

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

ELLORA'S CAVE

Quickies

Mackenzie
McKade

FORBIDDEN
Fruit
ECSTASY

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Forbidden Fruit

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FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Mackenzie McKade

Dedication

To my wonderful editor, Heather Osborn, for keeping me in line and allowing me to visualize my dreams. And to Cheyenne McCray and Patti Duplantis for the special touches their critiques add. Thank you!

Authors' Note

Forbidden Fruit incorporates only elements of Domination/submission and BDSM. It is not intended to accurately portray a true BDSM or Dom/sub relationship.

Chapter One

2106

Nicole Nielsen never imagined that her catering company, Sweet Dreams, would be selected to host a fantasy party on the Pleasure Planet, Zygoman.

Much less find herself strapped to a table as dessert.

She twisted her hands, testing the firmness of the ropes of black licorice that bound her wrists and ankles. With a shake of her head she released a sigh of disbelief.

Five years ago, if someone had asked where she'd be today, her answer would have been, "Happily married. The mother of Drake Andrews' children." Her heart stuttered at the intrusive thought.

Instead she was single and the owner of Sweet Dreams. And, at the moment, stark naked, shaved and cleansed, spread-eagled on a table designed to look like a four-poster bed. Her waist-length blonde hair had been sprayed cotton candy pink and feathered over a large, marshmallow pillow. Her body primed for decorating.

A knot formed in her stomach. *Where the hell is Chloe? This is her gig – not mine.*

Besides being the main dessert, Chloe usually had the task of fulfilling the sexual desires of the guests, especially the host's.

Niki wasn't looking forward to any of this, even if uncomplicated relationships were her forte now, ever since Chloe's brother had left her with a promise that never materialized.

Shit! She hated this emptiness, this feeling of helplessness that only grew from being bound. Moisture threatened to fill her eyes. "Jeez, Niki. You can't lose someone who was never yours to begin with," she whispered.

"What, boss?" Tom asked as he crossed the room.

"Nothing. Just muttering to myself." Niki forced a smile.

Still, unwanted memories rolled into her head like tumbleweeds driven by the wind. At eight years old she had fallen madly in love with the dark-haired boy who'd moved into the house next to hers. Four years older, he hadn't looked her way...

Not until she was nineteen, at the end of her first year of college, and the day of Drake's graduation. Everything had happened so fast. Their declaration of love. A night of heaven.

And then he was gone.

She closed her eyes and could almost feel his masterful hands caress her body. His masculine scent rose, clinging to her memory as if it were a second skin.

Dammit! It was over. It had taken years of therapy to forget him. Then last night Chloe had mentioned Drake and the floodgates opened, threatening to devour her.

Niki clenched her fists.

In her mind's eye she pictured the two letters he'd sent her promising a future. Then all communications had stopped—no calls, no letters for over a year. Weathered and torn from her constant reading, the two letters had lay hidden in her dresser, until Chloe informed her that Drake had finally written his family. He was okay. Busy. Probably wouldn't be writing. She'd kept the damn letters for another year, and then in a fit of anger she'd burned them.

As Niki's crew moved around her in the elaborate pseudo-bedroom, she pushed aside her melancholy. She didn't have time for a pity party. She had a job to do.

She took a deep breath. "Lily, check the tarts. Tom! *No, no, no!* Not there." Ladle in hand, the young man positioned to spread custard on her stomach halted. His eyes widened. "I know this is awkward." She swallowed hard before continuing. "Cover each of my breasts with the custard. Top each mound with a dip of whipped cream."

God, this was embarrassing.

"And a cherry." Her voice came out as a squeak.

Tom gave her a nod and one corner of his mouth quirked. The little devil obviously wasn't embarrassed at all about decorating his boss's naked body.

Damn you, Chloe, for not showing up. Niki knew she had to do something about her friend's absentmindedness. But what? The two of them had been friends since grade school. She couldn't jeopardize that just for her business.

A wisp of concern filtered through Niki. Chloe had acted strange last night. Nervous, as if she had something on her mind. Niki had brushed it off at the time – if it had been important her friend would have shared it. Wouldn't she?

But then Chloe had brought up her brother. Before she could talk about Drake, Niki had put up her hand and gave her friend *the look*. "Not. One. Word." Just *hearing* his name sent Niki into a tailspin. She didn't need this now. Not when her life was finally on track.

Niki had practically bolted out the back door, leaving Chloe with tears in her eyes. Niki had been beyond mad – she'd been hurt. She'd thought Chloe *realized* how difficult it had been getting over Drake.

"*Oh! Ahhh...*" Chocolate mousse went sliding over her pussy and between her legs, creating a delicious tremor. She looked down at the apex of her thighs. She wasn't used to being hairless down there. It made her feel exposed and far too sensitive. Funny how a little patch of blonde hair made such a difference.

Tom took a step backward, placing the ladle in the bowl, as his eyes widened innocently. "Did I hurt you, boss?"

"No, sorry. It just startled me." The apology came out with a tight laugh, as her hips squirmed, fighting off the exquisite feel of cool mousse sliding across her tender flesh. The slow glide was a torturous delight as it crept into folds beginning to tense with desire.

Niki had to admit that all of this was exciting. Actually, it was pretty damn arousing. Helluva lot better than thinking about Drake. In fact, maybe this was just what she needed.

Beneath the custard and whipped cream, her nipples tightened. The stimulation made her suck in her bottom lip and bite down, hard.

She startled when Tom's gloved hand touched the inside of her thigh, his fingers spreading *Philter*, a delicacy shipped in from *Gamu*, the planet directly to the north of Zygomian. The damn stuff turned his fingertips into fire dancing across her skin. She needed to squeeze her legs together, but the licorice ropes held taut. The warm, red gel smelled of cinnamon, cloves and something mysterious, naughty. Thank goodness her thighs had been coated with a special edible barrier that would keep the *Philter* from driving her out of her mind. *Philter* could be absorbed through the skin and was an aphrodisiac guaranteed to make the night a slice of heaven.

It better! At twenty-thousand dollars an ounce, a person should be able to climax on sight. The party's host had ordered three ounces, and had even directed where the gel was to be placed upon her body.

Niki hadn't yet tasted the ambrosia, but she had to admit the bulge in Tom's tight, white leather pants was becoming a little enticing. Her vaginal muscles clenched, drawing the soft, slick mousse into her slit. Her gaze scanned up Tom's bare chest following every muscle. The golden ring through his left nipple glistened beneath the bright lights. What would it feel like to suck on a pierced nipple, pressing gold and flesh against her tongue? The thought vanished as quickly as it appeared. Tom was her employee.

She dragged in a ragged breath. This was going to be a hell of a night.

Desperately, Niki tried to focus on something else. The theme of the fantasy party was All Tied Up and Nowhere To Go. Three separate rooms had been arranged, with two other women in similar positions, naked and decorated for the partygoers' pleasure. Lauren was the appetizer.

"Mmmm..." Niki groaned, thinking of the variety of foods her cooks had prepared. As far as appetizers went, her favorite was the little shellfish from Pandorvia called

wallows. Sex on a shell. Salty and meaty, it changed taste and texture in your mouth before slipping down your throat.

Crystal was the main course. She would sport all sorts of meats, fish, chicken and vegetables. There were a lot of creative things one could do with mashed potatoes, asparagus and carrots – and Niki's cooks and designers had wonderful imaginations.

Her stomach growled. When was the last time she had eaten?

Both Lauren and Crystal were vivacious blondes, a particular fetish of their client. With Chloe's absence, Niki had been the only blonde left to take her place. Lord knows, she'd tried to escape her fate. But the client had insisted on having a true blonde or canceling the party. What did it matter when her hair was vibrant pink and her mons shaved clean? Furthermore, he had insisted that the dessert girl, aka Niki, be his personal pleasure toy after the party.

Niki had attempted to switch places with Lauren or Crystal to avoid becoming the man's toy, but the girls were already being prepared. Any changes would have delayed the party. A fact that didn't sit lightly with the client, Niki's assistant, Lily, had informed her earlier.

Niki hadn't met the man, as Chloe had handled the details. She'd attempted to speak to the client herself earlier, but he'd been unavailable. She was sure he had to be an asshole.

Spending the night with him was going to be excruciating. Well, maybe not too excruciating. It had been quite a while since she'd slept with a man. Perhaps a little cheek to cheek would be nice. Lord knows, she could use a climax or two. Anything to chase thoughts of Drake away.

Still, the whole situation bothered her. There was so much to do. She shouldn't be spread-eagled on the table. She should be monitoring the other two rooms, making sure the food was presented correctly. And what about security? She had bouncers, but her people were her responsibility.

And where the hell was Chloe? *Man, I hope she's okay.*

Sounds of the party began filtering through the thin walls. Niki squirmed, testing her bindings for the umpteenth time. A bead of perspiration formed at her brow as she wondered if everything was all right next door.

Niki clenched and unclenched her fingers. It was her place to see that the clients enjoyed themselves, and that her staff was safe. Instead, she lay there bound, useless.

She knew that each employee of Sweet Dreams was multitalented and trustworthy. Not only did they prepare the food, serve and present it—like Chloe, they ensured that the guests' fantasies and needs were addressed. Niki was there to make sure the party ran smoothly.

She had always been a "look but don't touch" woman—until now.

As Tom gently laid angel food cake—iced with tropical flavors, like papaya and kiwi from Earth—along her hips, she squirmed from the erotic sensations.

Their eyes met and he winked.

"Tom, if my hands weren't tied I'd slap that silly look off your face."

"Then I'm glad they're tied." He smirked, tossing his long auburn hair over his shoulder. With a devilish grin he slid the prongs of a fork across her belly, making her jerk against her bindings. The licorice was stronger than she'd realized, holding her tight. And she was ticklish as hell. The spark in his eyes said he knew it, and it wouldn't be long before everyone else knew.

Well, shit! This was going to be pure torture.

Before she could tell Tom where he could put that fork, the swish of the door sliding open drew Niki's attention to the woman passing through it.

"Hey, boss." Mori sidled alongside Niki, her emerald green French beret tilted seductively over one brow. Her large breasts pressed against a low-necked silk shirt, stressing the seams. Her short skirt barely covered her pubic hair.

Niki wondered whether any of the evening's clients had discovered that Mori wore nothing beneath that little skirt. The woman was five-four, three inches shorter than Niki, but her four-inch stilettos gave her height and showed off shapely legs.

Mori gazed down upon Niki. She extended one arm in front of her, a well-manicured thumb popped skyward from her fist. She closed one eye and studied the length of Niki's naked body. "Ummm..."

The woman was an incredible artist when it came to body designs. All her paints were edible, with delectable fruit and candy flavors. Not to mention, Mori was a favorite among partygoers. And it didn't matter whether you were a man or a woman. In fact, the sassy redhead's specialty was threesomes.

Mori lowered her hand. "A cat... Men like pussy..." she purred. "Tom, get the vines and flowers. Drape them over the canopy railing."

Niki shot her a "be careful, girl" glare.

From a table beside Niki, Mori picked up her artist's palette and a paintbrush. "Perhaps now is a good time to discuss that raise, seeing as how you're, uh, a captive audience?" She ran her tongue seductively over her top lip.

"Perhaps tomorrow you'll be looking for a new job," Niki growled before letting the laughter inside her bubble out. "Now get on with it. I feel naked."

The woman leaned into Niki. The heat of her cinnamon breath fanned Niki's face. "Ahhh, but, Niki...you *are* naked." Her voice softened, and a light air of seduction stroked Niki. "And just think..." she paused, "soon six *very* hungry men will be slowly eating you."

The thought sent a shiver up Niki's spine. Moisture pooled between her thighs.

"Licking your arms..." Mori continued.

Niki clenched the licorice ropes tightly as Mori ran her brush from the inside of Niki's palm, down her forearm to her armpit. She tensed, fighting the tickle that was raising goose bumps across her arms.

"Six tongues stroking your legs...thighs...pussy..." Mori whispered, drawing out the last word. Her green eyes grew heavy as she moved the brush across Niki's abdomen, causing the muscles in her stomach to clench.

But it was Niki's heaving chest that caught the woman's attention. Mori's index finger swirled through the custard. Their gazes met, locked. Mori brought her dessert-laden finger to Niki's parted lips and slipped the digit inside. Their eyes were riveted on each other.

When Mori's finger withdrew from Niki's mouth, the woman replaced it with her lips. The small flick of Mori's tongue against hers sent a heat wave coursing through Niki's tense body. The woman tasted hot, fiery.

Mori broke the caress, her face a breath away from Niki's. "Do you really want me to cover up all this beautiful flesh?" She smoothed her fingertips over Niki's lips. "Full, luscious lips." The pads of her fingers caressed a path down her chin, tracing her jawline. "Your face is perfection, high cheekbones, wide amber eyes. And your body." She paused. "Made for sex."

Niki swallowed hard. She couldn't think. Damn, what she'd give to climax right now. Her breasts were heavy, her pussy wet, mingling with the silky chocolate mousse. Being bound and helpless was exciting. Having a woman seduce her was heady, even if Mori was just harassing her.

"Niki?" Mori inched further back.

"Uh." Niki shook her head to clear her thoughts.

"I didn't think so." Mori grinned.

"N-no, you misunderstood me." From the corner of Niki's eye she saw Tom's lusty expression. One hand cupped his hard erection through his tight leather pants, his thumb stroking lightly.

Shit. She was losing control. This party was going to be a disaster.

Niki cleared her throat. "No, I want you to do exactly what you would do if Chloe was lying on this table instead of me."

Mori's long face, her expression of disappointment, was a surprise. Surely the woman was just teasing Niki.

"It's shameful. A masterpiece should not be defaced." Mori's warm hand skimmed up Niki's side, making her nipples tingle and her heart race. "They'll use their fingers and their tongues to explore your succulent dips and curves. They'll fill you up and stroke the heat already burning inside," she whispered low in Niki's ear, sending shards of lightning through her womb. Niki clenched the muscles low in her belly and fought the urge to close her legs.

"Shut up, Mori, I'm dying here. One more word about being eaten and I swear I'll fire you." Niki pulled against her bindings, dislodging a cherry. They both watched as it tumbled off her breast, hit the table and then rolled across the floor.

Mori glanced over her shoulder. "Tom, the boss just lost her cherry."

Tom chuckled.

"Ha-ha," groaned Niki. "Now get to work."

As Mori's paintbrush danced across Niki's body, she clenched her teeth tight, fighting to remain still. She had to get her mind off sex, off pleasure.

"Mori, tell me about our guests."

Mori's hand paused. She released a heavy sigh. "Gorgeous. Servicemen in uniforms. Well...some are in uniform." A single brow rose knowingly, and she gave a sexy grin.

Niki had no doubt the majority of the men were stark naked. It didn't take long for Lauren and Crystal to have the clients hot and ready for dessert. She cringed at the thought.

"Royal Marines, I think." Mori's paintbrush swirled around Niki's belly button, causing her to bite the inside of her cheek to keep from squirming. "Everyone appears to be having fun. Well, except for the host."

Niki's head came off the table, nearly dislodging the marshmallow pillow. "What?"

"Actually, I can't say that he *isn't* enjoying himself. He just isn't participating. Too bad. He's yummy." Mori held up her brush and gazed at Niki. "Maybe he's a dessert man." She winked.

"Fuck you, Mori."

"Is that an invitation?"

"Get serious. Why isn't the man enjoying himself?"

Niki paid her staff a pretty penny to ensure they did what it took to please the customers. And the host was expected to receive the Premier Pleasure Package. What he wanted, he got.

"He appears preoccupied." Mori dabbed her paintbrush into caramel-laced gel and drew a line across Niki's right biceps. She followed it with a line of white vanilla and then black *lichi*, another delicacy from *Gamu*. "It's too bad." She sighed. "He's tall." She made another swipe of the brush. "Dark." Another stroke followed the curve of her waist. "And handsome. Short ebony hair with a sexy wave that makes you want to run your fingers through it. Blue eyes to die for, and a body honed from steel." Mori's large breasts rose on a sigh. "Strange that he's so standoffish, but maybe he's a one-woman man. Maybe he isn't into this."

Niki rolled her eyes to the canopy above her. "Yeah, and maybe I'm a saint." Bitterness rolled off her tongue.

Mori tapped the handle of her paintbrush against her chin. "Well, I did see him laugh once, when this burly guy climbed up on the table with Lauren, and —"

"Spare me the details," groaned Niki. "Just finish up here and check in on Crystal."

"With pleasure." Mori swished her brush in a cleaning solution. She turned to Tom who was busy arranging plates and silverware. "Keep an eye on our tigress. And remember what I told you to do." She pivoted and slid through the door that automatically opened on her approach.

"Tigress?" Niki raised her head from the table and gazed down her body. *Yep, tigress.* Mori had turned her into a stripped tiger. Her breasts were the cat's eyes, her mound its nose.

"Man, this is just freakin' great," she moaned. Her head dropped back to the table hitting hard enough to make a thud through the marshmallow pillow. "*Owww.*"

A crash in the room next door startled Niki. She lunged against her strong bindings and off went another cherry, bouncing as it hit the floor. "Tom, what was that?" She *hated* feeling so helpless.

A roar of male appreciation was followed by female laughter. One deep, seductive voice rose above the din. There was something familiar —

No, it couldn't be. Niki shivered and forced the thought from her mind.

Tom pushed another juicy red cherry upon her fruitless breast. "They're just having fun." His wistful expression told Niki he would rather be in the next room enjoying the party, than babysitting her.

"Go on, Tom, join the soirée. I promise not to get up and prowls around." She forced a smile as he approached with paintbrush in hand.

"First, I need to do this." Tom brushed red gel over her lips.

"What is it?"

She started to taste it but stopped the moment Tom said, "*Philter.*"

Holy, shit! She needed her senses all intact for this event.

"Take it off me." Niki's voice raised a notch. "Now."

Tom shrugged. "Too late. Even if I did, the *Philter* between your thighs is beginning to seep through the shielding and into your pores. Haven't you wondered why you feel

warm, tingly? And maybe even a little hot and bothered?" He gave a sexy grin as he moved towards the door. "Haven't you ever wondered how Chloe's able to climax so many times during a party?"

Her jaw dropped.

With a controller, Tom dimmed the lights, switched the music on, then disappeared. The door made a swishing sound as it shut.

Leaving Niki completely alone and horny as hell.

Chapter Two

Drake Andrews stretched his tall body along the sofa and watched members of his platoon enjoy the woman tied to the table. The busty blonde moaned as Second Lieutenant Smith dove between her thighs, lapping at her pussy. Her slender hips rose, her head tossed side to side and her eyes closed in blissful surrender.

"Yes. Yes." The light whisper floated from her full, pouty lips.

First Lieutenant Harrison, a brawny young man of twenty-three, snagged a nipple, pulling it gently into his mouth. At the same time, Bones, the platoon's mess sergeant, ran his tongue along her delicate neck.

Her body jerked. As her first climax broke, her back arched off the table. She screamed, her hands clenching and releasing. She moaned low, obviously savoring the aftershocks.

"I'm next." Captain Tally tried to push aside Smith.

"I'm not finished." Smith's finger thrust deep inside the woman's core, eliciting another groan of pleasure from...Crystal. The nameplate on a table next to her helpfully read – *Now Serving Crystal for Dinner*.

"Easy, boys," said a redheaded woman as she glided into the room. "There's plenty for everyone. I'm Mori. Lauren is cleaning up, but she'll be here soon. Then we'll party."

The scent of lust hung heavy in the air, but all Drake could think of was the woman next door. It had been five years since he'd seen Niki. Five very, very long years.

Regret slammed into his chest. He'd never meant to hurt her. Their timing had sucked.

Still, he'd never forgotten their first and only night together. Drake's enlistment in the Intergalactic Royal Marines had taken him from Niki the following day. A month later a raid by the Corians on DSQ-3 had sealed the distance between them. But not before he had written Niki a handful of letters promising a future.

Incarcerated, he'd dreamt of her every night for the past five years, while the Government had covered up the truth about the attack and his whereabouts. His family had been led to believe he was stationed there and simply too busy to respond to their numerous letters. Even worse, Niki had felt betrayed by his silence.

Fact was, it had been a miserable five years.

When he'd returned to Earth, his sister Chloe had told him of Niki's struggles. She had cried the first year, screamed the second, entered therapy the third and had never spoken his name from that time on. In fact, she refused to discuss anything about him—made it clear to Chloe she never wanted to see or talk to him again—leaving them no choice but to deceive her.

Niki had changed, according to Chloe, and not for the better. She trusted no one, guarding her heart at all costs.

"What's wrong, big boy, got someone special on your mind?" The woman named Mori sidled up to him. She leaned forward, her large breasts nearly spilling out of her blouse. The gleam in her emerald eyes promised she'd be a hellcat in bed.

But he was saving himself for dessert.

"Not hungry," he grumbled.

"For food or pleasure?" she purred. Her movements were slow, decisive, as she drew closer. Long auburn eyelashes brushed her cheeks. He could smell the scent of heather and desire on her skin.

"Neither."

Her soft hands cradled his face. Then she pulled her long fingernails down his cheeks, his jaws. "But this party is for you. Such beautiful blue eyes shouldn't look so bored."

He made no comment. His cock was for Niki, no one else.

She shrugged and pivoted, and as she did her beret tumbled from her head. When she stooped to retrieve the cap, he was graced with the view of a rather impressive ass and delicate pink pussy lips. Still bent at the waist, she glanced over her shoulder and winked.

Drake couldn't stop the laughter that surfaced. This one was a handful. He pitied the soldier, or *soldiers*, who ended up with her tonight.

Someone called her to the table. "I'll be back, big boy." She sauntered away, her hips swaying and skirt swishing—blessing him with several more views of her tight ass.

Niki's staff was well trained in the art of pleasure, that much was obvious. If it weren't for the fact he wanted no one but Niki, this party would have been a dream come true. Instead, it simply prolonged the time before he had to face her.

And as far as he was concerned, the wait was over.

When a very naked Tally climbed atop the table, landing squarely in the middle of Crystal, Niki's staff dove to the rescue. It was the break he'd been waiting for. Drake slipped through the open door and headed straight for the dessert room.

The room was dim, the ceiling a picture of the night sky with glittering stars in the heavens. Music played low—tribal drums and flutes—as wild animal sounds and screeches broke through the jungle ambience.

Niki was stretched out on a table, made to look like a tiger on a bed. Vines wove around the canopy railings and bedposts. The smell of exotic flowers, sweet and enticing, filled the air.

It was breathtaking. *She* was breathtaking.

Immediately, his body responded. He ached to touch her, to taste her, to feel his cock deep inside her warmth. The fact that she was bound for his pleasure made his blood heat and surge through his veins.

He wanted her. Now.

With the paint and food covering her body, Drake would never have recognized her. Still, she looked delicious. Wild, untamed, but not free – not tonight.

“Tom, I think one of those damned cherries fell off again.” Her warm, sexy voice wound around him like a cat, weaving through his legs, rubbing softly against his skin.

Drake stepped further into the room. The rebellious cherry she referred to was lying at her side. He picked it up by the stem and held it in front of her shuttered eyelids. “Is this what you’re looking for?”

Niki’s eyes popped open. She went deathly white, as if she’d seen a ghost, and closed her eyes tightly. “Drake.” Her voice shook, her body followed.

“I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“Drake,” she repeated, but weaker, as if she couldn’t—or wouldn’t—believe her eyes.

Hell, she was going into shock. “Niki.” He pressed his lips to hers, but they were cold, unyielding. He backed away tasting her rejection along with the lingering *Philter*.

When she opened her eyes again, her composure was intact. “What are you doing here?” There was a chill in her tone that went straight to his bones.

Fuck. His sister had been right. This was not the welcome he had hoped for.

At a loss for words, he said, “I arranged this through Chloe. This is *my* party.”

Her brows shot up. Her jaw dropped. “*You’re* the host?”

“Well, uh, yes.”

Her face grew tight, indifferent. “I see.” She bit out the two words. Then she scanned his length with a demeaning swipe. “The table was set to entertain you and your friends. Where is everyone?” She coolly gazed passed him.

Drake frowned. She couldn't mean it. Chloe had said she'd never go through with the charade. This was Chloe's gig. Niki didn't allow strange men to touch her. His sister had been sure Niki would chicken out when the time drew near.

The time was now.

"You and I—we need to talk," Drake said. "You need to know—"

She cut him off. "There's *nothing* I need to know or do, except finish this job and get you the hell out of here."

"Is that what you want, Niki?" he baited her, praying she'd call uncle—give in.

She pinned him with an all-business glare through the dark mask painted across her eyes. "Did you pay your bill?"

Was that all she could think of? He nodded, hating the rancor in her voice.

She looked away. "Then bring it on."

And with that, he was dismissed. He ran his fingers through his hair. Damn the woman. What was he supposed to do now?

Fuck. He'd told his men that Niki wouldn't go through with being on display, much less allow several men to touch her intimately. But here she lay, naked, looking more delicious and stubborn by the minute. Surely she would cave when his men entered the room.

A vision of his platoon's arrival on Zygoman flashed before his eyes. As he and his men had stepped off the transport he'd grinned confidently. "Sorry, men, no dessert for you tonight."

Bones had laid a hand on his shoulder. "Buddy, it's been five years. You don't know the lady anymore. What if she wants to go through with the dessert charade?"

No fucking way. "Then she's all yours." His previous words came back to haunt him. They tasted bitter on his tongue, as he drew his gaze back to Niki's pinched face.

"All business?" he asked, as his anger built. Damn the woman. She was pushing him into a corner.

"All business," she responded without hesitation. "I'm a professional. You'll get what you paid for."

"I want you."

"No," she flatly stated. "I'm dessert for you and your men, but you can choose Lauren or Crystal as your plaything for tonight. They're both blondes, and I can guarantee that you'll have a good time. Hell, take them both. It's on the house. Welcome home, Drake."

Her chest rose with each deep, unsteady breath. Although she hid beneath an indifferent mask, Niki was upset—and by the clench of her jaw, she was getting madder by the minute.

"It's you, or I sue," he threatened, playing all his cards.

As if he had slapped her, Niki's head jerked towards him. "You're kidding."

"No, Niki, I'm serious." Her head thumped back against the marshmallow pillow as he continued, "Remember...all business. You're entertainment for me and my men." Okay this was her last opportunity to beg out of the contract. His gut twisted. Dammit. It wasn't suppose to go this far. "Niki?"

She turned her gaze away from him. Her silence was a knife to his chest.

"You'll *have* to talk with me," he said. She jerked her head around to face him. Something close to fear flickered in her eyes and disappeared before he could register more. "Or, if you prefer, you can spend the night as a prisoner to my fantasies. You will not question them. You will do exactly what I ask. Is it a deal?" He held his breath waiting her answer.

Fire burned in the depths of her amber eyes. Her teeth clenched, seesawing back and forth, before she blurted, "Deal. One night with you and then you'll vanish from my life." She trembled with fury. "I'd shake on it, but I'm all tied up at the moment. Let the party begin."

Ohmygod. What had she done? Niki felt like she had just made a pact with the devil. When Drake left the room, so did all the oxygen. She couldn't breathe or think. This wasn't real—it couldn't be.

A dream. A nightmare. Or maybe it was a side effect of the *Philter*. Yeah, a drug-induced hallucination. She had prayed for Drake's return for so many years that she had conjured him out of thin air.

But what if it wasn't a dream? What if it was real? She had just made a deal to spend the entire night with him. To taste his kisses, feel his hands upon her body, his cock buried deep inside her. And then he'd leave her like he had five years ago. Maybe she should have agreed to talk to him. But she didn't want to hear his lies or excuses. If he could leave her once, he'd leave her again—just like her father had with her mother. The heartbreak, the tears—it had been too much then and was too much now.

How could he do this to her? How could Chloe, her best friend, put her through this again?

Niki's stomach pitched. She felt a wave of nausea wash over her. Life wouldn't be so cruel, would it?

Her answer came quickly as the door opened and a crowd of people filled the room. Drake entered last, a scowl upon his face.

He was real. This was real.

Niki was a dead woman.

Her staff moved quickly to prepare the feast. Extra sweets and goodies were rolled into the room on elegant tables, just in case there were actually men who wanted to sample delicacies not covering Niki's body.

Niki had witnessed Chloe's performance many times. She was an amazing actress. Her sensuality was natural, she drew men like bees to honey.

The *Philter* must have revved her up, because when five men approached Niki, each in rather obvious states of arousal, her pulse sped. Damn, but the men were huge, and

she wasn't just talking about height. Niki had never seen a collection of cocks like this. Well, she had seen one once...

She couldn't help licking her lips. Immediately, the sweet taste of the *Philter* melted her resistance. Her mind slipped, her body moving in to take over.

"Mmmm... Welcome, I'm Niki, I'm to be your dessert for the night," she purred.

From the corner of her eye she saw Drake tense. Heavy steps brought him forward. He stood at the foot of the bed, while his men lingered behind. Their eyes were pinned on him—not her, as if they awaited his command. Without a word he ran his finger through the chocolate mousse and between her swollen pussy lips. Niki jerked against her restraints, feeling the slow glide against her skin. His touch was magical, lighting each raw nerve like a candle. Their eyes locked. He brought his finger to his mouth and tasted the dessert mingled with her essence. A rush of desire moistened her thighs. She shivered at the intensity in his blue eyes.

"Bon appétit," he snarled, his words hanging in the silence that filled the room. "*Men.*" Heat simmered in his voice as he turned his attention to the naked soldiers standing at attention just inside the door.

Anxiety produced spasms in Niki's stomach. What were they waiting for?

The answer came in a deep, coarse growl. "Enjoy her." Drake spun on his heel—heading towards a chair across the room.

Niki didn't have time to question Drake's actions. The next thing she knew, she had a man on either side of her delving into her custard-layered breasts. It didn't take long for them to find her erect nipples. Warm, suckling mouths tensed her belly tighter than a snare drum.

Hot. Hot. *Hot.* Wave after wave of desire rippled through her body. That damn *Philter* was working overtime, heating her blood to a slow, steady burn. She arched into their mouths, slowly lifting her back off the table, releasing a moan as one of them bit down hard, sending shards of fire straight to her sex.

She felt exotic, desired, wild and untamed. Being bound—helpless—was more exciting than she had expected.

Another man trailed a finger down her arm, creating a delicious tickle that raised goose bumps across her skin. He gathered a handful of her hair, bringing it to his nose. His inhale was long and deep. “Sweet, so sweet.” His voice was low and mesmerizing, releasing a flood of desire between her thighs as he licked her cotton candy hair.

Niki was losing it. She felt trapped in a world of sensation. Drowning in desire, dying with the need to be fucked.

Another man swirled his finger in the chocolate mousse at her shaved mons—eliciting a moan from her lips as he blended the pudding with a caramel stripe from her hip. Eyes as hot as flames burned into her as he pushed his digit into his mouth making a popping noise as he released it.

Yet it was the big man between her legs who stole her attention.

“I’m Tally, and I’ll be the Captain in charge of your next flight to heaven.” The man dipped his blond head between her thighs and began to lick away the mousse. He teased, making small circles around her clit, but not touching the sensitive bud. Long, slow licks moved up one swollen fold and down the other, before delving between to taste her. Her knees bent as far as the licorice ropes allowed. She squirmed, needing him to close in on the spot that would set her body aflame.

Her nerves were a mass of sensation and confusion. It felt like hands and tongues were sliding over every bare inch of her body. Touching. Caressing. Her hands tightened around the licorice bindings at her wrists as her hips began a slow rise and fall, drawing out the heaviness swelling between her thighs. Captain Tally’s tongue touched the tip of her clit and Niki came off the table with a scream. An unbelievable climax filtered through her body, shaking her from limb to limb.

Aftershocks continued to ripple through her as she rose from the haze of orgasm, but the frenzy around her continued. Her climax was a catalyst, exciting the men, driving them to devour her body even more. She heard moans of pleasure, felt the

increased pressure and friction of their hands, their mouths, their tongues. Captain Tally's fingers dug into her thighs. He shook with the need to find fulfillment.

Niki was so engrossed in the warmth flowing through her veins that she barely heard the growl from the back of the room. All she knew was that she needed a cock inside her, and she needed it now.

"Fuck me, Drake," she whimpered, her head thrashing from side to side. Then she stilled, choking on her embarrassment.

Oh God, did I say that out loud?

She heard heavy footsteps padding across the room, then a grunt as Drake pushed the Captain roughly aside. Hunger sparked in Drake's eyes like lightning bolts in a midnight sky. She couldn't help the tremor that quaked through her body. The man before her was large, hard, his cock pushing against his trousers and—by the look of lust on his face—ready.

She squirmed against her bindings, feeling like a cat in heat. Her mind tried to surface, to tell her this wasn't right, that this wasn't what she wanted—but her body overrode her thoughts, chasing away any doubts.

"Yes, Drake, fuck me." And by all that was holy, she *meant* it. She had to feel his cock buried deep inside her, feel the thrust and the weight of completion.

"Out, everyone. OUT," growled Drake as he began to undress. He jerked off his tie, tossing it aside. Next to go was his shirt, revealing a chest that had broadened, defined, since the last time she'd seen him. As the garment hit the floor she heard his medals tinkle against the marble. He didn't bother removing his boots, simply ripping open his fly and pushing his pants down around his knees.

She groaned at the sight of him. Long, hard and thick—his erection throbbed, jutting out before him.

Caught up in a wave of passion that engulfed her, Niki didn't care if everyone on Zygomani came in and watched. She *had* to feel his cock inside her, his lips on hers, his hands on her breasts. Her body moved slowly, seductively.

Life had been so empty without him.

Within moments his broad chest hovered above her. She could feel his erection pulsating next to her pussy, through the remaining mousse. She bent her knees the best she could, widening her thighs to welcome him.

He stared down at her, his ebony hair lightly touching her face. With an aching slow movement, he bent to taste her neck, her shoulders and the swell of her breasts. His gentle lips caressed, heating her blood. Her nipples tingled. But it wasn't enough. She needed to feel him inside her, now.

When his hands skimmed along her hips, dipped between their bodies to touch her, she heard his breathing catch, felt his heart racing – or was that hers?

"Drake," she whimpered. "Fuck me. Please."

"I plan to, baby. Just give me a minute to touch you. I need to feel your skin beneath my hands. To know you're really here with me." His voice shook, rasped like coarse sandpaper over her as he did just that.

Niki couldn't stand any more. Her body felt foreign, her need so strong that it was all consuming.

"Now, Drake. Take me now," she cried.

He ran his finger along her swollen folds, positioned his cock, and with a single thrust he entered her, driving deep.

She threw back her head, burying it into the marshmallow pillow as her mouth parted on a scream. *Yes*, this is what she'd dreamt of. He stretched her to the point of pain, but it quickly morphed into a pleasure so exquisite she wanted to burst into tears.

He lay upon her, breathing heavily, allowing her body to adjust and take him deeper. He moved slowly, carefully, until he nudged against the furthest point of her channel.

The smooth custards and sauces between them were slick, sinful, as he began to rock.

Oh, sweet Jesus, this was heaven. This is what she remembered. This is what she had been missing.

When he ground his hips against hers, she gritted her teeth to keep from crying out. Flames licked her womb.

She fought to keep control even under his sensual perusal. He held himself buried deep inside her. His chest was smeared with gels and candies that now took on a dirty brown color. He held her hips, pinning her with his eyes as his fingers traced wicked circles in the sticky, sweet substances between them.

As his cock thrust in and out of her quivering body, his hands caressed her abdomen, dipped in the small of her waist, and cupped her breasts. For a moment he stared at them, unmoving. Then he began to knead gently, his strong hands covering her completely.

Breathing labored, he leaned forward and suckled her breasts, one and then the other. Puffs of warm air caressed her sensitive skin, while his tongue blazed a path up her chest, across her throat until he was an inch away from her mouth. Her tongue smoothed across her parched lips. He growled and pressed his mouth to hers.

She wanted to hold him, feel the strength in his shoulders, his muscles rippling beneath her touch. She needed to feel he was real. Know this was not just another dream.

He slipped a hand between their bodies, found her clit and pressed.

Her climax came out of nowhere, swallowing her up in a violent storm of emotions. It tore from her body, tore from her heart. It was pleasure and it was pain. She wanted to laugh and to cry.

Her body thrashed beneath his as spasms shot through her. He fell upon her, his weight pinning her as his hips thrust, driving into her one last time before he joined her.

As if she was starving and couldn't get enough, her body convulsed, contracting and pulling him deeper. She felt the warmth of his seed fill her. Thoughts of children, of home and love, assaulted Niki.

As their bodies lay pressed together, a wave of nausea rolled over her. She fought to hold down the bile.

Damn. What have I done?

The *Philter* was wearing off. Her mind was clearing. Drake had done things to her body—taught her things that made other men pale in his shadow. He'd taken her virginity, made promises for a lifetime together and then simply disappeared. After a couple of letters promising a future, she'd received no more. No calls. He'd just vanished.

Now he was back to screw her life up one more time and then leave. This was wrong, so very wrong.

"Drake, I'm going to be sick."

"Hmmm..." he hummed as his hands continued to slide through the sticky mess they had become, stroking her legs and drawing lazy circles in the sweets.

"I'm going to be sick." She gagged. The sugary scent became too much to handle as her stomach pitched.

That got his attention but quick. He climbed off her, working feverishly to untie the licorice knots. Within seconds he had her freed. She stood, but her knees buckled. He grasped her around the waist to steady her, but she slipped through his dessert-smeared hands. Finally he was able to get her to her feet after slipping and sliding on the slick floor.

When Niki was sure that she could hold her own, she flew from his arms and slid into the bathroom.

Time went by, how much she didn't know—didn't care. She found some *Alkazar* in the cabinet and took two to ease her stomach. She was a mess, both mentally and physically. Her black mask had run down her face. Her body paint was smeared, blended to a dingy brown. Her cotton candy-pink hair looked like it had got caught in a fan. In other words, she felt like shit and looked the part, too.

"Honey, are you okay?" Mori's voice penetrated the door.

"Yes, too much sugar. I'm fine," Niki assured her. But she was anything but fine.

"Have you showered?" Mori asked.

Niki plucked a cherry from her matted hair. "No, not yet." She tossed the offensive piece of fruit in a nearby trash receptacle.

Mori's muffled voice continued, "I just wanted to let you know that the client's suite is ready. I sent the host off to be prepped. Now it's your turn. Let me in."

The last thing Niki needed was Mori's hands all over her body. "No, I'll take care of it myself."

"Are you sure, honey? I wouldn't mind taking care of you—or priming the client, for that matter." By her tone, Niki knew that Mori wouldn't mind a piece of Drake. Hell, most women would take him in a heartbeat.

"I'm sure, thank you." Niki directed her voice towards the glass shower and whispered, "Shower on—medium temperature." A spray of water shot into the enclosure, drowning out Mori's next words. When Niki stepped beneath the water, she felt some of her tension swirl down the drain along with pineapple and strawberry pieces. A rush of liquid caramel, *lichi* and custard swirled and then disappeared, too.

The water on Zygomon was amazing. Artificial amoebas cleansed skin and hair, requiring no soap, no shampoo. The amoebas caressed the body so that a person felt revitalized.

"Shower off." Niki stepped from the enclosure, grabbing a warm towel from the heated towel rack. She blotted her hair, then stepped beneath the full-length dryers. The air felt a lot like the Mexico sun, heating and baking a person to a golden brown. Before she exited the blowers, she stopped and stared at her reflection in the mirror.

"Chin up, Niki Nielson. There's no way out of this mess. Besides, it's just one night of your life."

But the woman staring back at her didn't believe a word she spoke. A single tear rolled silently down her cheek. Niki turned away from the sight and walked into the adjacent dressing room.

Chapter Three

Nothing could have prepared Drake for what he had just experienced with Niki. As his fellow soldiers moved around the suite he'd been assigned, his memories drowned out the laughter and talk that filled the room.

Niki's body had been like a glove, fitting him to perfection. The emotions he'd felt as he drove inside her warmth were beyond anything he could have imagined. They belonged together.

Lost in his thoughts, Drake leaned his shoulder against a wall and swirled the ice in his glass. Where was Niki? What was she doing? Did she regret what had just happened between them? It had nearly killed him to see his men touching her. But when she'd whispered his name, begged him to fuck her, his control had broken. For a moment she'd been his again.

As the noise level in the room increased, Drake turned to see that members of Niki's staff had joined them for a congratulatory drink in the host's suite before the big party ended and the smaller parties began. Already, Smith had paired off with Lauren. He sat in the corner, his dark head pressed close to the tall blonde sitting on his lap. Tally and Harrison had taken Crystal in hand, leaving Bones and Layton with Mori.

The wild redhead was going to kill ol' Bones and teach young Layton more than he ever knew was possible.

Drake raised his brandy glass and pressed it to his lips, allowing the golden liquid to wet his mouth—

And almost choked as Niki entered the room.

Her long blonde hair flowed freely down her back. She wore a bustier that hugged her ribs and pressed her breasts upward, barely hiding her rosy nipples behind white lace. A satin and lace garter belt clasped thigh-high white nylons and white panties.

High heels completed her ensemble. She looked like a wicked angel, ready for a romping good time.

Until he saw her expression, which could shrink any man's erection. Her eyes were sunken as though she had lost her best friend. She wasn't happy and she didn't attempt to hide it.

Much to Drake's displeasure, all five of his friends deserted their women to approach Niki. Tally gave her a big bear hug that made her face redden from lack of oxygen.

Each of his men greeted Niki, treating her like an old friend they hadn't seen in sometime. Of course, while they had been incarcerated together, Drake had spoken of her. Told them how her laughter sounded like bells lightly singing in a gentle breeze, how her eyes sparkled and danced when she was in a mischievous mood.

Hell, they probably knew her as well as he did. Well, almost.

"Niki, Drake told us you two knew each other as children. Tell us about him as a strapping youth," Bones encouraged. The man was always looking for blackmail material. Scruffy ol' goat.

"Well—" she began.

Drake held up a hand silencing her. "Not now, boys. It's time for you to leave."

With a wave of her hand Niki motioned Mori to her side. "Ensure that everything is finalized for breakfast tomorrow morning with our clients." She turned to leave then swung back around as Niki continued. "Oh, and check with the transports and schedule me on the first flight out of here. The earlier, the better."

Mori brows furrowed. She straightened her beret. "But I thought you were staying an extra couple of days."

"Changed my mind." Her weary gaze darted to Drake and then back to Mori. "Now go—I don't want to miss the flight."

As the door slid closed behind Mori, they were finally alone. It was only him and Niki, no artificial setting, no drug induced haze, only them. And it was about time. His balls had begun to ache the minute she entered the room. It took all he had not to strip her naked and take her on the floor. Once was never enough with Niki—he'd learned that five years ago—and reconfirmed it only an hour ago.

Niki scanned the room. "Nice." She picked up a crystal figurine of a *dust-mister*, an animal similar to an antelope but with heavy fur and a long tail. From there she moved to a glass table with two chairs. She ran her hand across the cool surface. Each time something caught her eye it took her further from the bedroom—further from him.

Drake still leaned one shoulder against the wall, but shifted as he crossed one foot in front of the other. He had to break the ice, and it might as well be now. "Niki, maybe it would be easier if I told you what I expect."

She rolled her eyes heavenward. When her gaze reluctantly returned to his, she cocked her head, lifting a brow.

"First, that attitude has got to go. Damn it, woman. I'll be damned if I spend this night feeling guilty over something I couldn't help. Niki, I need to tell you—"

"*Guilt!*" she huffed. "You don't owe me an explanation. In fact, it doesn't matter, Drake. That's all in the past. We're both different people. It doesn't matter," she repeated as if trying to convince herself. "Let's just get on with the evening and be done with it."

"I'm serious, Niki. We've got to talk."

Her jaw clenched. "There is *nothing* to talk about."

"Fine." One way or another he'd *force* her to listen.

"We're going to play a little bondage and domination." He crossed his arms over his chest. "From this point on you will refer to me as Master."

"*What?*" Her eyes widened, her lips clamped tightly together. She was magnificent when she was angry.

"You will not speak unless granted permission," he continued. "You will stand with your feet apart, your head bowed and your hands behind your back."

He raised both brows and waited for her to comply. It took longer than was acceptable, but he felt lenient...for the moment. "If I say drop to your knees and take my cock in your mouth, you'll not hesitate." Her mouth gaped wide. "You will not question me. It is your job to pleasure me. If you do not obey, or you hesitate too long in complying, you will be punished."

As her jaw dropped farther, he said, "My word is law."

The pink in her face shot to scarlet in point two seconds. Still, she remained quiet. A good sign... Or perhaps not.

They'd always had their share of arguments. Both of them were hardheaded—proven by how long it took for them to reveal their feelings about each other. Now it was nothing but a huge FUBAR—fucked up beyond all recognition. She wanted nothing to do with him, and he wasn't leaving until things were resolved between them. But he had to work fast, before he shipped off—in three short days—to complete his tour of duty.

Somehow he would win her over. Show her that she could trust him, and perhaps even love him again.

"Come here," he growled.

Her chest rose as she took a deep breath and a step towards him, then another. When she was standing before him, he reached up and cupped her chin. "Smile, Niki. I want to believe that spending the night with me is the best thing that's ever happened to you."

A shadow crept across her face. She forced a smile that didn't quite make it to her eyes. "Yes, Master." The words were correct, but her tone edged on the derogatory.

"Kiss me," he demanded.

She went up on her tiptoes and planted a quick kiss on his cheek.

“Kiss me like you mean it.”

She swallowed hard and crushed her mouth against his. There was anger in the way her tongue dueled with his, and in the strength she used to meld their lips together.

He gathered her into his arms, breaking the kiss and starting anew. Gently, he nibbled on her bottom lip. Her eyes were closed. She took deep breaths, releasing them slowly. When she finally opened her eyes he met a shield of indifference, a detachment from him and the situation at hand.

“Fine,” he barked. “To your knees.” He ripped open his pants and his erection sprang free.

Niki’s glared at his cock as she drifted to her knees. He bobbed a mere inch from her mouth. Slowly her gaze traveled up his body until the fire in her eyes met his.

“If you don’t want to kiss my mouth, then wrapped your lips around this.” Drake cupped the back of her head and guided her towards his cock. He was a little hesitant—a pissed off woman’s mouth was probably the last place a man wanted to stick his Johnson.

A shiver racked his body as her wet, warm mouth closed around him. She was tentative at first. Then she surprised him by gripping his erection, moving her hand up and down to the rhythm of her suction. She cupped his sac in her other hand and gently kneaded. He clenched his teeth, sucking in a tense breath. Her expertise was unnerving. He hadn’t taught her this, someone else had. The knowledge hurt, but what had he expected?

For her to stay celibate as he had these past five years.

He trembled beneath her touch. “Stop!” *God, give me strength.* Though his body screamed “No!” he stepped backward pulling out of her warmth.

She blinked as if dazed and started to rise.

"I didn't give you permission to stand." He needed a moment to gather his resolve, to ease back from the climax, and the betrayal he felt when he thought of her in someone else's arms.

She stopped midway and sank back to her knees, her head bowed.

Drake's fingers curled into fists. He wanted to conquer her indifference, wanted her to *listen* to him.

"Come." He offered her his hand. She accepted his help in rising. "Follow me."

The suite had many amenities, but it wasn't where he intended to stay the night. Before he'd made the party arrangements, he'd visited Zygoman to ensure everything would be as he had requested. The adjoining room was the fantasy room.

The room had sky blue walls, ceiling and floor, no furniture and no windows. Even the door they came through blended into the blue walls.

Drake led the way. "Across the room is a door."

"I don't see a —"

He placed a finger to her lips. "You are not to speak without permission, Niki, until you choose to listen to me. You will be punished for disobeying my rules. And remember, you must refer to me as Master."

She flashed him her best "fuck you" glare. Followed by an in-your-dreams-buddy stance—her backbone erect, her shoulders squared, her chin elevated slightly.

He was glad to see her spirit had returned.

"There *is* a door. As you approach, the heat of your body will reveal it. Inside is a dressing room with three numbered white boxes. Tonight you will take part in my fantasy and make my dreams a reality. Now get dressed."

* * * * *

As Niki crossed the room she wondered what had happened to Drake over the past five years. Maybe she should have listened to him—should have heard what he had to

say to her. This wasn't the young man she'd known, had grown up with. There was a harder edge to him now. As if he looked at the world through different eyes. And he was freakin' crazy. There wasn't a door here or anywhere —

Just as the thought appeared, so did the hazy outline of a door. As she drew nearer it grew more defined. But the joke was on her. There wasn't a doorknob. She waited a moment for it to slide open, as all the doors on Zygoman did when you approached.

Nothing.

How the hell was she supposed to open the damn thing?

Her hands settled on her hips. "I found the fucking door, but there's no way to open it."

His response was five little words. "You've earned your second punishment."

Well, that's just great.

"Move your hand over the door," he commanded.

When she did, a doorknob materialized. Her fingers folded around it, turned, and with a push the door opened. Zygoman was a mysterious place. What fun it would be to spend a real vacation here. But there was no way she would stay on the same planet as Drake. Tomorrow morning she was out of here.

"Get going, Niki. You have ten minutes to dress and join me. Oh, and don't look in the other two boxes before I tell you to. Believe me, if you do, I'll know."

God, what she'd give to flip him off right now. Instead she walked through the entrance and slammed the door for good measure. As she did, she heard him chuckle. Damn the man. He knew she didn't want to be here. But she was a company woman and this was company business.

Yeah, that's how she would approach this — professional — all business. She'd give the man what he wanted, take his money, and then never see him again.

But damn, he had tasted good.

Kissing was too intimate. It drew on emotions she refused to release.

But no matter what, the fact that he'd tricked her into this night was unforgivable. It didn't matter what he had to say, he had forced this upon her.

As Niki pivoted, turning slowly, she scanned the room. It was indeed a dressing room. There was a table with makeup and hair accessories on it, a chair and bright lighting. On a couch lay three large, white boxes. As Drake had said, each was marked with either a one, two or three, large black numbers that seemed to jump out at her, taunting her.

A full-size mirror stood to her right. On the wall above the mirror she saw a clock. No, it wasn't a clock exactly, it was a timer. She only had eight more minutes.

Man, I hate surprises.

Niki reached for box number one. Underestimating its weight, she dropped it and the contents tumbled out upon the floor. Wide-eyed, mouth agape, she stared at the ensemble. It was a school uniform, the same one she had worn when she began college at Arizona State University on Earth. Yet it wasn't exactly the same—some modifications had been made. There was a gold and maroon plaid vest, a *little* pleated skirt, platform tennis shoes, knee-high socks, a tie...and a note.

Anxiety was at an all-time high as she bent and retrieved the message.

Wear your hair in two long braids.

What was he up to? This was the outfit she had worn that day...before he'd slowly stripped her of it. The man was cruel, making her remember things she had buried deep within her memories.

When she glanced at the timer, five minutes had passed. Quickly, she picked up the clothes and began to dress. After she braided her hair she glared into the mirror. The vest was too tight, the skirt too short.

"Sheesh, I look like slutty Pocahontas goes to college."

The timer blared and she startled. Time was up. Without hesitation she opened the door and hurried through it, coming to a dead halt. Mesmerized, she turned in a complete circle. It was the ASU Sky Dome in virtual reality. Students and faculty moved around her. From where she stood she could see the library where Drake had met her the day they'd finally made love. He was a senior, she a freshman.

Niki blinked her eyes, refusing the memories that nagged to be released. No. She wouldn't go through this again. Not now. Not ever.

When she cleared her mind she began to look for Drake. The hologram shifted from school to her family's backyard. Drake lounged beneath the large mulberry tree that stood outside her parents' guesthouse. He was clothed in a maroon graduation cap and gown, but the gap in the unzipped gown showed Niki that he had nothing on beneath it, except for the gold tassel he'd placed around his rock-hard erection.

She wanted to smile, but the sexy grin he flashed her gave her resolve. Slowly, she approached, stopping before him with her legs parted, hands behind her back, head bowed.

"Beautiful," he murmured. "Did you know I dreamed of tying you to this tree and fucking you? Hell, there wasn't a place on Earth I didn't want to take you."

His confession shocked her. She swayed.

He rose from the bench. "But first, your punishment. Face the tree, bend over and grab your knees." He quickly added, "If you hesitate, I'll be forced to punish you more severely."

She reached for her knees, her ass and pussy lips bared for his inspection.

Talk about humiliating. Tonight she was definitely earning her wages.

"Niiice," he hummed before his hand landed hard on the cheek of her ass. Thrown off balance, she would have fallen if he hadn't steadied her. Before she could suck in a breath, he struck again. Then he began to gently caress her inflamed flesh.

Niki didn't know if she was angrier about being spanked, or that the man had the balls to fondle her in the very area he had abused. The combination of her anger and his touch was lighting a fire she was desperately trying to extinguish. Her breasts pressed against her vest, rubbing against the abrasive material. Moisture built between her thighs. She only hoped he wasn't aware of her arousal.

When his finger slipped between her swollen folds, she died a small death. The mouth and mind could lie, but the body always told the truth. She wanted him. Even after what he had done to her, *was* doing to her, she wanted him.

As he worked his finger in and out of her heat, he asked, "Do you want me to fuck you, Niki?"

"Not especially, Master." It was a lie, she knew it—he knew it. He released a low, sexy laugh.

He slipped another finger into her. "It would please me to take you tied to this tree."

Then shut up and take me. "Do I have a choice, Master?"

His other hand slipped beneath the vest and began to stroke her breast. "No, Niki, you don't. You must learn to trust me. Believe that I know what's best for you."

Niki couldn't hold back her disbelief. It slipped from her lips in a gust of air.

Drake's fingers withdrew from her pussy, and he released her breast. "You have earned another punishment."

Well, goodie, goodie. I guess if I'd called you an out-and-out liar I'd be in real trouble. Thankfully, she held her tongue as her thoughts rambled.

"Stand up and turn around."

Niki did as Drake commanded, placing her hands behind her back.

He reached for the tie between her breasts. With deft fingers he undid the knot. As it slithered off her neck a shiver raced up her spine.

"Grab the branch above your head."

She reached up, and after her fingers curled around the limb, he wound the tie around her wrists and the tree.

With a quick movement he grasped each side of her vest and pulled. Material ripped and her breasts bounced into his palms. He massaged gently, his hands moving down her ribcage, her abdomen. Next to go was her skirt, until all she wore were knee-high stockings and platform tennis shoes.

Heat burned in his eyes, matching her own. She hated to admit it, but this was turning her on. She couldn't wait for him to drive his cock between her thighs. When he pressed his body to hers she felt his heartbeat. His warm breath fanned her face. He smelled of male lust. She inhaled deeply.

He slipped the commencement gown from his shoulders, tossed his cap aside. Palms on her waist, he lifted her as she tightened her grip on the branch above. "Wrap your legs around my waist." When her moist pussy touched his flesh, he smiled. "You're ready for me, baby."

The shell she had erected around her heart cracked. He had called her baby the night he had taken her innocence.

When he entered her, she gasped. No one else had ever stretched her, filled her so completely. Slowly she began to ride him. That damned tassel around his cock was spanking her lightly, teasingly. Their eyes remained locked until he covered her mouth with his. He commanded her attention, his tongue moving through her mouth as if he owned her.

Niki felt her shell crack a little more as she melted into his kiss.

Drake's hands clenched her waist tightly, driving her down hard on his cock. He moaned and the sound vibrated through her. His breaths were small pants. Niki knew he was close to coming. She squeezed him with her vaginal muscles just as he shot forward, sliding across her G-spot. She screamed, her body arching as her climax raced through her body like lightning. Drake followed, holding her down on his hips as he filled her with his release.

A light sheen of perspiration beaded her forehead. She felt sated as she laid her head upon his shoulder. Drake allowed her legs to slip down his body until her feet touched the ground.

As he untied her wrists, anger burned a slow trail through her. How could she have given in to him so easily?

"Are you ready to listen to me yet?" he asked her as he rubbed her wrists, chafing away the slight abrasions.

No matter how badly she'd wanted him to take her, Niki was furious that he'd put her through this charade, pissed that her body responded so eagerly to him.

She raised her chin. "Let's just get this over with."

A scowl flashed across Drake's face. "You *will* listen. By the time we're through, I'll have my say."

Niki just glared at him.

"It's time for box two," he said.

When Niki looked up, they were standing in the blue room again. He gazed at her expectantly. She slowly moved towards the wall where she found the door once again.

Chapter Four

Drake watched the new hologram appear around him. It was a dungeon. Chains adorned dark gray walls. Several women were strapped to St. Andrew's crosses. Another woman lay spread-eagle on a rack, a man standing over her with a black hood over his head. She screamed, tossing back her head as he tightened her bindings.

When Drake thought of Niki bound for his pleasure his black leather pants stretched tight across his groin.

The door slid open and Niki stumbled into the room. Her eyes conveyed her fear, her head turning quickly as she took in her surroundings.

Yet Drake couldn't keep his eyes off her. She wore a black collar with silver spikes, *his* collar—his mark of ownership. Attached to it was a silver chain that hung down her back. What she wore hid nothing. Black leather wrapped around her back, crisscrossing to lift her breasts. No panties, only a garter belt that held up her thigh-high silk stockings. Stiletto heels showed off her shapely legs.

He waved his hand, motioning her over. She remained glued to the spot where she stood. Her tongue swiped across her lips. He waved again and this time she took a step. It was a leaden process as she inched her way towards him. Her chest rose in tight breaths.

"Kneel beside me." He was pleased when she complied. "Are you frightened, Niki?"

"Yes." He barely heard her response.

"Yes?"

"Yes, Master."

Drake cupped her chin, raising her gaze to his. "Do you trust that I won't hurt you or allow anyone else to hurt you?"

He watched the play in her throat as she swallowed, struggling to move past the fear. Yet she nodded.

"You have a punishment awaiting you."

Her jaw dropped.

"Do you trust that what I'll do to you won't harm you?"

Uncertainty shadowed her eyes, but she again nodded.

"Stand up."

It wasn't easy in stilettos, but she did it on her own. Without being told, she followed him as he led her to two round platforms, each approximately twelve inches in diameter and about six inches apart. He helped her to step up, one foot on each platform.

"Raise your arms high above your head, palms facing the ceiling." Niki's arms rose as two identical platforms extended from the ceiling to meet her palms. She startled, a tight squeal squeezing from her lips as cuffs appeared, snapping around each wrist and ankle. As the platforms began to move, drifting apart, she began to struggle. She whimpered, fighting against her bindings.

Drake stopped the platforms and wrapped his arms around her trembling body. Her heart pounded against his chest. Tears raced down her cheeks.

"Trust me, Niki." He was surprised to hear the plea in his voice. He was desperate for her to trust him, accept him as her Master—her man. "Do you trust me, baby?" He held her at arms length and wiped away her tears.

She nodded.

"I need to hear you say it."

He held his breath, releasing it in a gust of air as she said, "I trust you, Master."

Sheer happiness raced through his body.

God, she was adorable, nervously biting her bottom lip. He kissed her forehead.

“Now, I’m going to spread the platforms further apart.” He waited for her to object. When she didn’t he began the process again. This time she held still and remained quiet.

From a table containing a variety of items, he chose a cat-o’-nine-tails. She watched him take the whip—nine knotted cords attached to a handle—into his hand.

Across the room, a woman was screaming, jerking her head from side to side. The woman was being flogged, but by the aroused look on her face, she was enjoying every minute of it. This seemed to relax Niki and some of the tension drained from her body. She faced forward and looked at Drake.

Okay. This was good.

As he slowly dragged the flogger over her tender skin she closed her eyes. The tight lines in her face softened. He was so proud of her, he could burst. If she trusted him with her body, could she also trust him with her heart?

He pulled the whip away from her body. “I’m going to flog you now.”

Niki’s eyes opened and instead of fear, he saw excitement—or was that what he *wanted* to see?

He moved behind her and snapped the whip. It landed lightly on the right cheek of her ass. She flinched more from surprise than pain, he was certain. He hadn’t hit her hard. As he flicked the whip again he struck the other cheek, but this time a little harder. She whimpered softly, the sweet sound making him grow impossibly harder. He applied the flogger four more times in different places, each one firmer than the last. Niki never once cried out. When he finally faced her, there was no fear, no anger in her eyes. In fact, he could have sworn she was aroused.

She had done so well that he wanted to praise her. Hell, he wanted to take her in his arms and tell her about the past five years. Then take her to bed and make love to her all night long.

Electrical currents held her erect as the platforms moved from vertical to horizontal. Another squeal of surprise slipped from her lips. But as she rose from the ground to become level with his hips, Niki smiled.

Spread wide for his pleasure, she was so fucking hot. Moisture glistened at her slit. Her nipples were tight beads of desire. Her chest rose and fell in the rhythm of arousal. All he could think of was sinking his cock into her body. But he had something else in mind to pleasure her.

From the table he extracted a small tool that looked like an ancient-style tongue depressor. She furrowed her brows.

"Do you trust me, Niki?"

She swallowed hard before she nodded.

He laid the tool upon her abdomen. Gently he massaged the insides of her thighs, his thumbs pressing on her swollen pussy lips. She moaned, her hips rising.

"Does that feel good?" he asked.

"Yes, Master," she replied.

"Do you want me to fuck you, or should I pussy whip you?"

Drake almost swallowed his tongue when she responded, "Whatever would please you, Master."

His aching cock jerked, as if answering for him. But there was plenty of time for that tonight. Right now he wanted to show her the beauty of pleasure-pain.

Drake loved the way Niki followed his movements, her amber eyes heavy with desire. As he reached for the tool lying on her stomach, he felt a shiver shake her. She sucked in an audible breath as he used his index and middle finger to spread her swollen folds and bare her clit. Holding her totally exposed, he lightly began to spank her pussy.

She arched her back, her knees bending to open wider to him, but limited by her bindings. As he continued a quick, steady patting, she moaned and whimpered. Her

pleading cries were driving him crazy. His erection hardened, pressing firmly against his pants. It was painful—but he wouldn't have it any other way. He wanted Niki to feel the sensation of climaxing under the tiny paddle.

"Ohmygod!" she screamed as her body jerked and then exploded. "Oh," she groaned, convulsing as another wave crashed over her. As aftershocks continued to roll through her, she cried softly.

Drake adjusted the platforms to bring her upright. When the handcuffs clicked, releasing her, she fell into his arms.

"Ready to listen to me?" he asked as he slowly stroked her hair.

She shook her head, but it was slow, almost hesitant—as if she wasn't sure. *Damn*, the woman was stubborn.

"I think you're ready for box three," he said.

* * * * *

As Niki stumbled back into the dressing room, she collapsed onto the waiting couch.

Oh. My. God. She had never experienced anything like that. She felt tender, both inside and out, as if every nerve ending had been awakened.

As Niki glanced at the timer above the mirror, she noted twenty minutes on the clock, twice as long as she had been given to dress for the first two episodes.

Box three lay beside her. If each box held something better, box three must be the ultimate. As she lifted the lid her heart skipped a beat, and then she swore it stopped. A shaky hand reached for the white satin and lace. Tears began to fall as she lifted a beautiful wedding dress from the box.

She closed her eyes, but moisture continued to seep out. Niki had experienced the climax of a lifetime, had begun to trust Drake again. Then he cruelly reminded her of his broken promises, of a life that would never be hers.

For what felt like forever, she stared at the gown.

Damn it, he couldn't do this to her. She couldn't go through it again. She wasn't playing his games any longer.

Niki rose, angrily wiping the remaining tears from her eyes. The bastard had hurt her for the last time. She grabbed the gown and headed for the door.

A beautiful hologram of a rolling meadow – wildflowers covering it like a carpet – met her as she entered the room. The sweet scent rose up to meet her. She looked past the crowd of people that congregated there, ignoring familiar faces in her anger.

Dressed in a black tux, Drake stood beneath an archway of red and white roses. When he saw her he frowned. "You're not dressed –"

The gown hit him square in the face, stopping his words. She stood before him still donned in her black leather, her fists planted upon her hips.

A few male chuckles and female gasps filled the air. Damn, there was a whole crowd ready to witness her humiliation. Her friends, his friends – and even a few strangers from Zygoman.

She faced Drake. "You're on your own for this fantasy, buster." As she turned to stomp away he grasped her by the arm. "Let me go," she growled. "You've had your fun. If you want a woman to wear that gown, give it to someone else. Someone you want for eternity."

"I did," he responded, refusing to release her.

Niki fisted her free hand. "I can't *believe* you. You son of a bitch." She shook her head in disgust. "You're married? This is *her* dress?"

A vein throbbed in his throat. "No, this is *your* dress." He released her, sinking to one knee. Before she could turn and escape him, he grabbed her hand. She tried to break his hold. He held tight. "Niki."

"If you don't let me go I'm going to deck you." She held up her fist. Her body shook with anger.

"Damn it, Niki, listen to me," he said firmly.

"No!" she growled, attempting to free her hand from his grasp.

Drake jerked her down to her knees so that they were facing each other. He held her firmly by her shoulders. She looked past him into the faces of his platoon and her staff, wide-eyed and gaping in surprise.

"You're going to hear me out, even if I have to sit on you to do it."

Her gaze snapped back to Drake. "Fuck you!"

It happened quickly – one minute she was kneeling and the next she found herself lying flat on the ground, Drake perched atop her.

"You –"

He covered her mouth with his palm. "Shut up, Niki." With his free hand he ran his fingers through his hair. "Woman, you're making this a lot harder than I expected." He closed his eyes briefly. "Niki Nielson, will you marry me?"

Niki's eyes widened. "*What?*" was muffled beneath his hand, followed by, "You're kidding, right?" There was a moment of silence, and then she frowned.

His brows furrowed, and he wondered what her thoughts were. He didn't have to wait long to find out. She bit his palm and he abruptly released her mouth. "Dammit, Niki." He shook his hand.

"Drake, this isn't funny." Tears filled her eyes. "It hurts. I trusted you."

"Then maybe it's time for the truth, because nothing else was working." He took a deep breath.

She snorted. "Truth? What about the fantasy party? The one-night contract?"

He gave her a boyish grin, then directed his gaze to Chloe and the others who stood silently behind them. "It was a hoax to get you to see me. Chloe said you never wanted to see me again. I...I hoped that wasn't true."

Emotion caught in Niki's throat. "You're not married?"

He stroked her cheek with his knuckles. "Well, I guess that depends on your answer."

Niki couldn't think. Dammit. This had come right out of left field. She trembled, so unsure of him—herself. God she wanted to say yes, instead she choked out, "You left me."

"Oh, baby." Sorrow filled his eyes. "I should have done this from the beginning—forced you to listen. I was held captive on DSQ-3 for five years, a prisoner. They let me write only one letter. The letter I sent to my family. It killed me knowing that you felt I'd betrayed you."

Niki's palm clapped over her mouth. Tears streamed down her face as she jerked her head around looking to his platoon, Chloe, *anyone* that would verify his story. The older soldier, Bones, nodded and Niki felt a vise tighten around her heart. What had she done? He hadn't betrayed her. She had betrayed *him*.

"Knowing that you were out there, waiting, saved me, kept me alive." His words only made her feel worse. Why hadn't she trusted him? He slid her hand from her mouth and cupped her face. "Baby, I didn't call because I *couldn't*. As soon as I was released I headed straight to Earth, straight to you."

Niki couldn't breathe. "Why didn't you say so from the beginning?"

"I tried." A smile quirked the corner of his mouth. "How many times did I ask you to listen?"

Niki's throat worked as she swallowed. "Incarcerated?" Then she shook her head. "I-I don't know what to say." But then her mouth furrowed into a frown. "You should have made me listen to you, Drake. Why this elaborate deception?"

Drake's shoulders slumped. "I was sure you wouldn't listen unless you were tricked."

From behind him Chloe appeared. Uncertainty flashed in her friend's blue gaze. "Niki, he's telling the truth. I encouraged him to set this all up because I knew you wouldn't listen to him unless you had no choice. I'm sorry to put you through this, but if there was a chance that you and Drake could resolve the past, I had to do it."

Drake drew Niki closer. "I love you, Niki. I always have."

Niki turned from Chloe to stare up into Drake's eyes. She saw the truth of his words.

Gently, she touched his face. *"Drake." He'd never stopped loving her.*

And just like that—five years of suffering vanished. As if a ton of bricks had been lifted off her shoulders, she felt lighter. Freer.

Drake loved her.

Hell, he wanted to marry her.

"Does that mean yes?" he asked, with a chuckle. His eyes twinkled with hope.

"Yes," she blurted as her head nodded rapidly. "Yes." More tears fell. Then heat spread across her face like a brushfire as she remembered their audience—her lack of clothing. "Drake, I'm almost naked!" She hugged him tightly, using his body as a shield.

He laughed. "And you've never looked so beautiful."

Epilogue

"Niki, I have a surprise." Drake still couldn't believe he held Niki in his arms, in his bed. Two days had passed since their whirlwind wedding. They had just returned from Zygoman and it was time for Drake to rejoin his unit. Niki hadn't taken the news well. Hell, she was downright pissed. Even after his attempts to convince her nothing like DSQ-3 would occur again, that after the end of the year they would be together forever, she still held doubts.

And he couldn't blame her.

She snuggled closer into the curve of his body. She groaned. "I don't like surprises." Her hand reached behind her and skimmed up his thigh. His cock hardened instantly.

"I know, baby, but you'll like this one," he assured her as he ground his hips against her ass.

She turned in his arms until she was facing him and gazed suspiciously into his eyes. "What?"

"I'm being stationed on Earth. Fairbanks, Alaska. It's colder than hell, but we'll be together."

She inched out of his arms, bolting upright. Clutching the sheet to her bare breasts she repeated, "*What?*"

He grinned. "You're coming with me."

Niki threw herself into his arms, showering him with tiny kisses over his face and neck. He couldn't help the laughter that burst forth. "Then you're happy?"

She pushed him onto his back and scrambled atop him. With a little hip motion she slid over his erection, burying his cock deep inside her. Palms on his chest, she began to ride him, slowly.

“Does that answer your question, dear husband?” Her breasts swayed with her body’s sensual movements.

He reached for her nipples, rolling them between his thumb and forefingers. He thrust his hips, meeting her hot, wet core stroke for stroke.

“Come here,” he growled, pulling her to him and crushing his mouth to hers. Her lips parted, welcomed him. He drank in the moan that slipped from her. Her pussy spasmed around his cock — she was close.

He rolled her over, covering her with his body. Slipping his arms beneath her knees, he spread her wide. She clawed his back, raking her fingernails over him in slow, deep strokes. Her touch, the sound of flesh slapping flesh, pushed him closer to his own climax. As he thrust hard inside her, Niki shattered, taking him with her. Together they plunged into ecstasy, a world where two became one.

Drake had dreamed of this for five long years. Fantasized that someday Niki would be his wife — bear his children. As her warmth surrounded him, he gathered Niki into his arms and held her tightly, breathed in her scent and then kissed her with so much passion she wouldn’t dare doubt his love.

As daylight shone through a slit in the curtains, he silently prayed she was happy, because he would never — ever — let her go.

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The Game



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