Lake came up behind her, his hands on her shoulders, holding her back.

“Give him a minute,” he whispered in her ear.

Eric walked out slowly, talking with his lawyers. Then, he turned a smiling face on Lucy and Lake.

“It’s over. They deemed it a clean shoot. No charges.”

“Thank God!” Lucy hugged him close and Lake nodded and shook his hand.

“Let’s celebrate,” Lake said. “There’s already a crowd at our house, cooking and getting ready for our arrival. Steaks and corn on the cob and potato salad and beer. Sound good?”

“Sounds delicious,” Eric replied. “Let’s go.”

They started off, then Lucy pulled back. “Wait! I’m going to invite Briscoe and Marcy.”

She ran toward her friends, who were just coming out of the grand jury room.

When she was gone, Lake stepped closer to Eric.

“How are you doing?”

“I killed a man. How do you think I’m doing?”

“You killed a criminal. You killed a man who was trying to strangle the woman I love. If you hadn’t killed him, then I would have tried to find a way. And, if he’d succeeded and killed Lucy, I would have killed him, and you for letting it happen. It’s a vicious cycle.”

“Very funny,” Eric replied with a frown.

“All I’m saying is that Baker made his choices. His choices are what led to his death. Not you.”

“I know. I’ve told other people that for years. It’s harder to hear, though, when you’re on the other side. A man’s dead because I shot him. I was judge, jury, and executioner. I have nightmares, Lake. I can see his face, hear him screaming that he’s going to kill her. Then, suddenly, he’s standing at the end of my bed calling me a murderer.”

“You’re not a murderer. You saved the woman I love. When you think of the bad part of it, remember that. Lucy is alive because of what you did.”

Eric smiled, and the smile increased when Lucy joined them.

“They’re going to follow us. So, Eric, you sticking around after everyone is gone? Lake says he has a surprise for me tonight.”

“Oh, yummy,” Eric replied. “I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

“Well, good. That means you’ll stay and play with us.”

“Making plans without my permission, Vixen?” Lake turned toward Lucy, his eyes twinkling.

“Will it get me punished?”

“Most definitely.”

“Then, yes, I guess I am.”

Lake stopped and turned toward Lucy.

“You know, Vixen, one of these days I’m going to make you go without a punishment. How would you like that?”

She gasped. "You wouldn't."

"Try me."

* * * * *

"I don't like that grin on your face," Lake said as Lucy approached him. He was cleaning the grill rack while it was still warm.

"I think we should fix Marcy up with Diego. What do you think?"

"Are you serious?" He stopped scraping and turned toward her. "Is Marcy even a sub?"

"I don't know, I never asked. It's not normal lunch conversation. But they seem to enjoy talking to each other."

She turned her gaze toward the two. They'd been talking for much of the evening, and seemed to be getting along. The party was winding down, and most guests had left. Numerous people had shown up to show support for Eric, and to celebrate the grand jury's decision.

"Stop playing matchmaker," Lake said.

"Hey, it worked for us."

"Only because I knew how to handle you."

"Oh really? From the beginning?"

"Don't start with me, Lucy. And I'm telling you, Marcy couldn't handle Diego."

"I'm going to push for it," she said, skipping away from him.

"Lucy! Lucy, get back here!"

"And her hair's not even bright red," Eric said, sitting down and taking a swig from his beer. "*Lucy, you got some 'splainin' to do.*"

Lake laughed and pointed his grill tool toward Eric's beer. "How many of those have you had?"

“Too many to drive. What’s on tap for tonight?”

“Destiney finished Lucy’s collar. I was going to wait and give it to her for a wedding present, but that’s still six months from now. I don’t want to wait that long. I want her officially collared as soon as possible. I was hoping you’d be among the witnesses.”

“Here?”

“No, at Tygers. My baby doesn’t like to be naked in front of people, so I’ll make her do it every once in a while. Takes her out of her comfort zone. Reminds her that she belongs to me.”

“Good plan.”

“Let me tell you, she’s a wildcat. She’s a damned good sub in the bedroom, but outside of it she has a mind of her own. And I love it!”

Lake waved at several friends who were heading out. Lucy was at the gate, checking to make sure that everyone who was driving hadn’t had too much to drink.

Diego and Marcy were the last to leave, and after they’d gone through the gate, she laughed at Lake.

“See. I told you there might be something there.”

“You. Naked. Living room. Now.” He pointed the scraper at her.

“I thought we were going to Tygers.”

“Lucy. Don’t argue with me. Naked. Living room. Now. And make sure you’re on your knees.”

She headed toward the house, stopping to pet Fred on her way. He laughed as he heard her mumbled something to the dog that sounded like, “I wasn’t arguing and he didn’t have to be pissy.”

“See what I mean?” Lake threw up his hands.

“You love it,” Eric replied. “You wouldn’t have her any other way.”

“You’re right. I’m counting my blessings everyday.”

They moved toward the house and when they went in through the back door, Lake was gratified to find Lucy naked and kneeling, facing toward the couch, her arms behind her back.

“Go and get George,” he said. “Then come back to the same position.”

She went to the bedroom quickly and he and Eric sat down on the couch.

“You feeling all right?” Lake asked.

“Sure, I’ve had a few of these.” He held up his beer bottle.

“We’ve had this discussion.”

“You’re right, we have. But Lake, I...”

They fell silent as Lucy entered.

“Bring the chair,” Lake said.

She moved the Papasan chair in front of the couch and settle back into the cushion.

“Make love to George.”

She bit her lip, then slid the vibrator into her mouth, sucking it deep. Lake’s cock hardened but he was determined not to take her until after the collaring ceremony tonight.

“Good girl. Keep going.”

He and Eric settled back to watch as she turned George on, then slid him over her nipples and around her breasts. Her soft moans filled the living room and his cock began to throb. He glanced toward Eric, who watched, but was not as affected as Lake was.

Worry for his friend settled into his mind. The next few months weren’t going to be easy. Eric was going to have to come to terms with killing a man, and he and Lucy would be there to help. He just wasn’t sure exactly what he could do.

When Lucy’s moans increased he smiled. She’d moved George down to her clit, sliding him back and forth over the swollen nub.

“May I come?”

“Not yet. I like watching you. Fuck yourself.”

She scooted down in the chair and slid George home, her pussy opening easily to take the toy deep inside her. She moved a hand to her breasts, tugging and pulling at her nipples as she called out Lake’s name, begging him for release.

“Not yet.”

“Master.” She whined as she bucked against George. “Please!”

But Lake just shook his head. “You’ll come when I’m ready for you to.”

“Suck him. Clean your juices off. Just make sure you turn him off, first.”

Her loud sucking noises replaced her groans and Lake palmed his cock. He looked to Eric, who shook his head. Lake nodded, then stood and walked to Lucy, unzipping his pants.

“Suck me instead. Put George back in your pussy.”

She sucked him in greedily, George disappearing back inside her folds. Lake felt the pressure build in his balls and he stroked Lucy’s hair.

“Take it all, baby.” He shot off instantly, the feel of her warm mouth more than he could handle. He was gratified to feel her swallow his offering.

“Come, Lucy,” he groaned. “Come for your Master.”

And she did, her hips shooting off the chair as she continued to suck his cock, which still throbbed in her mouth. When she finally released him and relaxed in the chair he gazed down at her. “Damn, you made me lose control. I hadn’t planned on that.”

“I guess you’re just going to have to punish me.”

“I guess I am.”

* * * * *

“Hands on the table,” Lake said, swatting Lucy’s behind as she walked by him. It was just the two of them. After the collaring ceremony, Lake had left her long enough to see that Eric was put into a cab for a ride home.

Now they were in room four, the room they’d always used at Tygers.

The collaring ceremony had been perfect.

About twenty people had gathered for the collaring, including Diego, without Marcy. Lucy had wanted to ask where she was, but Lake had told her to behave.

Now, she waited for his command, her hands on the table, her feet on the ground with her legs spread wide. She closed her eyes and remembered back to her first time in this room with Lake. How wonderful it had been, and how much she’d fought their original encounter.

“Master?”

“Hush, Vixen. I’m just enjoying the view. How does your collar feel?”

“Fantastic.” The leather was heavy on her neck. It had three large O-rings and a large padlock in the back. Destiney had studded it with lapis, the same stones that she’d used to make the collar that Lucy wore in public. To mark the occasion, Lake had hung little padlocks from her nipple rings and her slave ring, attaching them together with a fine chain.

When he’d clasped the collar around her neck, and the click of the lock filled the room, Lucy had wanted to run into his arms.

“You look so beautiful. I just can’t decide where to start, because I want to do everything. Turn towards me.”

She rotated toward him, lowering her gaze submissively when he was in full view.

“My Lucy. Maybe we should go home and take the bike out for a ride. I wonder if you would wiggle too much when the vibrations made you come.”

“I learned to control that after I was pierced. I wouldn’t come.”

He lifted an eyebrow. “You think? Well, let’s test that theory. We’ll leave all the locks and chains in place and take you for a sweet ride. If you come you’ll get punished. And believe me, Lucy, I’ll know.”

Lucy gasped when he crossed to her, cupping her face and pressing their lips together.

“Who do you belong to, Lucy?”

“You, Master. Only you.”

“That’s right. Now, let’s go take that ride.”

Lucy grinned. “At least I get to wear my clothes.”

Lake lifted his eyebrows. “Don’t tempt me to make you ride naked, Lucy. We could find a nice deserted road, with you wearing only boots to protect your feet and calves from burns.

“You wouldn’t dare.” Lucy’s eyes widened and her mouth dropped open.

“Try me, Vixen. Just try me.”

 **THE END** 

Melinda Barron

Melinda Barron loves to explore Egyptian tombs and temples, discover Mayan ruins, play in castles towers, and explore new cities and countries. She generally does it all from the comfort of her home by opening a book.

Melinda is the fourth of five children born to an Army officer and his wife. A longtime newspaper journalist, Melinda has loved to read and write from an early age. Now she lives in the Texas Panhandle with two cats, Amelia and Pippin, and enough books to, according to her brother, open her own library. In addition to reading and writing Melinda enjoys travel, cross-stitching, watching movies and spending time with her friends and family.