



Bridget Midway

Loose Id

LOVE MY WAY

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LoSeId®

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The Loose Id

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Chapter One

In the harsh glare of the stage lights, Ananda stretched her leg behind her as she arched her back until she felt as though she would snap at any moment. Pushing her body like this shouldn't be this painful, this hard.

With delicate grace, she spun out of the move, twisting and twirling over the empty stage, keeping her gaze forward.

Smile, damn it! Sell it! Not that she could see her buyers. The dimmed lights masked whoever sat in the audience. However, she only wanted to catch the eye of one man. Eagan Morton.

As the tempo of her music sped up, so did she. Spinning on her toes, dancing her heart out until, with the organ's constant pounding, she thought she was doing just that. She controlled her muscles, making sure to make each position precise, nothing sloppy. Nice and precise.

Damn, she needed this job.

"Miss Zelder!"

The loud voice snapped Ananda out of her trance. Freezing in the middle of the stage, she noticed right away that her music had stopped. She glanced stage left and found the next auditioning dancers waiting in the wings, chewing their bottom lips as they peered out into the seats, probably to see what Ananda had been seeking since she got there.

"Why did you choose that particular song?" a female voice asked her from the darkness.

"Seemed appropriate." Ananda stood up straight and made sure to stand in a perfect first position without bending her knees. Looking the part of a dancer was just as important as the dance itself.

“Mary J. Blige’s ‘I’m Not Gon’ Cry’ hardly seems appropriate for a classic ballet style.” This time a male voice cut through.

Ananda’s heart thudded. Could that be Eagan? As the top TV, movie and any damn media he wanted, producer, she’d remembered how his voice sounded from TV interviews and his hit shows. Even through her TV at home, his deep voice vibrated through her floors and walls. The man who spoke didn’t have that kind of resonance. She still gave him her full attention.

He kept speaking. “If you wanted to dance to a hip hop song, that would have been fine with us. We’re looking for different styles of dancing, not just classical.”

“Are you saying that what I did just now wasn’t good enough?” The muscles in the back of Ananda’s neck tightened. Her shoulders made a slow trek up toward her ears. *Relax. Hear the man out at least. Don’t be so antagonistic. Not this time.*

“No, that’s not what I’m saying. Actually, I think that --”

“Thank you for coming in, Ms. Zelder,” a deep voice said, cutting off the first man.

Ananda’s stomach tightened to a ball. Her knees buckled. She recognized that voice immediately. Knowing that he watched her, *the* Eagan Morton, she brought her shoulders back and took in a deep breath. Poised. Confident.

“Next dancer, please.”

Deflated. She released a long breath.

“What?” Ananda didn’t mean for her thoughts to materialize into a shocked verbal statement. “Am I picked for the show?”

A pause lingered, before he said, “no,” in such a harsh way that it echoed in the expansive auditorium. “Next dancer, please.”

“May I ask what I did wrong, so that in future auditions I can correct whatever it is I did?”

The second pause lasted longer than the first. While she waited for an answer, Ananda chewed the soft, fleshy inside of her bottom lip. “At least, can I see your face?”

A small desk lamp clicked on from about twenty rows away from the stage. The dim light cast an eerie glow to Eagan’s face, accentuating shadows under his eyes and nose. He could make the devil shake in his hooves.

“You’re not what we’re looking for. Accept that answer and leave the stage.” The rumble of his voice roared through the Virginia Wesleyan auditorium.

A gasp from the other dancers echoed off of the high ceiling. No way would Ananda leave defeated. When the next dancer waltzed on stage, Ananda took the opportunity to execute three back flips, a feat in her ballet shoes, then did a pirouette before sauntering off stage, her way of saying “fuck you,” but with class and grace.

“Asshole,” she muttered as she snatched up her borrowed Nike gym bag.

“Cool move,” one dancer said as he stretched his leg over his head. “How did you do that on those pointes?”

Ananda plopped on the floor and snatched off her shoes. “Practice.” Her toes throbbed as soon as they were released from their pink satin prison. She could almost hear her little toes shouting a thank-you when she slipped her feet into her favorite pair of flip-flops.

She wanted to tell the guy waiting to audition that hunger was the best motivation for anything. Hunger for food. Hunger for a better life.

“Get off the stage!” screamed the man cloaked in darkness to the dancer who had come behind Ananda.

Hunger for sex.

Ananda wrung her hands. No matter how much of an asshole Eagan was, the command in his voice triggered her libido. Her nipples hardened with only the inflection of his voice. Poverty must have made her crazy.

Slipping on her sweat jacket, Ananda zipped it up to cover her body’s response.

“Man, that guy is tough.” A young, pretty blonde galloped to the backstage area where the other losers congregated to lick their wounds.

The dancer’s bottom lip poked out and her eyes rimmed with tears.

Hold it together, girl. He wants to see you cry. Another reason Ananda had chosen the unorthodox song. No matter what, good or bad, she wouldn’t allow anyone to see her cry. Not again.

“I figured if he rejected you, there would be no way I would make it.” The lithe blonde wiped her eyes. “You’re, like, way better than most people here.”

Ananda wasn’t about to refute the woman’s claim. Although she wasn’t looking to join in her pity party, Ananda wanted to see if Eagan would pick anyone today. Creeping to the curtain, she peeked at the next performer.

The woman, a little thick in the middle and legs that seemed tied down with weights, floundered all over the stage with a big grin. Most people backstage snickered at the dancer’s clumsy moves. Not Ananda. No matter how silly someone looked, it was never cool to laugh at a person’s dream.

Once the dance ended, the woman struggled to catch her breath. It was what was said next that took away Ananda’s.

“I want to see you again,” the deep voice said. “Can you prepare another routine?”

“You’ve got to be kidding me.” Ananda hoisted her bag on her shoulder. “I’m out of here. This place is a joke.”

Good thing the audition location was relatively close to her apartment. She could have taken the bus to make the five-mile trip back home. The long walk, though, would do her good, help clear her head.

As soon as her hand touched the door leading outside, she heard her name.

“Ms. Zelder! Please, wait.”

Not the voice of the mysterious Eagan Morton, but she still stopped and turned around. The man who had gotten her registration information ran toward her. Being a little shorter than her five-foot-ten height, and just about as wide around, to see him run looked painful.

“Look, I’m just trying to get home before it hits high noon and I won’t be able to stand the heat.” She clutched the thick strap to the gym bag as she faced him.

“I promise I won’t hold you up.” He extended his hand. “My name is Carter.”

Ananda hesitated before taking his hand. “I remember you from registration.”

“I must apologize for my boss, Mr. Morton.”

His boss certainly lived up to the derogatory nickname that the media and everyone else had come up for him. The man’s ego could fill a stadium and the parking lot. Ananda guessed having a personality like he had was the reason he made millions and could bark orders like a spinning class instructor.

“You can’t apologize for other people.” Ananda glanced at her watch. Coincidentally, the watch had stopped fifteen minutes ago. Even it knew that if Ananda didn’t get this job, her dancing career was over.

“I know.” He scratched his head, making his chocolate brown dreadlocks wiggle around. “I just wanted to let you know that I think you did an amazing job back there. You should have definitely been picked for Morton’s *High Stepper* show. Honestly, I think he passed you over because you look like a professional already.”

Ananda snickered. “So I’m penalized for being too good.” She shook her head. “Apologizes and praises will not pay my rent and put food on my table.” When he lowered his gaze to the floor, an instant pang of guilt struck her belly. “Thanks for the kind words. I guess I’m not what Mr. Morton is looking for today.”

“Don’t give up, though. I’m sure something else will be popping up soon.”

Unless it came in the next few minutes, Ananda was out of options, out of money and out of time.

“I still have your application. If I hear anything, would you like for me to call you?”

Ananda had been around the business long enough to know a line when it was being fed to her. At least this guy didn’t follow his offer up with, “Let me take you out to dinner to discuss your future.” That usually ended up with the guy’s hand on her knee, or worse, her ass. Then she would make sure to introduce her knee to the jerk’s family jewels. However, this guy’s kind brown eyes left her little doubt as to his intentions. He wanted to help her.

To be polite, she smiled and nodded at his inquiry. She would bet her dancing shoes that she wouldn’t be hearing from him again.

And now she had to break the news to her roommate. No show, no contract, no money, no chance.

* * * * *

“Let’s take a five minute break,” Phil said into the microphone.

Under the haze of the small desk lamp that illuminated their workspace, Eagan glared at his director as the workers and dancers milled around on the stage.

“What the hell are you doing?” Eagan snapped. “Did you forget your place here? This is *my* show. I’m running this.” He gritted his teeth so hard, he thought he would crack his molars.

“Then maybe you should get out of whatever funk you’re in and recognize crap when you see it.” In the darkness, Phil’s brown eyes looked black.

“Maybe we should take this conversation to another room.” Nina gathered the dancers’ photos and other notes in her arms and stood, waiting for Eagan to make a move.

When he glared at her, she kept her gaze down to the floor, only occasionally glancing up at him. Each time she brought her head up, she pushed her wire-rimmed glasses up her slender nose then instantly swept her fingers behind her ear to push her stringy red hair from her face. Even in the darkened theater, her pale skin accentuated her dark hair and eyebrows.

When he stood, she took a step back, allowing him room.

“Follow me.” Eagan had been given the use of a professor’s office while conducting his auditions.

Eagan’s cell phone, which Nina carried, chirped an operatic tune. She answered it on the first ring, after juggling the pictures and papers in her hands.

“Um, sir, it’s your brother.” Nina held up the phone to Eagan.

“Thanks.” He took the silver-and-black phone and closed it with a loud snap, disconnecting the call. He only hoped the hang up rang as loud in his brother’s ears as the snap did in the empty corridors.

Some wounds Eagan couldn’t repair in a day, not even in a phone call. Why couldn’t his brother and the rest of his family realize that and leave him alone?

He handed the phone back to Nina. Like ducklings, Phil and Nina followed him to the assigned room. On the way, Eagan rolled up his sleeves. His heart pounded with each step. He shouldn’t have been there that day. From his actions, his crew must have picked up on his sour mood.

When they got to the office door, Nina raced around him and opened it for the duo. She kept her gaze cast down, not letting her sky blue eyes be seen as Eagan and Phil strolled inside of the room. Then she shut the door behind herself.

“What the hell is going on with you today?” Phil slammed his folder full of papers onto the cluttered desk.

“Take that tone out of your voice, Phil.” Eagan put his fists to his hips. “You’re my director, not my equal.”

Crimson shaded Phil’s pecan-colored skin. Eagan had been friends with Phil for over seven years, since he first had him directing commercials and music videos. It was a fast hop, skip, and a jump to the two feature films Phil directed, which had collectively earned well over five hundred million dollars. Since then, Eagan struggled for another hit, any hit. Unfortunately, the media knew that and grabbed onto that story like a co-ed accepting their first cool job offer.

Phil ran his fingers through his black hair, probably the reason the man, at the young age of thirty-one, had a receding hairline.

“I thought I was your friend.” Phil leaned against the desk and crossed his feet at his ankles.

“Outside of work, you are. Here, I’m your boss. I’m the executive producer of this damn show, and if I decide to pull it, I damn sure will.”

“Fine. Pull it. At the rate you’re going, your show will be off the air before you can get the first show in the can.” Phil braced his hands on the desk. “How could you pick that horse over the gazelle?”

“What are you talking about?” Eagan knew exactly what he meant. As soon as Eagan had told the last dancer to come back, he knew his mind wasn’t in the game. With everything that had happened to him recently, how could it have been?

“You let that incredible dancer go, the one with the graceful arms, who did that thing with her leg.” At a diminutive height of about five-foot-nothing, Phil attempted that same dance move, albeit in an awkward fashion, kicking his leg back until the man almost knocked over a floor lamp and a plant.

The dancer, that woman, Eagan knew exactly who Phil was talking about. Long, caramel-colored legs, high, rounded ass, full lips, and hair she kept in a ponytail. A beautiful Nubian goddess. He wondered what it would look like when it was all down and around her face, and over his body, and brushing his genitals.

“Perfect arabesque.” Eagan thought fondly of the woman. He allowed a slight smile to creep up at the corner of his mouth, something he hoped neither Phil nor Nina caught.

“What?” Nina craned her head toward him to catch what he’d whispered.

“The move. It’s called an arabesque.” And Ananda had executed it perfectly. He even knew her name.

“You do remember her.” Phil pointed to Eagan and his eyes widened. “I thought you barely looked at her before you gave her the boot. She was good. Damn good.”

“That’s right. She was good.” Trying to remain in control, Eagan took a seat behind the desk, forcing Phil to stand and make his way to a chair across from him. “She was too good. The show is supposed to be about amateurs dancing with professionals, not semi-pros dancing with pros.”

“So is that why you wanted to see the last girl again?” Nina asked.

“No.” Eagan brushed his pant leg. “I wanted to see her again because I wasn’t paying attention and I made the offer before I thought about it.”

Yes, that reason sounded plausible. If only Eagan could convince himself that the first woman’s look didn’t matter, he would be okay.

“So you are preoccupied today. Man, let’s just wrap this up and go home. We can finish the auditions another day.”

“No, I have to finish this. Besides, there’s nothing for me at home.” Eagan swiveled the chair around to look out of the window.

College students crawled over the campus. Ophelia was about their age. Young. Too fucking young. So much for the young being trainable.

“What are you talking about?” Nina asked.

Eagan kept his back to the duo. The news would have come out sooner or later. He was just hoping for later than sooner.

“About a month ago, I released Ophelia.” He didn’t have to look at his two closest friends to know they knew what he was talking about.

“Oh, God!” Nina gasped, then ran around the desk.

His hand in the air halted her. The last thing Eagan needed was a sympathy hug or gesture. Ophelia had been special. She’d been the perfect submissive. Attentive. Open. Willing.

He would get over her. He would have to.

“Ophelia? You mean Ophelia, Ophelia?” Phil’s small face squished into a ball as he contemplated who she was and why she would be important to Eagan. Within a matter of seconds, Phil’s face relaxed and he shook his head. “Your sex slave?”

“Submissive. Don’t call her a sex slave.” Eagan wasn’t defending Ophelia. He defended the Lifestyle and terminology.

For him, being a dominant wasn’t all about sex. Hell, Ophelia even did that well. Being a dominant meant he had control, control over his life, another’s and his world. Somehow his Lifestyle and his life weren’t mirroring each other. Control slipped through his fingers. He had to find a way to gain it all back.

“No wonder you’re so upset.” Nina kept her arms wrapped around her body.

Eagan could feel her anticipation. She wanted so much to hug and hold him. Not now. He didn’t need anyone showing any type of affection.

“I’m not upset.” He stared pointedly at Nina. “She wanted to go and explore the world. Her heart wasn’t into the Lifestyle anymore. I’m better off without her.”

“Bullshit.” Phil slapped his hand on Eagan’s shoulder. “I don’t really understand all of this ABCD stuff --”

“That’s BDSM,” Eagan said, cutting his friend off. Then he brushed Phil’s hand from his shoulder.

“Whatever. I just know that you cared a great deal for her. Sorry it didn’t work out.”

Eagan jerked to his feet. “Like I said. It was for the best.”

“I’m sorry, sir.” This time Nina managed to touch his arm as he passed her. “I say we stop auditions for today and go home. Would you like for me to come over, Mr. Morton?”

Eagan shook his head. “Not tonight. Just not in the mood.”

As tempting as the offer was, Eagan didn’t want to get Nina’s hopes up. He’d trained her a little when her curiosity got the better of her. Even played with her on occasion. He could tell right away she wanted something permanent. As nice and as beautiful as she was, she wasn’t for him.

A submissive who acted submissive didn’t appeal to him. His desired submissive would have to have a mind of her own, and know her limits and want to push them. With Nina, although she had been more than willing to please him, she also didn’t express her feelings, even after Eagan pressed her before, during, and after play. He didn’t want to collar her like he wanted to with Ophelia.

“Let’s just get back to work. No use wondering about my relationship woes.” Eagan headed to the door with Nina close behind him to open it for him.

“Hey, wait. I have an idea.” A grin as big as the school’s campus covered Phil’s face.

“This had better be good.” Eagan halted in his tracks, turned to him, and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Reality shows are all the rage now. *Date My Dad*, *Date My Mom*, *The Bachelor*. Hell, even that 80’s rapper has his own show. Um, *Taste of Love* or is it *Spice of Love*? I don’t remember. You get where I’m going with this?” With a far away look in his eyes, Phil strolled around the office.

Eagan shook his head.

“We can do a reality show with you where you find your perfect sex slave.” He held out his arms like one of those game show beauties showing off a car or a refrigerator.

“Submissive,” Eagan corrected. A sex slave was what Nina wanted to be and he wanted no parts of that.

Eagan waited to see if Phil would start laughing at any moment. What was Phil thinking?

“You’re joking, right?” Eagan reached for the door, but Phil quickly slithered his way in between him and the door.

“It could be the hottest thing on the planet.” Phil braced his hands on Eagan’s shoulders. “It’s not like the whole world doesn’t know about you and your Lifestyle anyway since you admitted it on that hour-long interview special.”

“The reporter asked. I answered.” Eagan felt no need to hide his true self from anyone.

Of course, coming out on national television to say that he had women strung up in his dungeon and he spanked them with paddles on a regular basis didn’t garner him a lot of female fans. Feminist attorney, Judith McCLOWAN, wanted his head on a platter. Most women and some men wanted his head on a platter. Some didn’t understand him. The rest wanted to be the next submissive.

He suspected that his chosen Lifestyle was why the numbers for each of his projects were plummeting. The Nielsen ratings for all of his shows couldn’t beat out rerun shows for other reality TV shows. The box office takes for his movies went from blockbuster to just above tanking. All of his projects were sure-fire winners. He didn’t understand how the public’s perception had shifted.

He did know this: He needed a hit and he needed it in the worst way. A fresh take on the old reality TV show market could boost his popularity again.

Picking someone to fill Ophelia’s spot couldn’t just occur on some cheesy reality TV show. It had taken months for Eagan to get Ophelia to trust him, and even longer to train her. A special bond like that couldn’t just happen over a two-month period in front of cameras.

“Since everyone knows that when you’re not directing Emmy-winning shows, you’re Master Eagan in your off time, I say we put on a show to find your next submissive.” Phil rubbed his hands together in a sinister fashion. If the man wasn’t wearing Dockers, an R.E.M. T-shirt, and loafers, the look may have worked.

“I don’t know,” Nina piped in. “Sounds awfully risky to me. What if you get weirdos or some woman trying to prove something to you or try to change *you*?”

“That will never happen.” Eagan crossed his arms over his chest.

“Dude, this could work.” Phil headed to the desk where he grabbed a pad and pen.

“It couldn’t, and I don’t want it to work even if it could. Finding a submissive or any romantic partner is not as simple as television makes it seem. There’s a lot of thought involved. You have to build trust. You have to get to know the person gradually. I can’t do that in a matter of weeks.”

“I’m thinking nine to ten weeks. Sound good?” Phil scribbled some notes on the pad.

“You’re not even listening to me.” The idea sounded ludicrous; Eagan paced the floor to hear more, just to be sure it was as crazy as it sounded.

“Where would I find the women to be on this show?” Eagan glanced at Phil as he marched back and forth.

“Let them be a mixed group. We’ll get half of the women from real TCB dungeons.”

“BDSM,” Eagan said with a heavy sigh. Next time his friend screwed up the name, Eagan would get a yard stick and discipline him like he would any of his submissives.

“Whatever. And the other half can be ordinary women who never thought about doing the Lifestyle, but are very interested in it.”

“And where would you find them?” Nina asked. She split her attention between Phil and Eagan.

“Around. I’m sure we could find five or six hot chicks willing to do this show. Do you see the crap people eat on that survival show and that other TV show that pushes contestants to conquer their fears? A little spanking should be nothing.”

“That’s not all I do.” Eagan planted his hands on his hips and glared at this idea man.

“Good. Whatever it is you do in your special dungeon, you can do each show to eliminate the women one by one.”

“Anything? We’re talking paddles, canes, wax play, electric play, nipple clamps.”

At the mention of the last item, Nina sucked air between her teeth. Her body recoiled in response as though he had put the clamps on her just now.

Knowing that Nina still responded to the toys accelerated Eagan’s pulse. He glanced at his watch. Maybe he did have some time after the audition to unwind a bit.

“No actresses.” Strolling back to the desk, Eagan assumed the chair behind the desk again. “I don’t want anyone doing this to get a fucking part in one of my shows or movies. And I definitely don’t want someone faking her emotions as some sort of exercise. This is my life. I take this Lifestyle and my involvement in it very seriously.”

“Okay.” Phil scratched through something he’d written on his pad.

“Wait, wait, wait.” Waving his hands in the air, a crucial thought hit Eagan. “What network would air this? There’s no way in hell any network would broadcast me stringing up half-naked women and deciding which one would be the right submissive.”

“Hmm, good point.” As usual, Phil drummed his pen against the pad of paper.

“Phil.” It was all Eagan had to say to get his friend to stop his nervous habit.

“Sorry.” Phil stood up straighter. “Hey, I’m not your submissive. You can’t tell me what to do.”

“And yet you stopped.” The power to control tickled Eagan’s insides.

“You’re good, man.” Phil took one stroll around the room before stopping in the center. “Hey, doesn’t Skintastic owe you a huge favor for fucking up your broadcast of the *Satellite Excellence Award* show?”

“That’s Cine-tastic.”

“Whatever. As much soft-core porn as they show, that’s what they should be named.”

“And yes, they do owe me for cutting out the audio in the last hour of that live show.” Thinking about it, even two years later, made Eagan tighten his jaw.

Something in what Eagan said made Phil smile, laugh and jump around with joy. “You are a freakin’ genius!”

“I know that.” Eagan smirked. “But what for this time?”

“That’s how we’ll pitch it. The show will be completely live. That’ll cut down on production time. Skintastic is just doing reruns of that mobster show now. Plus, they do that show called *Limousine Loving* where couples have sex in a limo. And they’ve aired that stripper show called *The Pole*. I don’t think a BDSM show will throw off their programming.”

“At least you got the name of my Lifestyle correct this time.” So much for having to resort to the yardstick. “The show couldn’t all be live, though.”

Phil furrowed his bushy eyebrows. “Why not?”

“There’s no way I can adequately play with twelve women within an hour. The first show can definitely be live.”

“And the last show.” Phil quickly added.

“Of course. The grand finale. That would have to be live.”

“Everything else, we can tape a show per week and edit. Yeah, that would make sense. It’ll be hard as hell, but it can work. I’m sure you have a ton of set up for each one of your,” Phil waved his hand in the air, searching for the right words, “events.”

“Play. We call it playing.”

“Whatever. I would never let my kids play the way you do.”

Eagan chuckled. “Okay, so let’s pretend I’m a network executive.” To punctuate his point, Eagan leaned back in a swivel chair and rocked back and forth. “Sell me on this show idea. Right now, I’m not feeling it.”

“Fine.” Phil set the pad and pen on the desk and rolled up his sleeves. “Picture this. Twelve women come to your mansion in Virginia Beach and stay with you for nine to ten weeks.”

“All twelve the entire time?” Nina didn’t speak up much, but when she had something to say, she piped in very quickly.

“No, of course not. Every show, Master E. will eliminate one potential submissive. Just like on every other reality show, they’ll go through a reward challenge and a test to stay in the house.”

“Who sets up these challenges?” Eagan asked.

“You would.”

Eagan cocked his eyebrow. “I’m TV exec right now, remember?”

Rolling his eyes, Phil corrected himself. "Fine. Eagan Morton would. Since he's most familiar with the Lifestyle and what tests he would want the women to endure, he would be the best one to make that call."

"Fine." He nodded.

"And we'll get twelve of the most gorgeous women you've ever seen."

Eagan waved his hand in the air. "I don't base my decision on looks."

"Really? I've seen some hot women on your arm. And Ophelia was the sexiest woman on two feet. What was she? Part black and part Japanese?"

"Half Filipino," Eagan glanced at his friend, who suddenly got a smug expression on his face, as though he were Ophelia's father, "and half African-American."

"I knew she had to be part Filipino. She was gorgeous."

"Anyway, I want all of the women to be hooded from the time they walk through the door to the time they're eliminated. At that point, then they can remove their masks."

"Ohh, element of surprise. I like that."

It may have sounded like an element of surprise to Phil. To Eagan it was a way of life. He never judged a woman by her appearance. He only looked at her by the way she carried herself. Tall, short, slender, or voluptuous. Size, shape, race, and age didn't matter to him. As long as she had confidence in herself, he could accept her as his submissive.

"Any other requests?" Phil asked.

"Are you asking me as Cine-tastic exec or as the Master?" He stared pointedly at his director.

"The Master, of course."

Eagan thought for a bit. The longer Phil talked, the more he could see himself actually going through this idea, that's if they could get it past the network.

"What prize would the one lucky submissive get?"

"Well, for one, they would be your submissive."

"For how long?"

Phil furrowed his eyebrows. "Isn't this sort of a lifetime deal?"

"It could be. But if we find we're not really compatible, she needs an easy out plan, and so do I. How about a year with me unless otherwise agreed upon between the two of us?"

Nina sighed.

"A year in your home? Sounds like a good deal to me."

"Plus, she would get jewels and trips. All of that could be worked out later." Eagan waved his hands in the air, hating fussing over the petty details. "And another thing. Each woman would have to be collared when they step into my house. I will own them and I will release them. And they cannot be collared by anyone else while in my home."

“I don’t know what all of that means, but I’ll make sure of that.”

“I have a friend who owns a club. I’ll get him to pick out six women for me.”

“Cool.”

“So what about the other six women?” Nina asked.

A knock on the door stopped the brainstorming session.

“Enter,” Eagan called through the door.

Carter, one of Eagan’s assistants, poked his head through the opened door. “Are we going to keep going with auditions or stop for today?”

Phil glanced at Eagan. “Well?”

“Give us five more minutes,” Eagan said. Just as Carter ducked his head back, Eagan called for him again. “I’m going to be putting together another reality show. Do you think you can find six women who aren’t skittish about nudity and who aren’t actresses?”

“Um, that’s a pretty tall order, but I’ll try.” Carter scratched his head. “What kind of show is it?”

“A reality show about a Dominant looking for a submissive,” Phil said.

Carter volleyed his gaze from Phil to Nina to Eagan, then back on Phil again. “I guess.”

“Don’t guess. Do it or don’t do it.” Eagan rose from his seat.

“Yes, sir.”

Eagan waved to Carter to leave. “Give us a minute and we’ll be right out.”

Carter shut the door on the trio.

“Hey, what are you all planning to call this show?” Nina asked as she gathered the photos and notes in her arms again.

“I was thinking *Controlled Environment*. How do you like that?” Phil clapped his hands in happiness.

“I don’t. It’s not very sexy or enticing. It sounds like a medical show or something that should be on The Learning Channel.” Eagan crossed his arms and stared out into the crowd of people below walking by them.

“What about *The Eagan Morton Show*?”

Eagan didn’t even have to look at his friend for Phil to know that he hated that show name. His hunched shoulders spoke volumes.

“Fine,” Phil said.

As Eagan stared at each young woman walking by, he wondered what they were really like behind closed doors. What did they really want? Their reactions fueled him.

“I got it,” Eagan said, still facing the window. “*Love My Way*.”

“Perfect.”

Yes, Eagan’s next woman would be just that. Perfect.

Chapter Two

“I didn’t get the fucking job.” Ananda slammed the door to the motel room she shared with her best friend, Darnell.

“Shh!” Rushing out to her, wearing jeans hung low on his waist and a silk ocean-blue button-up shirt that matched the contact lenses in his eyes, he raised his hands like a father trying to hush a screaming baby.

“You know I’m a fucking great dancer!” She threw her bag on the floor and stomped to the kitchenette.

“And now, so does the whole building.” Darnell sashayed behind her and leaned against the counter. It squeaked under his weight.

“I don’t fucking care!” She snatched her day-old cup of lemon soda she’d gotten from a burger joint up the street. The flat drink didn’t tempt her tongue, but the cold liquid cooled her after her long walk.

“Hmm, three fucks and no cigarette.”

“Funny.” She set the cup on the counter. “And why are you trying to shush me? As loud as these crackheads are around us, people will just think we’re arguing over who gets the last rock.”

“Or it’ll get Kerriman’s attention.”

As though he cued it, a hard rap pounded on the door. Like deer caught in a set of headlights, Ananda and Darnell stood still.

“Shit,” Ananda whispered.

“Oh, now you want to be quiet.” Darnell waved his long index finger in front of her face and shook his head. If he wasn’t a brotha on the outside, Darnell could have passed for a pretty good sista.

“Open the door! I know you’re in there!” Kerriman screamed through the door.

“We’re fast and strong,” Ananda began. “We can run past him.”

“Hmph.” Darnell smoothed his hand back through his cornrows. “I ain’t running from nobody. He can kiss the fat part of my ass.” He headed to the door.

“Yeah, like you have that.”

“Whatever. Let me handle my business.” Darnell opened the door and leaned against it. “Yes?”

“Room rental. Today. Now.” Under the hot summer sun, Kerriman’s dark skin glistened with sweat.

Darnell crossed his thin arms over his chest while Ananda stood next to the refrigerator, which was making a strange grinding noise.

“The day ain’t over. I got until midnight, right?” Despite the heat and the fact that their air conditioning window unit had been stolen a couple of days ago, Darnell didn’t sweat. His beautiful bronze skin glowed despite being confronted by a bulldog in overalls.

“Five. Don’t be late or it’ll be your ass.”

“Oh, I didn’t know you swung that way.”

Ananda imagined that he had winked at their testy landlord before the man walked off in a huff.

“Bitch!” Darnell slammed the door and turned back to Ananda. “Come on, Bunny. Grab your shit. Let’s bounce.”

“And go where? We have two pennies to rub between us. I’ll be happy if that fried chicken place calls me for a job.”

“Oh, hell no! You are the best damn dancer in the world. You are going to get a job.” Darnell grabbed Ananda’s shoulders and stared into her eyes. “And Ego Morton, that crackhead landlord, or nobody else is going to tell you differently.” He kissed her forehead. “Besides, I’ve been bragging to my girls that you’re going to be a star and it’s all because of me. Don’t make me come off as a liar.”

Darnell. If it hadn’t been for him, Ananda would have given up a long time ago. She touched his cheek.

“Now come on, girl. Go get your stuff and crawl out the back window with some dignity and class.” He jutted his chin out, but instead of it looking dignified, the gesture made Ananda laugh.

“Fine. I’ll just pack my --” The ringing phone interrupted her.

“You think it’s Kerriman?” Ananda asked.

“Why the hell would he call when he was just over here?” Darnell’s eyes got wide. “Maybe it’s a job. Maybe Ego realized what he let slip away and he wants you to come back.”

“And maybe donkeys can fly.”

“Why not? Unicorns can fly.” Darnell strolled to the phone.

“Unicorns aren’t real.”

“In my world, they are. And this could be a real job, so pick it up.”

Ananda stared at the phone sitting on a rickety end table when it rang for the third time.

“Oh hell.” Darnell snatched the receiver from its cradle. “Hello.”

Ananda chewed the skin next to her thumbnail until Darnell pulled her hand away from her mouth and held it.

“Uh huh.” Darnell glanced at Ananda. “Yeah, she’s here. Who’s this?”

“Darnell,” Ananda said between gritted teeth.

“Carter?”

At the mention of Eagan’s assistant’s name, Ananda yanked the phone out of Darnell’s hand.

“Hi, uh, hello, yes, um, this is Ananda Zelder.” She smoothed her hand over her hair as though the man could see her through the phone.

“I told you I would contact you when I heard about work.”

She could hear Carter smiling through the phone. Ananda hoped he couldn’t hear her heart pounding.

“Yes, you did. So Mr. Morton changed his mind?” She glanced at Darnell, who gave her a thumbs-up sign.

“In a manner of speaking, yes, he has. I have a wonderful opportunity for you. If you’re up for it, you would have to start training and researching immediately.”

At the sound of research, she furrowed her eyebrows. “Research? What do you mean? He wants different styles of dancing? I’m adaptable. I can pick up anything.”

“You’ll need that skill for this venture.”

“So what all is involved?”

“The great news is that you’ll stay in a mansion for the duration of the show.”

“A mansion?” With her mouth gaped open, she stared at Darnell.

Her best friend did a silent scream, holding his mouth open and jumping around like a pogo stick.

“Yes, Eagan Morton’s mansion to be exact, you and eleven other women.”

“Women? Only women are dancing in this show?”

Carter cleared his throat. At that sound, a shiver went up Ananda’s spine.

“What I’m casting for is not for the *High Stepper* show. It’s a new show, a reality show around Eagan Morton.”

A pregnant pause lingered before Ananda put two and two together.

“He’s looking for a date? Are you kidding me?”

“Actually, it’s a little more involved than that. But before I get into that, let me tell you about what you’ll get during the show and what you’ll get if you choose to win.”

She found it odd that Carter would use that phrasing to talk about her chances in a reality show. The more he talked, the more she wanted to hang up on him and high-tail it back to her home in Williamston, North Carolina.

“All of the ladies will stay in the mansion equipped with drivers and a chef. A new wardrobe will be given to each woman.”

Ananda’s heart pumped at the items she would be getting. This couldn’t be real.

“The show is like a *Bachelor* type show. You will be competing for Mr. Morton’s affections.”

“Well, then I’ll be kicked out the first round. For one thing, I think he’s an arrogant bastard. And I’m sure he’ll remember me from the audition. I probably won’t even make it into the house.” She chewed on her thumb again.

This time instead of stopping her, Darnell packed their bags.

“No worries. Each woman will be outfitted with a hood.”

“A what? Hood?”

“Well, maybe a mask of sorts. Mr. Morton does not want looks to influence his decisions.”

“I don’t want this man’s affections. Why would I want to be a part of this show?”

“You could promote your dancing and get tons of work from the exposure. Plus, as I alluded to before, you can last in this competition for as long as you like. Want to leave out of the first round? Do something to get disqualified like admit you’re an actress. He is adamant that he wants no actresses. My suggestion is that you do everything you can to hang in the game until you reach the top three or four. Then, start pulling back so that you can be eliminated. Or maybe you want to win.”

“And why would I want to do that?”

“To give him the treatment he gave you at the auditions. Win, then dump his ass right on TV. Revenge is a dish best served cold.”

Ananda wasn’t a vindictive person, but the lure of exacting revenge on the asshole who refused to recognize her talents did skip through her thoughts.

“I don’t know. That’s really not my style.”

“Okay, let me tell you the prizes. You’ll get trips, a car with a driver, your own American Express Black Card.”

Ananda blinked. “An Am Ex Black Card? What’s that?”

Darnell must have known. He dropped his bags and fell to the floor in one of his classic over-the-top faints. Ananda turned her back on him.

“It’s one of their most prestigious cards. You would be expected to dress a certain way and keep Mr. Morton happy. You would also be getting jewelry, a cash prize, and you would stay in the mansion for at least one year, even if it doesn’t work out.”

“How much is the cash prize?”

“Last I heard, it was up to five million dollars.”

“Five mil --” Ananda stopped herself. Her dear friend had just lifted himself from the floor. News that she could win that much cash would make him drop to the floor and twitch with convulsions.

“All of that to be his girlfriend?”

Carter cleared his throat again. Ananda sat on the edge of the ratty sofa.

“You would be more than just his girlfriend. I don’t know if you’re aware of this or not. Mr. Morton is involved in a different kind of lifestyle.”

“What kind is that?”

“Ever heard of BDSM? Bondage and discipline?”

Ananda’s throat went dry like Carter had opened her mouth and dropped a ton of sand into it.

“My God. He’s looking for a sex slave? They’re going to air something like that on national TV?”

“No, of course not. On premium cable.”

No way could Ananda bow down to any man, especially not to Eagan Morton. Her mother would kill her, not to mention what it would do to her dignity and pride.

“Thanks, but no thanks.” She was about to hang up the phone when Carter spoke again.

“Room and board paid for. You’ll be living in the lap of luxury. You can jumpstart your career finally and get the man that could make something happen for you to help you. Eagan is looking for a true submissive. I’d say play along, and then when you get toward the end, let your true self come out. No harm. No foul. If you don’t want to do it for revenge, at least think about your career. There’s nothing to lose.”

Except for her self-respect, her morals, her lunch, if she looked at Ego at all.

“I’d like to think this over.”

“I need an answer today. They’re hoping to have this show on the air within a month. By the way, the first and last shows will be completely live.”

She gazed at her best friend. “I have a roommate and we split the rent.” When they paid rent. “I can’t just leave him in the lurch.”

“How much is your part of the rent, Ms. Zelder? We’d be willing to pay your portion of the rent for the next four months while you prepare and live in the mansion.”

“Actually, he’s in between jobs, so I’ve been paying the full rent.” Ananda stomped on a roach crawling by her foot.

“Just get us your lease information and we’ll take care of the rest. So, are you in?”

The offer proved too tempting to pass up. She could live high on the hog pretending to be one of the women vying for Ego’s affection. Darnell would be taken care of, at least for the next four months. She could make this work to her advantage.

“Where do I sign, Carter?”

“That’s the spirit. Oh, by the way. You don’t have a problem with nudity, do you?”

“Seeing it? No, no problem at all.”

“Okay, how about being nude and on camera?”

She swallowed hard. Ego had damn well better be worth it.

* * * * *

Eagan paid no attention to the dancers leaving the audition, waiting to come back when his head was more into the game. Right now, he would take Phil’s advice. He would go home, crack open a bottle of his best wine and listen to some music to wind down.

“Do you have everything?” Nina asked as she hoisted a box full of eight-by-ten glossy headshots.

As he stared at her, he snapped back to his old self. Wine and music? What the hell? That wasn’t how Eagan wound down from a hard day.

“I have everything here.” He watched Nina juggle the position of the box with her knee.

“I have the car ready for you, Mr. Morton.” Richard, his driver, stood dutifully by the backdoor where Eagan would make his exit.

“Richard, take the box from Nina.”

“I’m fine. Really. I just needed to adjust the box in my grip.” Before she could finish her argument, Richard took the box from her and headed to the car.

Not caring if Richard heard him or not, Eagan grabbed Nina’s arm, then leaned down to her ear. “I’ve changed my mind.”

It was all he needed to say for Nina to melt. He had to hold onto her other elbow to steady her.

To solidify his vague statement, he concluded with, “I want to play tonight.”

She stared at him. The tear that crested on her lower lid forced him to look away. Eagan wouldn’t be playing with her mind, just her body. At least that was what he convinced himself that’s what he would do.

“Follow me home.” He hustled to his car without waiting for her.

A few photographers snapped his picture. Thank goodness he hadn't made the offer to have Nina ride with him. As open as he was with his lifestyle, his personal life wasn't open for discussion. The last thing he needed was speculation that he was dating someone.

As his limo motored down to his home in Bay Colony, Eagan called the guard at the gate to let him know that the late-model silver Honda following his limo was okay to proceed behind him through the gate.

After disconnecting the call, he slid the sleek phone into his front pocket. He took in a deep breath. Forget new-car smell. The inside of Eagan's limo had a scent of evergreen trees. The familiar aroma relaxed him, slowing his breathing rate and allowing his hunched shoulders to drop.

As he got closer to his house, his heart pounded. He wrung his hands together.

"Shit, get it together, man."

It had been a while since he'd played with someone. Could he be the same man he once was before Ophelia?

Even before releasing Ophelia, they hadn't played in several months. He'd blamed it on his busy schedule. What was happening to him? Where had his edge gone? Used to be, he made time to play.

What the hell was he thinking? He hadn't lost his edge. He would prove that tonight. In front of his house, Richard parked then swiftly opened Eagan's door. Eagan stepped out, and as soon as he was four feet from his front door, it opened.

"Welcome home, Master Eagan." Apple, as Eagan so named her, opened the door.

As usual, he kissed her on her lips upon the welcome. Wearing her traditional garb of a white, transparent shift with his black, thin leather strap collar around her neck and a chastity belt protecting her genitalia, she looked comfortable and serene. It had taken him a long time to get the blonde beauty to the point where she didn't hide her voluptuous frame behind the door when she opened it for him.

Tonight, she even wore her hair the way he liked it, down with large waves like Veronica Lake. Her pink nipples stood erect, evident visually through her dress. He noticed that her body always reacted that way when he stepped into the room. Out of his three slaves, Apple was his most trusted one, and, at five years, the one who had been with him the longest.

"I'll be in the dungeon tonight," he said as he strolled by her. "Please prepare my canes." He hit the first landing of his expansive stairwell and stopped. "And my whips."

"Yes, sir."

He listened to Apple's bare feet smacking against the marble floor as she headed to his dungeon area, which, actually, since his house sat by the water, was on the second floor. He wanted to make sure that if the house flooded, his precious toys would be protected.

When his front door opened, he continued up the stairs without turning around. Nina knew her way to the dungeon. She knew what to do.

Stepping onto the second floor of his home, he met with Willow, who dutifully waited for him by his office.

“Good evening, Master Eagan.” She bowed her head. Dressed in a similar outfit to Apple, the petite Asian woman kept her hands clasped behind her back.

Eagan stood in front of her and stared into her brown eyes. “Relax.”

As she released her breath, she unclasped her hands and let them dangle at her sides. Willow was his newest slave. Although she seemed tense at times, she was devoted. He kissed her and patted her head to calm her.

Her perky nipples jutted forward. They didn’t harden like Apple’s had whenever he entered the room. It didn’t take away from their beauty, either. The hall light reflected off of the Master lock on her chastity belt. Only Eagan held the keys.

“Any messages?” he asked Willow, before heading to his bedroom on the third floor.

“I left a stack on your desk. Your brother and mother called.”

Eagan nodded, but didn’t verbally respond. What could he say? He didn’t want to admit that talking to his family ranked in the same category as having all of his teeth pulled with rusty pliers. Since his father’s death, he found it hard to deal with the rest of his family. It was his father that normally smoothed things out between Eagan, his mother, and brother. Now, his glue was gone and Eagan had fallen apart.

“Um ...” Willow paused and glanced down.

“What?” Eagan turned back to her.

“There’s a particularly long message from Dris Markham on your voicemail.”

Eagan felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. “And?” As though he had to ask. The rumor around Tinsel Town was that Dris was unhappy with working in an Eagan Morton production and wanted out. The overpaid, overly-hyped actor claimed that Eagan was all washed up and needed to get out of the movie and TV biz as soon as possible. At least, that’s what Eagan had heard from his manager.

“What did he say? I don’t have time to listen to his message right now.”

“Well, he didn’t sound happy, although I’m not sure why.” She tucked her straight black hair behind her ears. “You’re the greatest person to be around and work for. I can’t imagine that anyone would want to --”

“Willow. Time, please.”

The young woman meant well. Sometimes Eagan had to reel her in on her tangents.

“Yes, right. He wants out of the movie *Infinity*. He said he didn’t like the director and the props are all breaking, so he’s questioning the production value.”

Eagan gritted his teeth, then relaxed his jaw enough to speak. "I guess I'll just have to find another lead actor for the movie."

Yeah, like it would be that easy and simple. *He*, personally, had called Dris's agent to convince the blockbuster actor to take the part.

Moviegoers weren't attracted to strong storylines any more. They wanted a name. Now, he would have to go back to square one. Eagan started back up the stairs again, his fists clenched.

"He also called you a B-movie producer," Willow said.

That statement froze him in his tracks. "I'll call him after I'm done downstairs."

He wished he hadn't gotten news like that before playing with Nina. His head throbbed each time he thought about Dris badmouthing him all over Hollywood. It was a good thing he lived in Virginia, across country from the hustle and bustle of the business. If he were there, he would confront Dris, which wouldn't be a good thing. He didn't need another lawsuit against him.

At the third floor level, Aspen stood dutifully by his bedroom door.

"Welcome home, Master Eagan."

Like the others, he kissed her. He stepped through his bedroom door after she opened it. "I'm playing with someone tonight. I'm going to shower and change before I go back downstairs."

"Yes, sir." Also in the similar looking outfit as the other two young women, Aspen, in her early forties, was the oldest of the three women and had been with him for a little over three years. In her short, shag haircut and her lithe body, she could have passed for twenty-five.

He heard her start the shower in his bathroom. Then she emerged and stood next to his wingback chair until he sat down. Once seated, she crouched down at his feet and removed his shoes and socks, stowing them in their proper places after removal. Then, he stood. As trained, she took off his shirt first, then his pants. Clad in only silk boxers, he waited as she slipped off her whisper of a dress. Grabbing the elastic waistband of his shorts, she pulled them down.

Only after Eagan nodded in approval, did she stand by the door of his bathroom to wait for him. He loved seeing the contrast of the black leather chastity belt and collar against Aspen's pale, white skin.

Ducking her hand under the streaming water, she tested the temperature then got into the stall. He loved that even after the bullshit of the day, his home still was his sanctuary. Things ran like clockwork there. Pretty soon though, with camera crews, directors, a host and twelve strange women, his home would quickly turn into a zoo. Why the hell had he agreed to the show? Dris popped into his head and Eagan remembered. He had to get his name out there again. He had to be number one.

“Ready, sir?” Aspen asked.

He ducked under the large showerhead over their heads and allowed the horrors of the day to wash down the drain. He didn’t flinch when he felt Aspen’s hands on his back, rubbing a musky-smelling body wash over his skin. Her slender, yet strong, fingers and hands grazed over his shoulders and down his arms. As though on a mission, she quickly moved to the front of his body and washed his chest.

Eagan closed his eyes, leaned his head back and let the water pelt his face. The feeling, oddly enough, calmed him. It wasn’t until Aspen wrapped her fingers around his shaft that he snapped to attention.

Grabbing her wrist, he said, “No, not tonight. I’ll do that.”

She blinked and nodded without asking for further explanation. He just wasn’t in the mood to be touched so intimately. Not just yet. With Aspen, though, it wouldn’t have been sexual or intimate.

Eagan never had penetrative sex with his slaves. They gave him their loyalty and trust, and, in return, he gave them shelter and a purpose. They loved to serve and he more than enjoyed being attended.

Aspen lowered herself to the shower stall floor and washed his legs and feet. As she hunched over, he spied the bones of her spine going down her back. Her ribcage, evident through her skin, moved up and down with each of her breaths.

“How’s your diet, Aspen?” he asked, knowing full well how she would answer.

She paused for a moment, then continued cleaning his lower half. “It’s going well, sir. Thank you for asking.”

Eagan knew she was lying to him. He had given her a specific diet to help bulk her up in a healthy way. Actually, all her diet consisted of was what a normal diet should be, fruits, vegetable, grains, dairy, meat, fish.

A couple of months ago, he noticed a dramatic drop in Aspen’s weight. He’d addressed his concerns then, however, a month later he released Ophelia and he’d forgotten everything else around him. He had to get his head back into the game. Aspen, Apple, and Willow were his family. He had to take care of them.

“I’m asking because I can see your ribs. I can’t have you as a slave if you’re too sick to fulfill your duties.”

Aspen gazed up at him, occasionally blinking when water got into her eyes. “I’m fine. Really. I promise. I’ve just been working out more, trying to keep up my endurance. I swim and jog a lot.”

“You would tell me if something was wrong, right?”

She nodded.

“I trust you and believe you. You know I don’t tolerate people around me who lie.” He watched her swallow hard and nod again. “Dry yourself off and wait outside, please.”

She kissed the top of his foot and the back of his hand before exiting the stall. Eagan wanted to believe she was telling him the truth. Reading her body language, he knew she was hiding something from him. He hoped his instincts were wrong.

Another five minutes in the shower alone let him clear his head. As he dressed in simple pajama bottoms and slipped on a pair of leather slides, he thought about what must be going through Nina's head right about now. He'd left her alone in his dungeon for well over thirty minutes.

Eagan strolled to the second level and went through a back hallway to get to his special spot. Before going inside, he watched Nina through a two-way mirror. She sauntered around the room, running her fingers over his instruments. Reaching for the first whip he ever owned and used, she stopped. Nina stroked her fingers down the shaft of the handle as though she imagined stroking Eagan's cock. When she attempted to pick it up, he decided to make his presence known.

"Were you bored waiting for me?" he asked as he strolled through the door.

Nina jumped back from the table. "No, sir. Never."

He stalked her, circling her as she stood planted in one spot by his table. When he felt he should start, he stood in front of her, staring into her eyes. He caught a mixture of excitement and fear. They hadn't played in over a year. Perhaps she thought he no longer had the skill or talent to send her body careening into that heightened pleasure spot that he'd sent her to time and time again.

Eagan glanced to his right, which prompted Nina to do the same. She gasped at what she saw.

"You remember the cross." He ran his fingers over the whips and canes laid out on a table. "Get undressed and face the cross."

Without question, Nina disrobed, placing her clothes on a nearby chair.

"You've already forgotten where your clothes go?" Eagan placed his hand on the whip.

Her mouth twitched as she giggled. "It has been a long time." She picked up her top and jeans. In haste, she went to the assigned wardrobe, where wooden hangers hung on a metal rod. She placed her clothes on the hangers, put her shoes and socks on the floor of the unit and then took off her bra and panties.

She whirled around and stared pointedly at Eagan, as though expecting a response. Her body hadn't changed since the last time he'd seen it. Dark pink nipples capped her small breasts. Her tiny waist nearly matched in width her slender hips. He could tell she jogged daily. Sinewy muscles strapped her legs. He wondered if she kept her vagina shaved for herself, a new lover, or him, since he asked that of all of his submissives.

Instead of responding to her body, verbally or otherwise, he pointed to the cross and said, "Face it and spread your arms out."

She blinked. Eagan placed his hand on the whip handle and glared at her. Nina scurried to the seven-foot tall wooden cross. In order to secure her, Eagan had to abandon his toys. He cuffed her wrists, then purposely placed her fingers on the clasp that held the cuffs in place.

“Do you remember how to work the panic release just in case?” he asked.

She nodded.

“I know you have a voice, Nina. Please respond to me verbally.” He went back to the table just as she said, “Yes, sir.”

“Good.” He lifted the whip and let the heft of it weigh his hand down.

Eagan swallowed as he stared at the toy. A toy. He’d used it time and time again. It wasn’t until the last time, when something was slightly off, that he put it to rest. He didn’t vow to not use it any more. He just needed time to get his head straight. His thumb rubbed up and down the length of the tightly-woven leather handle. His heart pounded so hard it sounded in his head. Sweat formed at the back of his neck despite only wearing silk pants.

“Master Eagan?” Nina tried turning around, but with her arms spread out and her hands above her head she had a difficult time turning but so far.

Eagan released a long breath and picked up a bamboo cane he had specially oiled and conditioned by a friend in New York. Using the cane would be just as special as the whip. At least that’s what Eagan had convinced himself. Besides, the whip was his very first one, the one he trained with and used on many submissives. The next time he used it, it would be on someone special, perhaps the new submissive he would pick from his reality TV show.

Without delay, Eagan smoothed his fingertips over Nina’s back between her shoulders. As soon as he touched her, she writhed and mewled.

This was what Eagan had been seeking, the reaction. The sounds. The emotion. His stomach quivered. He remembered the noises and reactions Ophelia made whenever he touched her. The thought of it made his cock swell.

He brushed Nina’s hair to the side to expose her tender flesh. Then he tapped her feet to signal her to move them apart. Thank goodness Apple had the wherewithal to lay down plastic sheets under each cross-station.

Even before Eagan touched Nina with the cane, juices dripped from her naked pussy. He smelled her pungent sex, an aroma he wished he could bottle and sniff whenever he needed a little pick-me-up.

To warm up her skin, he took the two-foot long, sallow-colored cane and tapped lightly, if not rhythmically, over her upper back. He knew exactly where to hit and how to tap the cane against the body. Too low, it could hurt or irreparably damage the submissive’s internal organs. That’s not what BDSM was about for him, or any other Dom worth his weight.

With each tap, Eagan increased the pressure until Nina's body writhed and her juices flowed. He alternated spots on her upper back, moving the stick a hair down or up to give her the full sensation. At the end of the first session, he rubbed his hand lightly over her now heated flesh.

"Oh God, Eagan!" she exclaimed.

"What?" He stopped caressing her.

"Master Eagan. Master Eagan. I'm sorry. It's just." She shook her head. "So damn good."

"It hasn't been that long since we've played. You know I don't like when you curse."

"Sorry, sir. What you're doing pleases me. Does it please you?"

She should have stopped before asking about him. He didn't answer her. He slid the cane down her body to her perky ass. He gave her one quick tap that caused her to yelp and jump. Then he resumed with a series of light taps on the fleshy part of her ass cheeks. He moved the cane to just below her ass then back up again.

As a Dom, he experienced each one of his toys personally. He wanted to know what the sensations felt like that he inflicted on his submissives. At this point, Nina's back and ass had to have been hot and tingling. The way she tossed her head about, an orgasm was imminent.

Ordinarily, he would have told her to hold out on coming until he gave his command. Between the TV show that would either make or break his career status, and the call from Dris, and the call from his brother, he was feeling more than benevolent. Someone had to have a better day than him.

"I've missed this so much!" Nina leaned her head back.

Eagan increased the pressure of the hits while watching her reaction to make sure it wasn't too much for her. He'd gotten her warmed up pretty well. It had been a long time since they'd had a session together. He didn't want to push her too far.

Her back and ass cheeks were now a dark pink hue. She colored well and fast, something that did make Eagan happy. He switched his cane for a smaller, thinner one. With the tip of it, he brushed it between her two cheeks in a rapid motion, flicking it back and forth as it cut the air, making a swishing sound.

This time Nina screamed. She stomped her foot and arched her back to accept more of the caning.

"Easy. Take your time with it." Eagan stopped the caning long enough to rub her hot skin with his hand.

Soothing the submissive during and after a session was always important. His mentor taught him that and it was a practice he'd carried on to this day. For Ophelia, the first session ended up with the two of them having hot sex in his dungeon.

After making Ophelia's skin tingle with the tail end of his whip, she came immediately then begged to be fucked. She didn't have to beg. Watching her golden brown skin turn pink

and her body coiling and curving with each one of his hits, he wanted her as much as she had wanted him. It was against this very cross where they had fucked for the first time ... and the last time now that he thought about it.

Eagan continued spanking Nina until she finally broke. She screamed using her full lung capacity, engaged the panic clips to get down from the cross, and would have nearly collapsed to the floor had he not been so close to catch her.

With one swoop, he netted her in his arm and eased her down to the floor. "Easy. Easy. It's okay."

Nina struggled to catch her breath as she pressed her head against his bare chest. She must have been ready for a session for a long time. He'd never seen her go into subspace so quickly and hard.

"Shh." He stroked her hair as he rocked her in his arms back and forth. "You did really well, Nina. I'm so proud of you. You are --"

Before Eagan could finish his statement, Nina found the strength to turn in his arms and kiss him fully on his lips. Gratitude was one thing. However, the expectation of sex crossed the line.

Although he had played with Nina before, and some sessions were a lot more intense than this one, he'd never had sexual intercourse with her. And he wouldn't be starting now. He wanted to get to know his next submissive before engaging in a sexual relationship.

He grabbed her shoulders and pushed her back. "No!" he said sternly as he looked directly into her eyes. "I'll send Apple in here to help you get cleaned up. If you need to spend the night, you may use the guesthouse. This session is over."

He stood.

"Wait! I know I fucked up, uh, made a mistake."

Eagan didn't turn around to see the desperation on her face that matched the tone in her voice.

"Please don't leave me yet. I need you." Her voice cracked at the end.

It wouldn't take long for the tears to come. He didn't want to be there to see or hear it. Something inside had told him not to play with her, but he'd needed the release. Funny how now he felt tighter and more tense than ever.

He bounded down the stairs to Apple's room. A curtain hung in the doorway to give her a bit of privacy. None of his slaves had doors to their rooms. His rule. He waltzed into her room where she lay in bed reading. As soon as she saw him, she set her book down and stood completely naked save the chastity belt, another rule he'd enacted.

"Nina needs some assistance upstairs." He put his hands to his hips.

"Yes, Master Eagan. Will she be staying with us this evening?" Apple slipped on fuzzy red slippers and nothing else.

“I hope so. She hit subspace really hard.” Eagan noticed how a confused look covered Apple’s face. He could almost read her thoughts. “I couldn’t calm her down or do aftercare. She really needs to be alone with her thoughts. But I want you to help her tonight.”

“Yes, sir.”

Before leaving the room, Eagan remembered another important aspect he had to share with Apple, Willow, and Aspen. They were a part of his home and an extended part of his family. He had to share the news of what would be happening to them in the next few months. How they would take it, he had no idea.

“Apple.”

She stopped in the doorway and returned her attention to him. “Yes, sir.”

“Gather the other slaves. There’s something important I need to share with you three.”

Chapter Three

The month had gone by in an uneventful way. After explaining about the show, Eagan's slaves seemed to take the news in stride better than he had. Perhaps they recognized his need to have a submissive replace Ophelia. His demeanor had changed, and not for the better.

Aspen smoothed down the lapels of his jacket and brushed lint off of his pants.

"Aspen, be sure you stay in your room during filming," Eagan said.

The woman glanced at him and nodded.

"I'm not ashamed of what I do with you or this Lifestyle, sir."

"I know. But I understand about your children. They have families and I know you've told me that they don't approve of your desired choice in how you live your life. Being seen on camera would hurt you and them, and that's not what I'm about."

"I know that, sir. That's what I love about you." When she smiled, the wrinkles around her eyes spread in thin lines like sunrays.

"I love you too, Aspen, which is why my offer of setting you up at The Westin for the duration of the show still stands."

She shook her head until it look like it would pop off if she kept going. "No, sir. My job, my life, is here with you. I want to serve you."

Eagan kissed her forehead. "If you're staying, I want you to at least wear a mask. There are cameras set up everywhere in the house. I don't want to chance that you'll get caught."

She smiled. "I still have my veil. I will wear that."

"Great idea. I've also instructed the editing team to blur out your face just in case. Since tonight is the live show, you're going to have to make yourself scarce."

She kissed the back of his hand. "Yes, sir."

“You’re dismissed. Go to your room for the rest of the evening.”

Without a word, she turned and sashayed back to her quarters.

As Eagan straightened out his cuffs, gazing at himself in the full-length mirror in his walk-in closet, he’d hoped that Cine-tastic would have called him and told him that they had changed their minds.

Just the opposite. They fell over themselves being accommodating. In an era of pushing envelopes, the cable channel offered Eagan anything and everything he wanted ... including women to satisfy his needs until the show started.

To see how far they were willing to go, Eagan had made some outlandish demands. He stopped short of hinting at bestiality. Even he couldn’t go that far to get out of this deal.

At the time Phil pitched the idea, Eagan wanted to do it. Could it be that easy to find his next submissive through a reality show? And could he stoop so low as to get his next submissive that way?

“Fuck it. I’m going to cancel this.” He undid the top button of his shirt and turned to the door to give the cameramen, boom operators, and potential submissives the bad news.

As soon as he opened the door, Phil stood on the other side.

“You’re not backing out.” Phil put his hands to his hips in a smug manner.

“I wasn’t going to do that.” In an equally defiant move, Eagan put his fists to his hips.

Phil pointed up.

Directing his gaze to the ceiling, Eagan saw a camera with a small microphone next to it.

“Damn. There goes my privacy.” Had he actually agreed to let them record his every move? “My dance studio and office are off limits, right?”

Phil shook his head. “Just your office and your bathroom. Of course, we want to know what’s going on in every room of your house.”

“Of course.”

Nina scurried down the hallway and planted herself in front of Eagan. “The submissives are ready. And it’s about twenty minutes to show time.” She buttoned his top button and smoothed down his lapels.

“Good. Keep them waiting. The longer they wait, the more I’m sure one or more will crack under the pressure.”

“Are you kidding? This is live. You’d be wasting valuable air time.” Phil dragged his fingers through his espresso-colored hair.

“Since I’m the executive producer, it’d be my money I’d be wasting. Besides, what I’m looking for is a reaction. Be sure to keep the cameras and mics right on them. You need to capture their every thought and concern.”

“You are the king of mind games, aren’t you?” Phil patted him on his back. “I’ll make sure the host knows what’s going on so he doesn’t assume you flipped out on us.” He reached the door, then directed his attention to his friend again. “By the way, I am directing this, aren’t I? For a minute back there, it sounded like you were trying to take over.”

Eagan smiled. “Habit.”

Looking a tad remorseful, Phil shook his head. “Do these women know what they’re in for?”

“Trust me. They’ll soon find out.” Eagan directed his attention to his full-length mirror again.

Eagan wanted to see his prospects, give them all a once over. Even if he let them wait over thirty minutes, he needed to look presentable. He smoothed his hand over his hair, parted on the side. As he adjusted his cuffs, he straightened his posture. These women would be expecting a true Master. A Dom. He would be that and then some.

“Mr. Morton,” a male voice said over his home’s intercom system. “Fifteen minutes, sir. Nina will bring you down when we’re ready for you.”

No, Nina would wait. Eagan would go when he was ready. He strolled to his desk where he had the show’s agenda for that night. For this pilot episode, Eagan had to introduce himself, have the ladies introduce themselves to him, then they would all sip champagne and eat strawberries as a way to ease viewers into the show and not jar them just yet.

Eagan snickered. “Bullshit.”

Ducking into his closet, he grabbed a black overnight bag he used as his goody bag. When he traveled with his submissive, well, when he *used* to travel with her, he carried the bag as a way to keep up the bondage and discipline on the road. At one time, as a lark, he thought of selling his idea of a BDSM bag for the road to those in the Lifestyle. He just didn’t have the time or energy to take on another project.

“Those twelve women want to be introduced into BDSM? They’re going to get it.” Eagan unzipped the bag then smiled at the contents. Some items made him laugh out loud.

At the sound of his laughter, Nina opened the door. “Are you ready?”

“No.”

Eagan zipped the bag close. When he sat in his favorite armchair, he noticed Nina’s bottom jaw dropped.

“The women are waiting.” To punctuate her point, Nina jutted her thumb over her shoulder to direct him to the downstairs area.

“I know. They’ll just have to wait.” He crossed his legs. “Don’t worry. Phil is aware of what I’m doing.”

Nina’s shoulders hunched around her ears out of nervousness.

“Relax.” Eagan held his hand up hoping to calm the petite woman.

“I can’t. I just want to make sure this show comes off perfect, you know? As associate producer, I have a stake in this, too.”

Eagan grabbed the arm of the chair again. “We’ll be fine. You’ll see. This will be the biggest show since *Singing Sensation*, the show where they find the next big pop singer.” It used to be that anything Eagan touched turned to media gold. Now, Nina questioned his validity in the business.

Nina laughed. “You’ll be the new snarky judge.”

“So you think I’m cruel and unfeeling?”

Eagan watched Nina’s expression go from jovial to horrified in a matter of seconds.

“No! Of course not. I just meant that you’re direct and some people may not appreciate that.”

“And some people might.” Eagan stared at her for a moment.

Although it was summertime, Nina wore loose-fitting jeans, Birkenstocks and a plain white T-shirt sans bra, obvious by her dark pink areolas. As a right-hand woman to him, Eagan found he couldn’t operate his day-to-day business without her.

As a potential submissive, the bond wasn’t there. After playing with her a month ago, he knew for sure that she wasn’t the one for him. If she wanted to be his submissive, she had to trust him. That’s why he’d brought out his bags of tricks early. He needed to see who could trust him and who couldn’t.

“You need to calm yourself.” Eagan held his hand up.

She peered over her shoulder first then turned her gaze up to the camera in the ceiling. “They see and hear everything.”

“You have something to hide?”

She shook her head. After setting her clipboard on the floor, she glided to him. She released a long, haggard breath then lowered herself to his feet. Like a cat, she curled her body next to his legs, hugging them, as she set her head on his knee.

Without missing a beat, Eagan stroked her silky hair. “You’re an amazing woman.”

“Thank you, sir.” She squeezed his legs tighter.

“However, you still need to work on your confidence, right?”

She didn’t verbally answer. He felt her head move, but couldn’t tell if she nodded or shook it.

“Again,” he demanded.

“Yes, sir.” Her tiny voice projected throughout his bedroom.

“Very good. I wished you understood how very special and wonderful you are.” He stroked her like a cat.

Small trembles riddled her body.

Eagan asked, “Are you okay with this whole thing? Do we need to talk?”

Nina paused before answering. "No, we don't. You have been more than generous with me, sir."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"Yes, sir. I'm fine." She sniffed.

"You know I'm always here for you. You and I will always be special friends."

"Thank you, sir."

Now, if he could get her to stop this damn show, he would consider this woman his very best friend in the entire world.

"Eagan, do you know when you'll be coming downstairs?" Phil asked through the intercom.

Eagan didn't answer. He still had to clear his head. Didn't help that he had a whole bag full of tricks to present to a group of potential submissives. God help him.

* * * * *

Ananda noticed the other women shifting their weight from one foot to the other. The spiked four-inch stilettos the show had given to her and the other eleven women were not the most comfortable in the world. However, Ananda had an advantage. She rested her weight on the balls of her feet. Dancing came in handy in all aspects of her life. Besides, how in the world could she turn down an opportunity to wear a pair of Manolo Blahniks?

That didn't top the clothes. Ananda had decided to wear a simple beige Calvin Klein dress. Since the dress hugged the body, Ananda thought it would give her an edge. The other ladies wore something short or with plunging necklines or high slits on the sides. These women were really putting themselves out there for this man.

So what if he had a lot of money? In her eyes, he was still the same asshole that passed her over for the dancing job. She'd never forget that. And at the end of this show, the end of her time on the show, he would know that.

"Okay, ladies, listen up," one of the associate producers said. "The show is about to start. I need you all to slip on your masks."

"Masks?" one woman spat.

"Please, do not act surprised. Everyone's contract clearly stated that while you're an active contestant and have not been eliminated, you will wear a mask the entire time. The only time you may take the mask off is when you're bathing. Eventually, that may change as well."

"Depending on what?" Ananda asked.

"Depending on what Mr. Morton likes."

The room became deathly quiet. It was clear then that this was real and not a game.

"Now slip on the mask and line up in a single file."

Ananda and the other women went to a table where masks were lined up in two rows. Although they were all colorful, looking more like Mardi Gras masks than BDSM ones, they were sturdier. The mask covered the top portion of her face while leaving everything below her nose exposed.

Hair stylists and makeup artists swooped down on the group of unprepared women. Cameras came into the room and took footage of the skittish contestants. For those like Ananda with long, thick hair, they bound their hair into a bun and tucked as much of it as they could under the headpiece, trying to hide as much of their hair as they could. From the neck up, the women all looked the same.

As soon as the restrictive adornment covered her face, she then noticed the different body shapes and sizes. Ananda took a quick inventory in her mind. Out of twelve women, four, including Ananda, were African-American, four were white, two looked Hispanic, one was Asian and there was one whose origin Ananda couldn't pinpoint.

Stick thin women mixed in with healthier-sized women and a couple of women who were pleasantly plump. Standing in the back of the line, Ananda clasped her hands together.

"Follow me, ladies." The producer led the way.

A small trickle of sweat rolled down her back between her shoulder blades. Aside from her purse, Ananda had no personal belongings with her. They all got confiscated when she came to Ego's house.

"I don't know about you, but I feel like I have a damn good chance of making it," the woman standing in front of Ananda whispered to her.

"Why is that?"

The producer leading the group turned around when Ananda spoke. Although he didn't tell them all to remain quiet, for some reason silence seemed to be what was expected of them.

"A man like Eagan Morton can't have some porker on his arm. He needs some eye candy." She snorted when she laughed. "I understand what men like him want."

"I have a feeling we're in for some surprises with this show." Ananda's knees knocked together the closer they got to the main foyer of the house.

"Honey, I've been on three of these type of shows. It's a piece of cake. Tell the guys what they want and they're putty in your hands. I've had two marriage proposals from two of those shows."

"Why aren't you married?"

The line stopped at the entryway to the foyer.

"The show was over. What the hell did I need him for?" She snorted again. "By the way, I'm Iona."

"I'm --"

Iona cut her off. “Don’t bother, honey. You probably won’t be here that long for me to remember your name anyway.”

Heat rose to Ananda’s face. She hadn’t care about winning before. Now her game-face was on. She at least wanted to outlast this chick.

Through hidden speakers throughout the house, a blaring rendition of the Psychedelic Furs’ song “Love My Way” sounded through them. Ananda scanned the opulent room. Marble covered the floor with a big E.M. in gold in a center crest. Marble steps went to the upstairs. Good God. Was that an elevator?

She directed her attention to a screen next to the camera crew. The opening credits rolled. It was apparent the show would be about Eagan and no one else. Every shot had Eagan working, playing, dressing, undressing. If wearing masks and putting up with Ego got her work, she would do it.

The last shot in the opening credit showed a confident Eagan Morton. He stood in the middle of the screen wearing a distinguished suit and a cocky smile. The camera pulled back in the shot and Eagan cracked a whip over his head. At the tail end of the whip, the show’s name flashed across the screen.

Every woman gasped. A couple turned to the doorway then turned back. This was no longer a game. Would Eagan actually use that whip on one of them? All of them? Ananda wrung her hands together. What the hell had she gotten herself into?

After the opening ran, the room stilled. Ananda scanned the other women. They, too, started to glance around the room. So where was the man-of-the-hour? Where was Eagan?

“What the hell is going on?” Iona asked from the side of her mouth.

Afraid to verbally answer this time, Ananda shrugged. Perhaps Ego was going through some stage fright. That would be funny. Or maybe the man just wasn’t there.

Ten minutes had gone by without so much as a word from anyone. What the hell kind of show was this? Ananda watched the women shifting from one side to the other. Even the shoes were getting to her feet, too. Without moving her neck, she peered up to see where the hidden cameras were stowed. One red light blinked in between some books in a massive bookcase across from her. Next to an Oriental vase, another red light flickered. She could only imagine the number of cameras in their sleeping quarters.

“The perks of a live show, folks,” the host joked.

The host, Tony Artini, an aging child star who once starred in a vampire show that had teenaged vampires, started the show by introducing himself. Ananda guessed this was his last chance at glory, too. Then he talked to each woman. When one tried to say her name, she was quickly hushed by the host.

“Eagan Morton requested that no one reveal their names,” Tony said, then playfully put his index finger to the woman’s lips.

If he still didn't carry that baby face, the move may have come off as sexy or alluring. As it was, it looked like a creepy younger brother trying to put the moves on his sister's friend.

He got towards the end of the line.

"And where are you from?" Tony, the host, shoved his microphone into Iona's face.

"I'm from Mitchell, Nebraska."

Thank goodness for the masks. Ananda blinked at the woman's admission. She thought for sure Iona was from California or even Florida. Nebraska seemed too wholesome for her.

"Ah, a Midwesterner. Welcome to the show." Tony patted her hand. "Anything you want to say before we start the show?"

"Only that I can't wait to serve my Master."

Ananda tried hard to hold back her snicker. It came out like a light sneeze.

"And last but certainly not least, where are you from?" Tony put the microphone under Ananda's chin.

She took a step back. Considering she towered over the man, he should have felt grateful. Ananda opened her mouth to answer when someone caught her attention.

At the top of the stairs stood the man himself, Eagan Morton. Even though he was twenty minutes late, he acted as though he didn't care. How in the world could the man be twenty minutes late when the show was taped in his house?

He strolled down the huge staircase taking five minutes, it seemed, for each step. As he descended, he stared at each woman. At the last step, his gaze fell on Ananda. His burning stare bore right through her body. However, she wouldn't give him the satisfaction of cowering. She maintained her stare until he approached the group. It was only then that she noticed the bag in his hand, which he set on a circular table next to them.

"Welcome to my home," Eagan began.

The baritone voice she remembered from the rehearsal hall resonated ten times more now that he stood a few feet away from her. The boom of his voice and nerves tickled her insides.

In a whispered response, Ananda and the ladies all said hello.

He turned to the host. "I'll take it from here."

Obediently, Tony stepped back beside the cameras.

"If you don't know, my name is Eagan Morton. This show is about me finding that perfect woman to be my next submissive. My expectations are high. Is that understood?"

Again in unison, the women answered, "Yes."

"During the show, while you're in my house, you will address me as Master Eagan or Sir. I will not tolerate, nor will I accept anything else besides those two addresses. Unlike shows like *The Bachelor* or any other romantic coupling show, I'm not looking for a wife."

He took a closer step to the woman at the end of the row. "I'm looking for a submissive." He strolled down the line, making sure to keep his stare directly on them. "This challenge will be difficult as I expect perfection. Some of you may wonder why you have to wear masks." He stopped at the sixth woman. With both hands, he straightened out her mask. "I'm not looking for a beauty queen."

Ananda jabbed Iona with her elbow. The woman screwed up her lips then turned back to their host.

"I'm looking for someone who will be devoted to me and learn to anticipate my every need." He sauntered down the line. "Part of this experience will be training. All of you should have received literature on the BDSM lifestyle and what is expected by both parties." He stopped at the eighth woman in line. "You will be tested on this information."

Shit, Ananda thought. She'd skimmed through the books and let Darnell read them but she never really read them.

"First and foremost, understand that we will operate by the BDSM credo. Everything we do will be safe, sane, and consensual." He scanned the women for their expressions. When no one uttered a sound, he continued. "The first half of the hour-long show, I will present you with either a task or an instructional tutorial. Whoever impresses me the most in that task will win a special prize. The second hour, you'll be challenged. As I said before, I'm seeking perfection. Giving me less than your best will not impress me. The winner of the second task will win immunity, meaning you will not be eliminated for the next show."

Ananda nodded, taking in everything Eagan said. It was evident that she would have to stay on her toes to last longer than a week.

"I will decide during elimination who performed the worst and ask that that woman to leave my house immediately." Eagan reached the end and planted himself in front of Ananda.

She stared directly into his cool green eyes. Behind her mask, she saw a rugged yet polished man. Distinguished lines marked the corners of his eyes. A dimple dotted his chin. His lips parted, showing off the small gap between his two front teeth.

Ananda took in a deep breath. Besides the overwhelming scent of leather, she caught a light cologne scent that smelled like sandalwood and earth. As much as she hated to admit it to herself, Eagan Morton could take her right there and then in front of these women, the camera crew and the world. From the way he smiled, she figured he knew that as well.

"What does it mean to be collared?" he finally asked.

"What?" Ananda's mind hadn't registered that he was actually speaking to her. Then she had to think about the answer.

"Collared. What does it mean when a Dominant collars a submissive? Do you know?" He crossed his arms over his chest.

Shit! Shit! Shit! To collar a dog meant to put it on a leash. So did that mean he wanted to put them on leashes? Walk them around like pets in a park? Knowing Ego, that was exactly it. Ananda opened her mouth to answer when another woman cut her off.

"It means we belong to you. We are your submissives," Number Seven answered.

Eagan cut his gaze away from Ananda long enough to acknowledge the other woman. "You're right. Thank you for answering, although I wasn't asking you. I was asking this one right here." He nodded his head toward her. "I realize half of you have never really experienced this Lifestyle. I did that on purpose. I want those who have never had a Master to learn from those who have had one or been trained by one. No one has an advantage here. BDSM is more about learning than anything else. You'll learn about yourself, your body, your pleasures, and your pain." He turned to the young host. "Will you get Apple and Willow, please?"

Tony nodded and trotted off to a side room. Ananda and the other women stared at where Tony had gone to see who or what were Apple and Willow. Were they special names for his toys?

The click of Tony's shoes on the floor matched Ananda's racing heart. She didn't hear another set of feet until he appeared in the room again. Then she heard a light smacking sound. Following behind him, were two women. One looked to be in her late twenties or early thirties with blonde hair. In her see-through, spray-on dress, her curves were made apparent. Many of the larger women in the group blew out their breaths in a sigh of relief.

Next to the first woman was a younger Asian woman. Her dark hair framed her pixie face. Not really wanting to but feeling compelled to look down, Ananda noticed they both had on similar necklaces, well, if you could call them that. They looked more like chokers. Both wore slender black leather straps with what looked to be a diamond or some jewel in the front.

Her gaze fell down even further to see some strange contraption that didn't look like panties or even a bathing suit bottom. When the first woman moved her arm, Ananda noticed a lock dangling from the side of hers. What the hell was it?

"These are my slaves, Apple and Willow. They are here to help you in the house. You can ask them any questions about the Lifestyle, however, they cannot help you with any task. If you ask them questions related to a specific task I've given you for immunity or reward, you will be asked to leave the house."

A couple of the women nodded. Damn, there went Plan B for Ananda.

"After this show, they will show you where you will be sleeping and lay down the ground rules of the house, like no cursing."

Shit! She might get eliminated the first day. Ananda cursed so much, her mother wanted her to get tested for Tourette's Syndrome. So if she was meant to last in this competition, Ananda would have to keep her mouth closed and do what she was told. Damn, that would be hard on both counts.

Eagan had Tony retrieve something in a large hutch. Tony returned to the group holding a tray of several slender black velvet boxes.

“Tony, will you assist me, please?”

The former child star followed Eagan back to the first woman. He cracked open one box and pulled out what looked like a string of pearls except there were two rows of pearls with vertical strings of pearls connecting the two horizontal rows.

“During this competition, each of you will be collared by me. You will be my submissive until I release you.” He asked the first woman to turn around. When she did, he put on the short necklace that hugged her neck. “I like your black hair. From now on, you will be known as Lily.”

“Yes, Master Eagan,” Lily said when she turned back around.

Before moving onto the next contestant, he kissed her lightly.

He moved down to the next woman and did the same thing. “I like your yellow mask. You’ll be known as Daisy.” Then he kissed her.

Each woman, he renamed them with a name of a flower. Guess that was better than being called Submissive Number One or Hey You. Then he planted a small kiss.

The third woman jumped as soon as he opened his mouth to speak. “You are a skittish little thing. I’ll call you Poppy.”

“Thank you, sir!” She clasped her hands in front of her and jiggled around some more, probably for show. No one could be that happy about being a submissive.

Poppy barely stood still long enough for Eagan to kiss her.

Eagan stroked his hand through the fourth one’s flaming red hair. “Of course. You would have to be Rose.” He wrapped her collar around her neck after she turned around.

“Thank you, Master Eagan.”

He gave Rose a peck and strolled to contestant number five. Ananda noticed he blinked and brought his face closer to the woman’s face before making a final naming decision. “You have the most striking blue eyes I’ve ever seen. I’ll call you Iris.” He collared her, kissed her, and she thanked him for the privilege.

To the one in the yellow dress whose strap kept falling off of her shoulder, he said, “I’ll call you Freesia.” After collaring her, he adjusted her dress strap onto her shoulder, then kissed her.

Interesting. Ananda would have thought Ego would have ripped the dress off of her body and made her stand in the buff. Guess she was wrong about him.

“While you’re in my house,” he said to the seventh contestant, “you’ll be called Sunny, short for sunflower.”

“I like that, Master Eagan. Thank you.” She bowed her head.

Sunny leaned forward for Eagan to kiss her.

As Ananda watched each woman, it was becoming apparent who was into the BDSM lifestyle and who wasn't. Giggling Poppy had to be a newbie in the whole thing. However, Sunny came off like an old hat at this. Ananda hoped to be paired up in a bedroom with women who knew all about the Lifestyle and could teach her a thing or two ... or three.

To the eighth woman, he didn't hesitate before he blurted, "Magnolia. That's who you'll be."

"Fits me to a T, sir." She curtsied like a good southern belle. Damn showoff. He kissed the back of her hand like a southern gentleman.

Longer than he'd stared at Iris, Eagan looked over contestant nine thoroughly. Obviously the heaviest of the bunch, the woman started wringing her hands together. Then, she crossed her arms over her chest. Eagan took her hand and brought it down to the side of her body. "The name I'll give you is Meadow."

The woman spat out an indignant chuckle. "Is that because I'm as big as one? Why don't I get the single flower names like everyone else?"

A few of the ladies gasped at Meadow's daring to question the great and powerful Eagan. Good for Meadow, Ananda thought. At least the woman showed she was no pushover.

"I named you Meadow because in you I see all of the great qualities I look for in a woman."

Meadow's shoulders relaxed. She reached under her mask to wipe away a few tears. "I'm sorry. It's just that it's hard looking like --"

He shook his head and moved closer to her. "Never apologize for expressing your true feelings. I respect your viewpoints and opinions. I'm glad to see you being assertive." Eagan attempted to collar her until she stopped him.

"It won't fit," Meadow said and shook her head. "If you got the same type of necklace for me that you gave to the other ladies here, mine won't fit. My neck is too big."

Eagan placed his index finger over her lips and smiled. Now with him, that move exuded sexiness. Tony had better be taking notes.

"One thing you and all of the other women here will learn about me..." Eagan twirled his finger in the air to get Meadow to turn around. After a big huff, she did so, obliging Eagan. "I'm always prepared." He slipped on the necklace that fit her perfectly.

Meadow turned back to him and touched it as though not believing the jeweled piece could fit her.

"It's the reason I had you all weighed and measured before coming on the show." Eagan adjusted it so that it sat to his specifications. "I took the liberty of having one specially made for you. I know no two women are alike, so I knew not to make all of the collars the same."

Meadow nodded. "Thank you."

Ananda wasn't sure if it was for show or if he truly appreciated Meadow, but he gave her two quick pecks before moving on to the next woman.

At contestant ten, Ananda's heart started racing. He was so close to her, she could smell him.

"I'll call you Pansy."

"Beautiful name, sir."

Actually, the name sucked. Except for Meadow, no one here seemed willing to upset the apple cart. He kissed her and moved over to Iona.

At Iona, he scanned her from the top of the points on her mask, down to her four-inch stiletto heels. "I have a feeling you know how to ensnare men." Eagan pulled out a necklace from the box. "For that reason, I'm calling you Venus, after the Venus Flytrap."

A wide grin exposed all of Iona's chemically bleached teeth. "You already know me so well, Master Eagan."

When he held up her necklace, she hesitated before turning around. Eagan stared at her.

"Turn around," he demanded.

Ananda didn't want to look, but Iona stood next to her. She stole quick glances. From the throbbing in Iona's neck, the woman seemed scared about something.

"I'd like to face my Master when he collars me," she said.

"Nice to know, however, you're already forgetting rule number one about this whole thing. This is about what I want. I've asked you to turn around. The next step is that I'll tell you to leave. Your choice."

"Sorry, Master Eagan." Iona turned around.

Eagan raised his hands while holding the necklace, but stopped midway. He was probably staring at that hideous tattoo on the back of Iona's neck. Ananda had noticed it, too, but didn't want to say anything. She just assumed the woman had done time in prison to have that greenish blob mar her pale skin.

He closed the clasp on the necklace and waited for her to turn around so he could kiss her before he moved on to Ananda, the last one in line.

"And last but not least, I have you."

Not yet, Ananda wanted to say. Instead, she turned around and allowed him to place the necklace on her.

"You'll be Begonia."

Ananda blinked at the name. It wasn't as romantic as Rose. And it certainly didn't have a deeper meaning like Meadow.

As he put the necklace on her, he whispered in her ear, "Miss another question, and you'll be gone."

Oh, now she got it. Begonia. *Be gone, you.*

“I won’t let you down.” She had to dig deep to come up with an appropriate response, one that made it seem like she wanted to be there in the game.

He seemed to accept her answer. He smiled and moved in for his kiss. Ananda kept her eyes open as their lips connected. Then something happened. She felt a spark when their lips touched. Then, Eagan pressed his lips on her harder.

Ananda’s knees buckled. He backed away from her. Maybe their kiss lasted as long as the others. In her mind, they had kissed the longest. Was she the only one who felt like he just made love to her using only his mouth? All at once a feeling of satisfaction and exhaustion consumed her. Christ, what had she gotten herself into?

Ananda touched her necklace. She couldn’t wait to go back to her room to take a better look at it.

“I will hold an elimination challenge and offer a reward today and one of you will have to give up your collar and leave.” He reached into his black bag. “Tonight, you will learn more about me. At the end of the night, you’ll be tested. If you fail, you leave.” He pulled out a long whip. “Ready to get started?”

Iris fainted. The games had officially started.

Chapter Four

“Oh, my God!” Freesia, one of the other African-American contestants screamed.

Eagan crouched down next to Iris as soon as he saw the woman go down. “Can you hear me?” He patted the back of her hand, in between rubbing her arm. Outside sounds nearly disappeared behind the beating of his heart that echoed in his head.

“Jesus Christ!”

Eagan heard Phil curse behind the camera. Considering they were on live TV and the fainting came as a surprise, Eagan would have thought the shot would have made Phil happy.

Within seconds, another man squeezed his way through the crowd of women.

“Took you long enough, Sergio,” Eagan said in a whisper.

“I expected to be used once you started doing your thing on them, not from just showing off your toys. Who knew?”

Eagan couldn’t fault his close friend and doctor for being a little slow on the draw. For as many years as he has been involved in the scene, he had never had one faint *before* play.

Sergio waved something under Iris’s nose that stirred her.

“She’ll be fine,” he announced. “I’ll take her to the back to check her out.”

Eagan held her face steady to stare into her eyes. He wanted to see some clarity in her eyes before she got whisked away.

As though emerging from underwater, Iris blinked several times and even gasped for air. Her hands grasped at Eagan’s jacket. He allowed her to steady herself while he held her head still.

“Are you okay?” he asked in a soft tone.

“The whip! The whip!” Iris muttered other things that came out incoherently, but what was clear was her focus and fear on his toy.

“You fainted,” Eagan said as though the woman wouldn’t have remembered what had happened. “Doctor Veruccio is going to check you out. I’ll stay with you.”

A hand immediately clamped his shoulder. Eagan turned around, looking at the hand first, before gazing up to see Phil standing on the wrong side of the camera.

“Let me help her to the back bedroom,” Phil said as he got down next to Eagan. Then in a hoarse whisper said, “And then you have to go on taping. The show is live, remember?”

Eagan peered over his shoulder at the cameras and the crews all standing by. When he turned back around, he caught the stunned expression in the gazes of the remaining contestants. The one that made him do a double-take was Begonia.

Going down the line of women, Begonia was the only one who made his heart stutter. There was something about her eyes that drew him into her. Without a word, she seduced him.

Her gaze held a warmth and a compassion that could have only existed deep down inside of her. And the kiss they shared still rocked him.

He hadn’t meant for his kiss to be longer than any of the kisses he’d planted on the other contestants. As soon as his lips touched her soft set, he didn’t want to stop. That was a bad sign. He didn’t want or need another submissive that made him forget everything except for sex. He had to make this about more than just a physical connection.

For a man determined not to make this a contest including sex, he wanted that one contestant as badly as he had wanted Ophelia the first time he’d met her. That meant only one thing. Begonia had to go.

With a stretcher ready, Sergio, Phil, Eagan, and another stagehand lifted Iris’s petite frame onto the gurney. After strapping her down, Sergio wheeled her to another room away from the cameras and other contestants.

“We only have fifteen minutes left for this episode,” Phil said between gritted teeth while his back remained to the camera. “You wasted twenty of it sitting up in your room.”

“It was my twenty minutes to waste.” Eagan stripped off his jacket and laid it on the table next to his bag of tricks.

“You don’t have much time. You have to get rid of one of these ladies tonight. Do what you have to do and then get to the elimination ceremony.” Phil returned to his spot behind the camera and made some non-verbal cues to Eagan.

As much as he hated not tending to Iris alongside Sergio, Eagan knew he had a job to do. As it was the show was going in a questionable direction. He knew to get it out of its slump, he would have to do something spectacular and end it with a bang.

As he returned to the table with his whips, Eagan rolled up his shirtsleeves to his elbows. “As I was saying before, you all will learn more about me tonight.” He picked up his whip again. “I need one volunteer.”

Scanning the group, he thought for sure Sunny or even Venus would have jumped at the chance. It was apparent that Sunny had some background in the BDSM lifestyle. Venus didn't, however she was ready to please, probably to get the prizes at the end. Women like her were so transparent.

"I'll do it."

Eagan couldn't help but blink when Begonia volunteered. This was the same woman who couldn't answer a simple BDSM question. Even if she weren't in the Lifestyle, which was obvious, she should still be able to answer the question.

Without getting permission, Begonia stepped forward in front of Eagan. Nervous energy emitted through her gaze. Staring at her lips, he knew she was chewing the inside of her bottom lip the way it drew in and out.

"Are you sure?" he asked to give her a chance to back out.

"Yes, sir." To punctuate her claim, she took another step forward, crowding into his space.

"Okay, take about ten steps that way and put your back to me." He pointed toward the front door. Maybe if Begonia had a clear shot of it, she would keep walking.

She took the required steps. From the way her shoulders drew up and back down, he knew she had taken a deep breath.

In an elevated voice, Eagan said, "Now pull down your dress to expose your back."

Her body froze. What seemed like several minutes later, she turned to him. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me." Eagan adjusted the whip in his hand. "If I have to repeat myself, elimination will be a breeze tonight. Now you can either debate me or --"

Before giving her a second option, Begonia rolled her top down to her waist, exposing her bare back. Eagan caught a glimpse of the succulent curve of her breast when she briefly turned. Good to see nudity wasn't a problem for her.

When Eagan saw Phil directing his cameraman to get into Begonia's face, he held up his hand to stop him. Though in a mask, Begonia didn't need her nudity exposed this soon. Ratings or not, he didn't want to make this some *Girls Gone Wild* TV show.

Eagan stared at Begonia as she stood perfectly still. Her dark caramel skin was too perfect, too beautiful to mar. He did, however, want so desperately to touch it, taste it, feel it under his hand.

A clearing throat snagged Eagan's attention. He turned to the cameras and found Phil pointing to his watch.

Time. Yes. He had to keep going.

"The basis of the BDSM relationship is trust," Eagan began. "I know what you're thinking. That's the basis of all good relationships, right?"

The ladies nodded. Eagan took that time to snap the whip next to Begonia's arm. He didn't touch her. He made sure of that. However, he knew the sound would get to her. And it did. She, along with the other contestants, all jumped. A few gasped.

"Trust is paramount in the BDSM lifestyle. 'Safe, sane, and consensual' is not only our credo, it's our mantra. We live by it. I expect you all to do the same." He snapped the whip again, this time on the other side of Begonia. And he did it again over her head, a feat at her statuesque height, especially in her heels.

"I will use toys like this and canes and paddles throughout this competition and in the relationship. If you don't think you can handle it," he snapped the whip right beside Begonia's head, "then get out of the competition now." Good thing she stood perfectly still.

With whip in hand, he stormed to Begonia, standing behind her. He took in a deep breath and caught her fresh, fruity scent.

"Pull your dress up," he commanded.

Without clarification this time, Begonia rolled her dress up. Then, she turned around. Although he couldn't see her full face, her pupils were fully dilated, so much so her brown eyes now looked black. Her breathing matched that of a hard panting.

He'd done his job. Eagan managed to frighten her a bit. But she didn't run away. Impressive.

"Go back in line with the other women."

By the time Begonia resumed her spot, Iris returned to the living room, walking slowly as she held her head.

"I'm so sorry for fainting earlier." She stood in between Freesia and Magnolia again. "I feel so silly."

"Don't. Your body reacted the way you felt. No shame in that." Eagan put his hands to his hips. "Unfortunately, ladies, one of you will have to go home. As much as it pains me to remove the very collar I just gave you to signify that you're mine, I will have to do it."

He started at the head of the line with Lily and walked his way down it again like he'd done before. He stopped at Sunny.

"You answered a question I didn't ask you."

From the way her long, lean neck moved, he noticed Sunny swallowed, then bowed her head. Eagan sauntered down the line. He stopped at Meadow.

"You questioned my name for you and implied I wouldn't have addressed your special needs."

Meadow wrung her hands. "I didn't mean to. I swear. It's just that every time I buy a necklace, I have to --"

Eagan held up his hand to her. He strolled, stopping in front of Venus. "I don't know what it is about you, but I think I'm going to have to keep my eye on you."

“I would like that, Master Eagan.” Venus capped off her clueless statement with a courtly head bow.

He stepped over to Begonia. Damn Begonia. If he felt something was wrong with Venus, he really felt it with Begonia. She stared into his eyes without breaking her glare.

Anger? Hmm, he hadn't expected that emotion from her. Fear, maybe. Appreciation that he didn't actually touch her delicate skin. He had to find out what she was thinking.

Eagan stepped back to the center of the row. “Although I don't know all of you ladies yet, I have made my decision.” He scanned the group again. “Even though a lot of you made some mistakes tonight, only one will be rewarded and one will be eliminated.” He turned to Begonia.

Shit! Did her nipples just get hard? *Don't look, man. Don't look!*

“Begonia.”

“Yes.”

Eagan cocked an eyebrow.

She swallowed. “Sir. Yes, sir,” she quickly followed.

“You didn't know something as basic as what it means to be collared. I find that unacceptable.”

She lowered her head.

“However, because you were willing to step up and be the first to brave the whip, you have won the reward challenge. Due to the brevity of this show, that means you also win the immunity challenge, meaning you can't be eliminated in the next show.”

Eagan wanted to know more about this one contestant. Once he figured her out, he would let her go and let a real submissive serve him.

“Tonight, I'm releasing you, Iris.”

The woman buckled like she wanted to faint again. This time Eagan was able to catch her and hold her arms.

“When you fainted, that showed me that you didn't trust me. You assumed I would do something to hurt or harm you. If you can't come into the relationship with trust, it'll be impossible to build.” He held out his hand. “Iris, please return your collar.”

She unclasped her collar and placed it in his hand.

Eagan and every woman stared at Iris as she removed her mask. Underneath hid a beautiful, if not scared and remorseful, woman. Her brown hair cascaded down and around her face like chocolate waves. Her blue eyes entranced all who dared to look at her directly.

She handed her mask to Eagan as well. “My name is Deana,” she said. “I didn't think I would be so scared of you and the whip. I just saw it and assumed the worst. You have been very kind to me. If I could do it over again, I wouldn't have fainted.”

“Either this is not the Lifestyle for you, or I’m not the Master you need. I wish you luck in your search.” Eagan took a couple of steps back so that she could exit out of the front door.

As soon as she walked away, Eagan wasted no time turning his attention back to the group.

“One minute, Eagan,” Phil called from behind the camera.

“Begonia,” Eagan began, “since you won tonight, your prize will be a private dinner with me in thirty minutes. You also will be allowed to pick which bedroom and bed you desire before the other ladies. You other ladies can go to the patio where your dinner is waiting. Begonia, Apple will escort you to where we will be dining. Please remember not to be late.”

Although he wanted to see her reaction, he turned and headed to the stairs. Behind him blared the song “Love My Way” with Tony attempting to talk over it to congratulate the remaining women.

Dinner tonight would be interesting. Perhaps he should bring a cane to the table ... for dessert.

Chapter Five

Ananda followed the nearly nude woman through a long and winding hallway. The spider web of a dress she wore hid nothing underneath, especially whatever it was that covered her vagina and ass crack like a leather diaper.

“Congratulations on advancing and winning the challenge,” Apple said with a light voice.

“Thank you.” Ananda decided that now would be the time to ask questions. She would have to be careful not to ask anything that would get her eliminated. “So how long have you been with Eagan, uh, Master Eagan, I mean?”

Apple peered over her shoulder. “Five years.” She smiled. “I finally found my purpose when I met him. I feel complete.” At a door at the end of the hall, she stopped. “I hope for you that, if you win this competition, you’ll find that kind of happiness and peace.”

“Peace?” Ananda had to learn to temper her responses, but there was no way this woman could think that getting beaten on a regular basis constituted peace or any level of happiness.

“Yes. Peace in knowing that what I want, he wants. I long to serve. He loves to be served. It’s a perfect match. If you truly are submissive --”

“I am!” Ananda said, cutting her off.

Apple nodded. “As a submissive, you love to submit to your master, sexually and otherwise. You will enjoy having your limits pushed.”

Ananda thought about her question carefully before posing it. She didn’t want to assume that Apple had sex with him. Her luck, she probably did.

“Don’t you miss out on having a sexually intimate relationship?” she asked, testing the waters.

Apple opened a door. "I have sex." She smiled. "Just not with Master Eagan. Sometimes he takes us to play parties and allows us to have sex with other slaves. He likes watching us."

Pervert all the way, Ananda thought.

"Besides, the pleasure I get from serving more than makes up for any physical relationship I could have. Although I don't need the chastity belt to keep me from pleasuring myself, Master Eagan likes to keep it on us."

So that's what that contraption was. A chastity belt. Damn. Ananda didn't think those things existed in this day and age.

"I thought trust was a big deal in this Lifestyle. Doesn't Master Eagan trust that you won't touch yourself?" Ananda followed the woman into the room, but kept her gaze squarely on her.

"Yes, he trusts us and we trust him and his judgment. I can tell you're not into this Lifestyle." Apple stopped in the middle of the room.

"How's that?"

"Mind games are a part of the Lifestyle. Like what Master Eagan did with you just now with the whip. He could have whipped your body several times, but didn't. He wanted to play with your head, with your emotions." She raised her hand in the air. "Here's the third bedroom."

Ananda scanned the room. A soft sage color covered the walls along with tribal artifacts and art. Four beds sat in the room with a different bedspread covering each. A small dresser sat next to each bed with a matching armoire alongside it. Considering the show confiscated their clothes, she wasn't sure why she would need the dresser.

The plush tan carpet allowed her feet to sink into it with each step.

"This room. I want to stay in this one." Ananda nodded.

"Might I suggest taking the bed closest to the bathroom," Apple said and pointed to that direction. "It may ensure that you get first access into it each morning."

Ananda wasn't so sure of that theory. Besides, she would have much rather been closer to the door just in case she needed a quick escape. "No, I'll take this bed right here. I want to be the first person seen when people come to the room."

Apple nodded. "Very well. Would you like to freshen up before your dinner tonight with Master Eagan?"

Ananda had almost forgotten that she had a private audience with the great Master. "Yes, I would really like a shower and to change my clothes."

"Do you prefer your showers hot, warm, or on the cool side?"

Ananda stared at the curvy blonde for a moment.

"I'm a slave to the house," Apple said, answering Ananda's unspoken question. "I serve those who are in it. I have no problem starting your shower."

“That’s very nice of you. Thank you. It’s not necessary, though.” Ananda found it difficult to have anyone, let alone another woman, serving her in any way, shape or form.

“I know it’s not necessary. I want to do it.” Apple took a couple of steps closer to her. “I can also bathe you, if you’d like.”

Ananda took a few steps back. “No, that really isn’t needed. As you guessed, I’m not really fully into this Lifestyle. I’m going to need some time to get used to all of this. Sharing a shower with another woman is way out of my realm.”

“I understand. I will, however, wait for you out here in case you need help getting dressed.”

Ananda was going to protest that as well, until Apple cut her off this time.

“By the way,” Apple pointed up, “all bedrooms are equipped with cameras and microphones.”

Ananda peered up and caught a small black dome in the center of the room. When she turned her gaze to the corners of the room, she found red lights blinking. Yep, she was officially on a reality TV show. If dropping her top on the first show didn’t prove it then the cameras that invaded her privacy certainly did.

Shit, had she actually bared her breasts on television? What was she thinking? It was a good thing she wore a mask.

“Thanks for the warning.” Ananda scanned the room.

What if her mother watched the show? Her mother would know her body. Not that her mother would stay up past eight at night. And the woman still went to church every Sunday and expected Ananda to accompany her every time. If Ananda missed a sermon, her mother filled in as backup for Reverend Beachum.

She needed to stop dwelling on the past and get on with the task at hand. She had a man to impress and a future riding on it. “By the way, what should I wear?”

Apple opened one of the drawers next to the bed Ananda had chosen. “There are clothes in the drawers. This armoire is yours, also.” She opened the doors. Inside hung dozens of dresses, gowns, and other outfits, both tame and questionable.

Ananda had never seen a closet with so much plastic and rubber clothing that hung alongside Calvin Klein and Gucci outfits.

“If you can pick out an outfit that you think Master Eagan would like to see me in tonight, that would be great.” It was a sneaky way to know what Eagan would like without having to figure it out for herself.

“As you wish.” Apple bowed before Ananda closed the bathroom door.

The bathroom was just as lush and large as the bedroom. In the black-white-and-red bathroom, Ananda’s breath escaped her as soon as her gaze fell upon the large picture window that looked out over the water. Just beautiful. The moon reflected off of the still water as though a part of it.

Instead of enjoying the view or the opulence of the room, Ananda stripped, removed her mask and ducked into the shower stall with five heads. The large space made her wonder if the man shared this stall with more than one person at one time. Eagan looked like the type who needed constant attention. He had two slaves *and* he was looking for a submissive.

No time to think about the possibilities now. She had less than twenty minutes to dress and get back to him for dinner. After her shower, she dried herself and jetted out to the bedroom. She'd almost forgotten Apple was in the room. Thank goodness Apple remembered about the show.

"Begonia! No!" Apple rushed to her and covered her face. "Cameras all around, remember? You could be eliminated if Master Eagan sees your face." She helped Ananda secure her mask over her face out of the watchful eye of the camera over their heads. "He is the executive producer. He reviews everything."

"Thanks. I forgot all about the mask. I'm just not used to doing this." Ananda made sure she could see before making another step.

"Understandable. But you have to remember from now on. That is, if you want to stay in the competition."

Apple stared at Ananda as though waiting for some sort of verification.

"Yes, I do. I do want this," Ananda said emphatically.

Apple nodded. "I took the liberty of finding an outfit that Master Eagan would like."

The dress Apple had laid out on the bed looked beautiful. It was an antique tan color with pale pink flowers over it. However, when she lifted the dress, it was almost as thin as Apple's own garb.

"Is there a slip for it?" Ananda asked.

Apple furrowed her eyebrows and shook her head. "No. Of course not."

"Okay, what about underwear? Does Master Eagan like the lacey kind or satin stuff?"

Apple shook her head. "Completely nude, of course. You're not ashamed of your body, are you?"

Ananda looked up at the camera in the ceiling, rolled a curse in her head and dropped her towel. "Of course not." *Remember, you could be the toast of Broadway after this.*

She allowed Apple to help her slip on the outfit, which seemed too fragile to even wear. The thin fabric caressed Ananda's freshly-scrubbed skin. Each time the front of it brushed her breasts, her nipples hardened. And Apple felt this dress would be appropriate? No bra. No panties. Everything showing. Darnell would have tanned her hide and threatened to call her mama.

Apple knelt down to Ananda's feet and slipped on strappy stiletto sandals. Great, more heels. No time to style her hair the way she wanted, not that she could do much anyway with the mask; Ananda combed it all back into a ponytail.

“Follow me.” Apple headed to the door.

“Wait. How will the other ladies know that this is my bed?” Sure, Ananda had put her clothes on top of it. Knowing these women, they would push it off, throw her bed out of the window and burn the spot where her bed once sat.

Apple smiled. “Don’t worry. I’ll be sure to secure this bed for you once the ladies have completed their dinners.”

When Ananda gave Apple a knowing nod, Apple walked out of the room to where Ananda would be meeting her date ... well, at least her date for that evening. Over the course of the show, she was sure the man would spend special time with all of the women.

Ananda turned down a hallway and was surprised that Apple continued walking. “So when do we get a grand tour of this place?”

Apple turned, but gone was the jovial expression. “You contestants are confined to the bedrooms, the bathroom, and the foyer while on the show, unless escorted. Leaving your room after-hours or wandering the house can get you eliminated. Master Eagan was very clear on that when he started this competition.”

The man was a control freak to the fifth power.

Just as Ananda was going to ask, “Are we there yet?” Apple stopped.

“Here’s the formal dining room.”

With tentative steps, Ananda walked inside and peered around. For a dominant asshole, he had the ambiance down to a T. A long formal dining table sat in the middle of the room. Long, white candlesticks were lit and illuminated the length of the table. Suspecting that Eagan would have a table like this, Ananda was surprised that the two place settings were next to each other, although she was sure Eagan would have the spot at the end of the table. She would have thought he would have put them at either ends.

“Please have a seat. Master Eagan will be with you shortly.” With that, Apple walked out of the airy room.

Ananda should have listened to Apple. She should have sat down. Curiosity got the best of her. She instead strolled around the room to take in what Ego Morton was really like.

At his bookshelf, she noticed a lot of nonfiction titles, mostly by presidents. Did this man liken himself to the president of the United States? No. He couldn’t. In the corner of the room sat an ornately carved golden harp. Although she should have resisted every urge to touch it, Ananda reached her hand out to strum the taut strings.

“You play?” Eagan asked from behind her.

Ananda shrieked and spun around, coming face to neck to him. “No, I don’t play. I was just admiring this piece. Do you play?”

He avoided her question. Instead, he said, “Why don’t we sit down and enjoy the meal I had prepared for us?” He held out his hand, a nonverbal gesture for her to accept it.

With some hesitation, she strolled to the table with him. As she suspected, Eagan had a soft hand, however, the strength in it impressed her. Guess he had time exercising it while whipping young women into submission.

Even though she wore stilettos, the man still towered over her. When he pulled out her chair, her heart melted. What guy does that nowadays? He was still an arrogant asshole with a god complex.

“Thank you,” she said as he adjusted the chair under her.

“You’re welcome, Begonia.” Eagan took his seat.

Just like in the movies, he rang a tiny bell. Apple and Willow, the other slave Eagan had introduced to the group, came through a door. Both had on similar dresses, basically mist with some color.

In Apple’s ample hands, she held a silver tray with a matching dome cover. Without making a sound, she set the tray on the table and lifted the lid. Ananda never thought she would describe salad as beautiful, but it truly looked like a work of art. Every grass green lettuce leaf looked carefully placed on the tray and fanned out in a particular order. Sliced cucumbers in the shape of the sun sat on top of the lettuce. Small cherry tomatoes dotted the arrangement with olives, green and red bell pepper slices, and diced carrots all sitting on top of the display.

Ananda didn’t want to ruin it just yet, but despite it being after midnight, her rumbling stomach wouldn’t allow her to pass up this meal.

After a nod, Apple served the salad, while Willow let Eagan test the wine. Once approved, she served the red wine to both.

“You know you are allowed to ask me questions.”

The sound of his voice shook Ananda to her core. Goosebumps prickled her skin until she had to rub her hand up and down her arm to smooth them down.

“Okay. How long have you been a, uh, well, uh --” She waved her hand in the air trying to summon the correct word so she wouldn’t insult the guy.

“A Dominant?” he said.

Ananda nodded. “Yes. That’s it.”

“You really are green about this Lifestyle, aren’t you?” A simple head nod sent the two naked servers out of the room, finally giving them privacy.

“But I’m more than willing to learn.” She picked up her fork and knife. “Wow. This looks so good.” What an odd turn of events. The day before, she and Darnell dined on some chicken nuggets and cold French fries.

As soon as she shoveled some salad into her mouth, her gaze fell onto Eagan. With a hard expression covering his face, she wondered what it was that she’d done to offend him this time. Her elbows weren’t on the table. Thanks to her background in ballet, she always

sat with excellent posture. This time she chewed with her mouth closed. Even Darnell would have been proud of that.

“Yes, very green to the Lifestyle,” Eagan said. He snapped his napkin and slid it over his lap. “In the presence of a Dom, you always wait until the Dom starts eating first.”

Ananda set her fork on her plate. “Sorry.” If she didn’t think the man would be completely grossed out by her spitting out her food, she would have done that, too.

“After I have started eating, and only when I give you permission, do you begin. Is that understood?”

“Yes.”

Eagan let his fork hover over his salad at her one-word answer. He glared at her, searing her flesh with his harsh look.

It hit her very quickly why Eagan stopped everything.

“Yes, Master Eagan,” Ananda said, hoping her memory lapse wouldn’t have him regretting he didn’t let her go tonight instead of Iris/Deana.

Eagan waited a beat before finally cutting into his salad. He speared a few leaves then inspected them. Jesus, he could drive a person to drink.

Staring at him, Ananda hoped her look would make him buckle as his did to her. He twirled his fork around then sniffed the food. Damn! Who the hell would smell a salad?

Ananda compressed her stomach to keep it from growling, although she should have let the organ speak loud and clear for her. She swallowed, hoping his careful scrutiny would end soon. When she swallowed, her stomach relaxed and a low, long, woeful growl emitted.

Feeling prickly heat sting her cheeks, she placed her hand on her belly hoping to quiet it.

As though feeling like he had tortured her long enough, Eagan finally took a bite of the salad. He turned to Ananda and nodded his head to her, like he’d done with Apple and Willow. She didn’t care if the nod meant that the food tasted like shit. She grabbed her fork and dove into her meal again.

“Tell me why you’re here,” Eagan said after a leisurely sip of his wine.

Ananda swallowed and hoped to God that she didn’t have lettuce stuck between her teeth. “I won the competition and you invited me here.”

Eagan set his glass down. “No, that’s not what I meant. I mean why are you on this show? Why do you want to be my submissive?”

She hadn’t expected to answer that question so soon. She had nothing prepared except for the made up excuses she and Darnell created the night she heard about the show. Hearing reasons like, “I like my ass like I like my cream, whipped” wouldn’t be a good excuse to tell him.

"I've always been curious about the Lifestyle." That was sort of true. She knew of some people who were into BDSM, but it never really floated her boat. "I thought the best way to get into BDSM would be to go to the best."

He chuckled. "Ah, flattery. Cute. I can see you understand what a precarious position you're in. Had you not stepped up earlier this evening, you would have been gone tonight instead of Iris."

She bowed her head, not as an act. She almost blew her chance to make an impression. The world would never see her dance and know who she was. She had to redeem herself.

"Is that the only reason why you allowed me to stay?" She brought her gaze up and stared at him, hoping she was giving him her best fawn eyes.

Eagan dropped his gaze to his food. "Honestly, no. There's something about you." He glanced at her, then brought his attention back to his food. "Something mysterious and familiar. I can't put my finger on it."

The thought of him putting any body part on her, hardened her nipples. It was the one time Ananda wished she could feel comfortable hunching her back to hide her breasts. She just hoped Eagan wouldn't notice her two-gun salute.

She also hoped he wouldn't recognize her from the audition. It was apparent he didn't recognize her voice. Then again, she had yelled throughout their last conversation.

One thing was for sure. Sitting this close to Eagan proved fatal to her staunch resolve. Did the man have to have such alluring green eyes? And that cleft in his chin made her think about licking it, then kissing his lips. She shook her head to clear the thoughts.

"Maybe we were lovers in another life." She laughed as a way to lighten the conversation.

He continued eating. Not being interested in her at all was always a great sexual downer.

"I have a cousin who believes in all of that past life regression stuff. I think that if you don't get it right the first time, you should start all over again. People deserve fresh starts, don't you think?"

He slowly and carefully finished chewing his food before responding. "It's an interesting theory."

Long on action, but short on words. He would be an interesting nut to crack.

"So you never answered my question. How long have you --"

"Twenty-five years," he said, butting into her query. "Since I was twenty."

Ananda felt her eyebrows shoot up. "So you're forty-five."

Again, his fork hovered over his plate.

"Uh, Master Eagan, are you forty --"

"Yes." He set his fork down and lifted his wine glass. "Does my age bother you?"

Although she hadn't dated anyone more than two years older than her, Ananda wasn't about to admit that and further ruin her chances with him.

"No. Age is only a number. You certainly look good for your --" She stopped when he flashed her another disparaging look. "You're in great shape. You must workout a lot."

Eagan took another sip and set his glass down. "Jog every day and lift weights four times a week. What do you do for exercise?"

"I dance, uh, cercise. Yes, dancercise. It's a generic version of jazzercise." *Real smooth, Ananda.* "Other than that, I jog and work on my flexibility."

This time it was Eagan's turn to raise an eyebrow. "So you're flexible?"

She swallowed. He wasn't going for innuendo. It was obvious where he was going with his inquiry. So, Ananda played along. "Yes, Master Eagan. Would you like to see?"

He moved his chair back and crossed his arms over his chest. "What are you going to show me?"

She slid her chair over the hardwood floor. Standing straight, Ananda lifted her left leg, grabbed her heel, and brought her leg straight up next to her head. The sheer dress was long enough that it draped down in front of her naked pussy. The cool air that blew through the garment cooled down her sex until she took one look at Eagan.

His eyes said it all. He stared at her with such carnal intent that her knee buckled. She brought her leg down to keep from falling and returned to her seat.

Although the move impressed Eagan, she wanted to snag the attention of other producers looking for dancers. Since she couldn't dance, not just yet, she would show she had some potential.

"I can't hold it up there for a long time." She lied. She could do kicks that high all night long if given the chance.

"Maybe one day I'll test your endurance." A smile cocked at the side of his mouth.

She swallowed. "I would like that, Master Eagan." In more ways than one.

He rang the bell. As quickly as Apple and Willow served them, they rushed off with their plates and brought out the main entrees. Despite the amazing smells coming from their gourmet dinner, Eagan's scent lingered in Ananda's olfactory memory.

There was something so manly and rich about his distinctive aroma. No other man could carry that cologne, that smell, but Eagan.

"You never told me how old you are," he said as he cut into the shark steak on his plate.

Ananda knew better this time. She kept her hands on her lap and stared at him eating until he gave her the proper sign. She could learn. She hoped he saw that.

"I'm twenty, uh, five." Damn her stumble. She was so used to lying about her age that when the time came to be honest, she was going to lie again.

Producers didn't want to take chances with dancers over the age of twenty-one. Dancers were considered over-the-hill after that age.

"Did you have a birthday or something and that's why you forgot your age?"

"No. Sometimes I just forget how old I am." *Yeah, that made you sound like a fucking genius!*

"And do you have a special talent? Perhaps dancing."

"My talent is cooking." Yes, that's what she noted on her show application instead of dancing.

"Cooking? I guess it's called culinary arts for a reason." He nodded. "What's your best dish?"

"I'm a southern girl through and through. Of course, it would have to be fried chicken. No one makes it better than me."

Even Darnell had agreed with that statement on the rare occasions that they could afford chicken to cook.

"And what makes yours so special?" A small smile started to peek through his aloof countenance.

"A little pinch of my special Ana -- uh, Begonia magic."

His eyes widened at her momentary slip. Waiting for Eagan to mention something about her name, her heart pounded.

"Maybe while you're in the house, I'll get to experience some of your special magic."

Ananda released a long, harried breath when Eagan made no mention of her name. Maybe he didn't really catch it. The name Ananda wasn't so unusual.

"Do you have any brothers or sisters?" she asked, hoping to keep the conversation on him this time.

"Perhaps I need to be asking you questions instead."

She blinked at his reluctance to talk about his family. Eagan's gaze cut upward, which made her look heavenward as well. Camera. She'd almost forgotten they were doing a staged dinner.

"So what did you think tonight when I cracked the whip all around you?" The tone of his voice rolled over her like a hand caressing her body.

Ananda's skin tingled at the thought of it. She remembered vividly the sound. The crack of the whip as it snapped by her ear still rang in her head, cutting through the air like she imagined it would cut through her flesh. Even without touching her, she felt the tail of the whip pushing a small bit of air whenever it snapped down. The air puffed against her skin, but not the whip. He was careful not to touch her.

It was that care, that control, that delicacy that accelerated her heart rate. Ananda remembered how wet she became and wondered why in the hell her body had reacted that

way. This man physically abused women for fun. Despite her body's reaction, had he touched her, she would have laid into him like a good sista should.

"After the first crack when you didn't touch me, I knew you wouldn't hurt me. Well, I knew you wouldn't hurt me regardless."

Eagan finally nodded to her and she started on her very tender shark steak. The fish melted in her mouth and made her toes curl.

"How could you have been so sure I wouldn't have slipped and touched your skin by mistake?"

"You're a TV guy. You would want to drag out the suspense until the last few episodes once you got your audience."

Eagan released the biggest belly laugh she'd ever heard from anyone. She never thought Eagan ever smiled, let alone laugh.

"You're very clever and funny. And you understand the business. Are you an actress?"

"No." She didn't need to remind herself on how to answer. She knew full well how Eagan felt about actresses. Plus, it was never her dream to be an actress. Dancing was enough for her. "So does *my* age bother you?"

He peered at her while still slicing into his meat. "Just like you said. Age is nothing but a number, right?"

She nodded.

"However, much could be said for a woman with some years on her. Wisdom over youth. I'm at an age where maybe I don't want to train anyone again. I haven't decided."

He hadn't decided? Ananda would have to help him in his decision.

"What you need is a quick study, Master Eagan. In our short time together, I've learned to address you properly and to not eat unless given permission." Both made her stomach turn.

He shook his head at her admission. "Trust me. You still have a very long way to go. Being a submissive is much more than addresses and patience."

"What makes a great submissive, Master Eagan?" She stared at him intensely to let him know she meant business.

He set his utensils down and returned her stare, matching intensity with intensity. "A strong will," Eagan began. "A good heart. A good soul. Adaptability. Humility. Strength in character."

"And flexibility, right?" She smiled.

He offered a smile back and nodded.

"What about sex?"

“You really want to do the whole shooting match tonight, huh?” Despite the fact that Apple and Willow had just brought the meals to the table, Eagan rang the bell until the slight tinkling sounded like a train bell.

“I know you don’t have sex with your slaves. So you would have to have relief in other ways.” Her nipples hardened again awaiting his answer.

This time, she caught his gaze dropping down to her chest for just a brief moment before returning his attention back to her.

“I do share an intimate relationship with my submissive. I will not have sex with any of the contestants in the house.”

Apple and Willow cleared the dishes even though Ananda wasn’t finished with her meal.

“Dessert, sir?” Apple asked.

“No.” Eagan stood. “Please retire to your room, Begonia.” He shoved his chair under the table. “Consider yourself lucky that you have immunity for the next competition. I won’t be lenient with you the next time, despite your, um, charming disposition.”

This was lenient? Ananda watched Eagan disappear from the dining room without turning around to say goodnight. What an ass! Then again, he did just call her charming.

“Do you need me to escort you back to your room or are you able to find your way?” Apple asked with an armful of dishes.

“No, I should be okay. I left a trail of breadcrumbs.” Ananda stood.

“You’re funny. No wonder Master Eagan stayed through more than one course with you.” Willow nodded.

“What?” Ananda halted in her steps.

“He likes to eat alone, unless he’s with someone who makes him laugh and who he finds interesting. If you last beyond salad, you’re doing really well with him.” Willow, also carrying loads of dishes, tiptoed over to Ananda. She whispered, “I like you, so I’ll share this with you. You have to learn more about BDSM. That’s a big sticking point with Master Eagan.”

“I see that.”

“Good night, Begonia. See you in the morning *with* your mask.” Apple winked.

Although running into a few closets along the way, Ananda managed to find her bedroom. When she opened the door, it was full of the other ten contestants. All conversations stopped as soon as she opened the door.

“So?” Freesia asked.

Ananda was not in the mood to play debriefing. “So what?” She slipped on a robe over her thin dress. In front of these women, she truly felt underdressed.

“Don’t be cute,” Daisy said. “What happened at dinner?”

“Did he say anything about us?” Iona asked.

Of course, she would ask that question.

“The dinner wasn’t as revealing as you all think. We ate. We talked a bit. Then he left.” Ananda got into her bed. Although she wasn’t sleepy, she wanted the other women to get the hint to drop the third degree.

“What about the next contest? What will he do?” Lily asked, then chewed her thumbnail.

“I didn’t ask. Even if I did, you know he wouldn’t have told me. He’s keeping a lot of things about this competition close to his vest.” Along with other personal tidbits, she wanted to add. That information she would keep close to *her* vest.

“And what about you? Did he keep you close?” Meadow pressed.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Ananda balled her pillow in her fists.

“You have on an interesting outfit. Just wondered what you hoped to accomplish by wearing it?” Meadow, now wearing flannel pajamas, crossed her arms over her ample chest.

“Apple picked this dress out for me. I didn’t. And let’s face facts, Meadow. Eventually all of us will be naked at some point during this competition, so if you’re a prude about nudity, you need to get to stepping right now.” She scanned their faces. Some women carried worried expressions in their eyes. Others, like Lily, continued chewing on fingernails. “Look, I’m tired. I don’t know about you all, but I’m getting some sleep. Who knows what’ll happen tomorrow.” She pointed upward. “Besides, everything we say and do is being recorded for future broadcast. If you want to keep talking about the man, go right ahead. I’m going to bed.”

Before anything else could be said, Ananda ducked under her comforter, still wearing her dress and robe, and threw it over her head. She would see her new roommates in the morning although she prayed that Iona wouldn’t be one of them.

One by one, the women filtered out of the room until only three other roommates remained. In the morning Ananda would check them out and see who she would be stuck with for the duration of the show.

When all of the lights were turned off in the room, Ananda curled her legs closer to her body. Yes, it was a very good thing she got a bed closest to the door. Even though Eagan was done eating, Ananda wasn’t, and she wanted whatever dessert lurked in that kitchen. Once she was sure everyone in the room was asleep, she planned on making her escape. She would sneak into the kitchen. Who would catch her?

Chapter Six

“How did it go tonight?” Eagan asked as he paced in the spare bedroom they made into a makeshift control station for the show.

“It lagged in some spots and hit a couple of high points. Over all, you did a pretty good job.” Phil patted Eagan’s back.

“Nice to hear. But you know what I was asking. What do the numbers look like so far?” The great thing about producing a show in this day and age was getting instant feedback. Nielsen ratings were nice. Public opinion fared much better.

Phil sighed. Not a good sign. Eagan stood up straighter and braced for the news.

“The main theme on the message board is that you’re an overbearing asshole.” Phil stared at Eagan straight in his eyes as he dispensed the news.

“Go on.” No use tiptoeing around the bad news. “I’ve heard worse.”

“The women don’t find you attractive.” Phil turned to the nineteen-inch flat screen monitor. “Let’s see. Lorna69 said, ‘Why did he wait so long to come downstairs? Was he scared?’”

Eagan chuckled, but Phil didn’t share in the merriment. “I told you not to play that prima donna stuff.”

“Glad someone else supports your I-told-you-so argument. Keep going.” He paced the room, listening to each word intently.

“I can’t believe he was going to beat that woman with the whip. What year does he think this is?”

Eagan stopped. “I didn’t touch her.”

“I know.”

“I just snapped it around her.”

“I know.”

“And if I did touch her, she would have enjoyed it.”

“And when will we see that?” Phil swiveled his chair around to face him.

“What?”

“We introduced this as a BDSM show. You’re supposed to be looking for your perfect submissive. So why not start this show with a bang instead of a whimper? If all of the other shows are going to be like this, you’re going to have a flop on your hands.”

Hearing the word “flop” made Eagan cringe. The last thing he needed was to have another failure under his belt. If he wanted to stay in this business, which he did, he had to come back with something spectacular.

“What did the guys say?” he asked and slowed his pacing a bit.

Phil turned back to the screen. “Uh, let’s see. ‘Why can’t we see any of the chick’s faces?’ Tough Timmy asked if you were gay since you had Begonia take off her dress but didn’t ask her to turn around to look at her tits.”

“That guy is a real gentleman.”

“Says the man who whips women for fun.”

Eagan cocked his head. “Keep reading.”

“Fine. One guy asked why you have that has-been Tony Artini as the host.” Phil looked up. “That is a good question. I had that industrial metal singer with the hit song about spanking all set to be your host and you pull this guy from out of no where. How the hell are viewers supposed to take us seriously with that guy as host?”

Eagan shook his head. “That’s one thing that’s not negotiable. Tony is fine and will be fine for the show. That’s one guy’s opinion.”

“It’s a topic in the forum with one hundred-thirty-five amen posts after it. Even that dinner you just had was a dud, although I must admit, I do like Begonia.” Phil smiled the same kind of smile that he had when he’d told Eagan how much he liked the woman who was now his wife.

“She’s okay.” Okay? As soon as Eagan’s gaze connected to hers, he’d felt this instant spark of electricity shooting through his body. He hadn’t felt anything like that since Ophelia.

“Okay? When she cocked her leg up straight, I thought my eyes were going to roll out of my head.”

“You saw that?” Eagan had to admit. Even that impressed him.

Her graceful stance and logic-bending flexibility stirred his cock and jumpstarted his heart. Whatever exercise class she took to learn to do that, she needed to keep up with it.

“Although there weren’t cameramen in the room, we still have the cameras and mics all around. We picked up everything. Just have to edit it down for next week’s show.”

Eagan nodded. Cameras, of course. How could he have forgotten that everything about his life for the next few weeks would be on display? After all of this, he had better find that perfect woman, that one submissive.

“So any frontrunners you see already?” Phil gathered his things.

“Too hard to tell right now. If Sunny can learn some discipline, she could win this thing. I also like Meadow. I want a submissive with a mind.”

“What about that Venus chick? Did you notice the rack on that one? Christ, it’s like she’s smuggling cantaloupes under her dress.”

“Don’t you have a wife and children to go home to right now?”

Phil huffed. “You take the fun out of everything. I’m living vicariously through you. Just promise me you’ll tell me when you do one of them so I can be there on taping day.”

Eagan shook his head. “No sex. I’m not having any sex with any of the women until I find my one submissive.”

Phil’s mouth hung open until Eagan thought the bottom half would completely unhinge. “You’re killing me, Eagan.”

“While you’re shocked, I’ll break this news to you. Begonia is not going to make it.”

Phil set his things down and crossed his arms over his chest. Now, he looked like he was in all business mode, which meant he would be serious.

“Why not? She’s funny. She’s willing. She has a killer body.”

“It’s not about physical appearance.” Too bad Eagan’s dick didn’t get that memo. As soon as her leg went up, so had his cock. “She knows nothing about the Lifestyle.”

“Neither do half the women here. Well, less than half. The one you got rid of tonight was a virgin to the Lifestyle. That was another comment on the board. How could you get rid of that hot contestant and kept the hefty one.”

“I’ve heard that argument before. I believe the terms used before were ‘gazelle’ and ‘horse.’”

Phil blinked. “What? You think I wrote that comment? Give me a break. I’ll just tell you face-to-face what I think.”

“And what is it that you think?” Eagan glared at his friend, waiting for his response.

“I think that if you don’t get your ass in gear that you could ruin what could be a very, very good thing. This show has loads of potential and you’re driving it to the ground. I thought you were in with this plan. What’s going on with you?”

Whatever was going on with Eagan, he certainly didn’t feel like discussing it with Phil. Besides, how could Eagan talk about Ophelia, a part of his problem, when he didn’t fully understand what went wrong in that relationship?

“Maybe you would feel more comfortable talking about what ails you with Christian.”

At the sound of his brother’s name, Eagan bristled. “He’s not in town, is he?”

Phil raised his eyebrows. “Don’t think so. What? You don’t want to see your brother now?”

Phil, the family man, wouldn’t understand. “I’ve got a lot of work to do. I don’t have time to entertain.”

“Not even your own family?”

Eagan turned from Phil. He already knew his family judged him beyond just his predilections. He didn’t need their take on how he was a shitty son and a rotten brother.

“Shit! I still have the teaser promos to cut.” Phil shot out of his chair and darted to the other control panel.

“That’s why you have an assistant director.” Eagan put his hands to his hips.

“I let him go home early. His wife is due any minute now. He should really be with her.”

“If he truly wants to be with her, I can make sure that happens on a permanent basis.”

Phil rolled his eyes. “Christ, Eagan, what crawled up your ass and died? Not everyone is a workaholic like you.”

“I take pride in my work and making sure that people follow rules.” He also took pride in being able to avoid his family for all this time. Family. Who needed them? Eagan would create his own family, one that he could rely on and that could rely on him. Start over. Start fresh.

As Phil sat down at the other set of boards, Eagan noticed something in one of the monitors. A woman crept through the dimly lit halls. He couldn’t see her face, but it didn’t matter. Whoever she was would be going home soon. “I have no tolerance for those who think they are above the rules.”

“Blame me for letting Scott go.”

Eagan headed to the door, when he noticed the unknown woman tiptoed into his kitchen. “Cutting those promos will be your punishment. Be right back.”

“Where are you going?”

Instead of answering, Eagan went straight to the kitchen. Rules were rules. The contract clearly stated that the contestants were to stay confined to their bedrooms after hours unless retrieved for the show. From the silhouette in the darkened hallway, it was impossible to tell who this wayward woman was.

Eagan stood outside of the kitchen door, his hand against it. He thought about slamming his fist on the door, scaring her, and telling her to take her ass home. His need to play mind games won over. He pushed the door open, making sure it didn’t creak.

When he had it opened all the way, he saw a woman bent over looking into his refrigerator. The light from inside of the fridge illuminated her shape. She had on a T-shirt and her hair looked like it was in a bun.

Eagan crept into the kitchen and stood a foot away from her. As she bent lower her shirt rode up over her backside. Her firm, rounded ass peeked from underneath, showing off her naked cheeks through her thong.

His heart pounded as he watched her. He placed his hand on the counter and touched something. Lifting the item in his hand, he saw it was her mask, a pink-black-and-white mask with sequins.

Begonia.

Deciding to go for the scare tactic, Eagan slammed his hand down on the counter. Begonia screamed and jumped.

“What the hell are you doing in here?” he asked.

He heard her muttering curses under her breath. With her back to him, her hand reached onto the counter in search of her mask. Each time she got close to it, Eagan pushed it back out of her reach. She used her other hand to cover as much of her face as possible.

“Begonia? Is that you?” He already knew the answer, but he enjoyed watching her squirm.

“Yeah. I mean yes. I mean, yes, Master Eagan.” She swept her hand over the counter. “Shit!”

“What are you doing out of your room? You know the rules.” Eagan snatched the mask off of the counter and hid it behind his back.

“I know, sir. I was still hungry after dinner. I wanted some dessert.” She gave up on the mask search and backed into a darkened corner. “Am I in trouble?”

“Yes.” He walked toward her voice.

“Am I getting kicked off the show?”

He heard a tone change in her voice. Desperation replaced the naïveté she exuded during dinner. Was this really what she wanted? Could Eagan handle her remaining in the competition?

“What do I have to do to stay?” she asked, when he didn’t answer her last query.

Eagan inhaled deeply.

On his exhale, she asked, “Is there a punishment I could endure?”

He blinked. “You want to take one of my punishments in order to remain a contestant?”

A pause lingered before she answered. “Yes, sir.”

“So you’re serious about being my submissive? You want to win this competition?”

She didn’t hesitate to answer. “Yes. I want to win this competition, Master Eagan.”

He hadn’t expected her to answer that way. He thought for sure she would have walked. “If you’re able to withstand my punishment, I’ll allow you to stay. If not, you’ll pack your things tonight and leave. Understand?”

“Y-y-yes, Master Eagan.”

The tremble in her voice pumped life into his dormant cock. He didn't know what it was about this woman, but she excited him like no one since ... damn, he had to stop thinking about Ophelia.

Eagan gritted his teeth. “Turn around. Face the counter.” Used to be he had so much control. Control over his life, his submissives, his career. Now everything seemed to be slipping away.

“Yes, sir.”

“You're going to be spanked.” He hadn't done that in a long time. For her act of defiance, the punishment seemed appropriate. “Put your hands on the counter.”

He set the mask back on the center island and rolled up his sleeves. Feeling around in the shadowy room with only the light from the opened refrigerator door guiding him, he found her. He felt her trembling after her initial jump when he touched her. His hand rested at the small of her back. Eagan had to swallow to coat his suddenly dry throat.

As he reared his hand back, she spoke. “Should my panties be down for this?”

She had on a thong, so it wouldn't have made a difference. However, he answered, “Yes.” He removed his hand from her back and allowed her to pull her thong down to her ankles. Then she lifted her shirt.

The curve of her ass was something an artist couldn't have captured in a painting or a marble sculpture. It was perfect. Strong, high, round.

Again, putting his hand on the small of her back, he stared at her flawless form for a moment.

“Master Eagan?”

He brought his hand down and smacked her ass cheek. It wasn't as hard as he could have done, but she yelped anyway, probably more out of surprise than pain.

As he suspected, her skin was soft. All he could hear in his head was the pounding of his heart. In his mind, he propelled back twenty-five years ago when he did his first spanking ever. Back then and now, sweat poured from his face. What was happening to him?

He gave her two more spanks in a row on two different spots so that she wouldn't be sore. “It's important that you understand the rules, Begonia.” It wasn't enough to punish her. She had to know why and understand that what he did was out of compassion, not hatred or malice.

“Yes, sir.” Her soft voice weakened his heart.

He smacked her backside a fourth time. “I don't punish because it excites me.” Although right now, his skin tingled as though an electric spark danced over it. “You need to be punished. If you expect to be my submissive, you are going to have to learn to adhere to the rules.”

Before landing his fifth and last hit, she did something that surprised him. Begonia curved her back, raising her ass in the air higher in anticipation of his hit. She liked this? She wanted the spanking?

Eagan landed the last hit and let his hand linger on her curved cheek. It wasn't until his heartbeat slowed that he heard them both panting like wild dogs. Although it was customary to do aftercare after a punishment session like this, which would have included him holding her and further explaining his actions, he didn't want to be that close to her. He couldn't be that close to her. It was bad enough he had touched her this way.

Eagan slid his hand over her cheeks, sliding them from one side to the other then up the ass crack to her lower back. In a move that surprised himself, he grabbed her hips and moved in close behind her, pressing her ass against his hard cock, which pushed against his slacks.

Begonia gasped, but responded by pushing herself back against him. They stood in that position, motionless, she still breathing hard and Eagan standing stoic and contemplative. No doubt in his mind or body that he wanted this woman.

Damn it, why didn't he tell her to pack her shit and leave? His last relationship with his submissive started off with an intense sexual chemistry. He didn't want to repeat that same mistake with the next submissive. And he sure as hell couldn't pick Begonia. Even his body knew this woman could send him to the greatest heights of ecstasy. That scared him more than confronting his persistent family.

Reaching behind himself, he grabbed her mask. He brought both hands to her shoulders, one hand holding her mask, then slid them down her toned arms until he got to her hands still bracing against the counter. His chest rested on her back. Her heart pounded so hard he felt it through her back.

"Put your mask back on, pull your panties up and go back to your bedroom. I don't want to see you until the next time we tape the show." He tossed the mask in front of her and without another word, walked out of the kitchen.

Eagan wiped his forehead as he ascended his staircase taking the steps two at a time. He burst through the door to the control room and was surprised to still see Phil there.

"What the hell just happened?" Phil asked.

Eagan swallowed hard and paced. "What are you talking about?"

"For one, you're sweating like Whitney Houston singing in a concert. Plus," he turned his monitor around to him, "the message boards are lighting up like a fucking Christmas tree."

"From what?" The show was over. The cameras didn't follow him down to the kitchen. And except for the light from the fridge, they couldn't have seen anything anyway.

"From the video streaming from the cameras in the house. You know that there are a few cameras that have night vision on them, right?"

Eagan stopped in his tracks. "Which ones?"

"Well, the obvious. The women's bedrooms, the foyer, the kitchen --"

"The kitchen."

If people watched the night vision camera, they saw him giving Begonia a spanking and what he did afterward. How the hell could he have let his libido overrule his senses? Pressing himself against her was wrong and way out of line.

If she hadn't felt so good, smelled so heavenly, and reacted the way she did, he wouldn't have felt the need to push himself on her. Now the whole world knew he'd made a personal connection to one contestant. She had to go.

"Yeah, the kitchen. Did you do something in there?"

Before Eagan could answer, Phil clicked few times on the computer and watched the screen. His mouth dropped open with what he saw.

"Shit, man, why didn't you do that during the show? That's priceless!"

"It kind of got out of hand." Eagan ran his fingers through his hair. "I should have restrained myself. I never punish a sub like that for bad behavior. I like to talk to them first."

"Forget talking. Out-of-hand stuff is good. This will definitely get viewers to come back to next week's show."

That was great to hear. He had a day to prepare for the next show and to clear his head about Begonia.

"But you know what you'll have to do, right?" Phil began.

Eagan shook his head.

"You're going to have to keep Begonia around for a long, long time."

Damn.

Chapter Seven

“What’s up with you?” Freesia asked, snapping Ananda out of her thoughts.

Even after a night of tossing and turning, Ananda marveled at the early morning’s events. What the hell had happened in the kitchen? Ananda still couldn’t reconcile it all in her mind.

“Nothing. I’m cool.” She even flashed a phony smile to throw off the other contestant but with Freesia’s hmph, the nosey contestant wasn’t falling for it.

When Ananda had gotten up last night to take off her robe and her dress to put on a T-shirt and a thong to sleep in, little did she know that she would have had a night visitor. How in the world did Eagan know she was in the kitchen? She thought she’d moved silently. Eagan’s hand slamming on the counter still rang in her ears.

“So what do you think will happen today?” Lily asked. Silver sequins decorated her all-white mask. The breakfast table full of women in various masks looked like the day after a Mardi Gras party.

“I think we’re supposed to chill until tomorrow.” Poppy picked over her bagel. “Then the shit starts all over again.”

“Watch your language.” Sunny wagged her finger at Poppy. “You know Master Eagan doesn’t like it.”

“That motherfucker is not sitting here with us. How the hell is he going to know unless one of you bitches says something?” Poppy glared at Sunny as though she thought the woman would betray her.

“Hey, no one would have to say a word.” Ananda put her hands up as though Poppy had planned on jumping over the table to get to the woman. “One thing I did learn last night. There are cameras and mics everywhere.” She pointed up and at the corners of the room

where she'd noticed the cameras were last night. "Even when the cameramen aren't here, they're still filming. So listen to Sunny."

Sunny rewarded Ananda with a sheepish grin before bowing her head. If her submissive nature was all an act, she deserved an award.

"Did any of y'all sleep well last night?" Pansy asked as she twirled her curly brown hair around her finger. "I kept hearing noises all night."

"Like what kind of noises?" Ananda sat up straighter.

"Like someone walking up and down the hallway. Then there was this loud knock against the wall."

Pansy must have heard when Ananda pushed the sculpture into the wall by accident.

"Maybe it was Pear or Oak." Daisy snickered and gave Poppy a high-five for the remark.

"That's Apple and Willow. You know that." Rose shook her head.

"Whatever, man. Those chicks are weird." Daisy shook her head.

"Why do you think that?" Magnolia asked.

"All they do all day long is be his personal slave and that's it? They walk around here in a leather diaper and nothing else, and that's what makes them happy?" She shook her head even more. "Don't make no sense. To go through all of that, he had better be the bomb in bed."

Ananda set her napkin down. "They don't have sex with him."

A collective crash of forks onto plates echoed in the expansive dining area.

"Excuse me? They do this shit because they like it? He's not even giving them dick for it?" Poppy stood from her seat.

Ananda thought about not sharing this information with the women. Their thinking that Apple and Willow had problems made her skin crawl. They had been kind to her since she got there. Despite their circumstances, they still deserved to be treated and spoken of with respect.

"They do it because they love serving. I'm sure they'll tell you more if you ask them." Ananda stood and picked up her plate.

"You damn right I'm asking them. There's no way I would be some man's slave and not get *something* in return."

"Then what are you doing here?" Iona asked as she stared at her blood red fingernails.

"Trying to be Eagan Morton's submissive. There's a difference between being a slave and being a submissive. I did learn that from reading those books they sent to me."

Damn, even Poppy had read the books. Ananda had to catch up with all of the lingo and customs of this Lifestyle. After what happened last night, she no longer wanted to do the contest strictly for her dance career, although that still topped her list.

Eagan Morton managed to stir something deep within Ananda that she didn't know existed.

"Is this all we're getting for breakfast?" Meadow asked.

"Damn! You had pancakes, eggs and bacon. How much more do you need?" Freesia asked and glanced down at Meadow's empty plate.

"I'm nervous. I eat when I'm nervous." Meadow chewed on her lower lip.

"You must be an anxious bitch then." Poppy cackled and gave high-fives to Daisy and Freesia.

She put her hand up to Ananda to get some skin from her, but Ananda kept her hand on her lap.

"That was a horrible thing to say." Ananda crossed her arms over her chest. "You should apologize."

"Don't front for the cameras. You know that shit was funny." Poppy sucked on her teeth. "And don't turn your back on folks trying to be your friend up in this joint." Then, she crossed her arms over her chest. "He's only choosing one chick up in here. It could be any one of us."

"I didn't think he would send Iris home." Sunny shook her head. "I thought she was nice."

"All comatose people are nice." Poppy cackled again. "The bitch fell out as soon as he broke out the whip."

"Honestly, girl, that scared me, too." Daisy shivered. "I can't believe you volunteered for him."

Daisy would have been surprised at what Ananda did last night with him, too.

"Him holding that whip plays with your mind, you know, especially with us." Freesia pointed to Ananda, Poppy and Daisy. "Can you imagine if he had touched you with it?"

Ananda didn't have to imagine his touch. When Eagan caught her in the kitchen, she knew he was about to give her her walking papers unless she acted fast. Suggesting that he punish her seemed like the best solution, except she didn't think he would spank her.

Thinking back on the moment, as soon as Eagan suggested the spanking, she thought he was just trying to scare her like with the whip. So she decided to push things and asked if he wanted her thong down. Her heart pounded now thinking about it, just as it pounded then when she pulled her panties down.

The long pause before he spanked her worried her. Had he changed his mind? Was he admiring her ass and the things he wanted to do with it? Was he messing with her mind like he had before?

The first smack came as a shock to her. She hadn't expected it and the sparks that shot from every pore on her body. Ananda had planned on playing along with him, pretending

the spanking really hurt her and that she was remorseful. The first hit straightened her out, but quick.

Not only had she not expected him to go full out with the hits, but she also didn't expect to be so sexually aroused by them either. The first contact opened the valve between her legs, making a slow trickle drip from her pussy.

Ananda recalled balling her hands, clawing the countertop to prevent herself from buckling. The second and third hits caused her nipples to harden, her insides to quiver, her resolve to melt. Eagan had said something to her during the session, but she couldn't hear anything but her own blood rushing through her body.

After the final hit, her body begged for some relief. Eagan's body must have picked up on the message. Although when he moved behind her, pressing his hard yet impressive cock between her cheeks and shocking her, the connection caused her shoulders to relax. She remembered him holding onto her hips like he owned her. At that moment, he did. He could have fucked her right there in the kitchen with her bent over the counter and she would have loved it and begged for more.

Then awareness or his conscience must have hit him. He pulled away from her and left her to go back to the bedroom. Now that they'd made such a bond, what would happen to her now? Would he want to send her home? Or did he want her to stick around?

"I don't know if I could have him hitting me with that whip." Poppy sucked on her teeth. "If he touches me, I'll have Al Sharpton up here so fast that --"

Poppy stopped her speech and stared across the room making the other women including Ananda turn around. Standing at the doorway near the kitchen were Apple and Willow. Their daytime garb changed slightly from their evening wear. Right now they were dressed in white sundresses that touched the tops of their bare feet. Still apparent, though, were the chastity belts underneath.

"Master Eagan has approved for you ladies to take a little stroll around his grounds," Apple said. "Are you all finished with your breakfasts?"

Ananda nodded while the other ladies responded that they were done, all but Meadow. Meadow sighed loudly and pushed her plate away. She nodded to indicate she was ready for the tour.

"Great," Willow said. "Follow Apple. I'll be at the tail end of the line."

Ananda fidgeted with her mask, smoothed down her dress and picked at her sandals, all to make sure she would be at the back of the line. A niggling feeling inside her told her that Eagan wouldn't be too far away. Scanning the staircase and the second floor landing, she saw no one but the camera crews and the director, a nervous, little man with an infectious laugh.

"You won't see him," Willow said with a smile.

Ananda gazed at the pixie-like woman. "What?"

“Master Eagan. He’s watching you and everyone else, but you won’t see him.” She followed Ananda along with the rest of the group.

“I can’t explain his habits. He does what he wants.” Willow smiled as she walked alongside Ananda.

The tour had them going through a back sliding door to the outside first. The hot summer sun already roasted the outside enough for Ananda to pray the outside tour would go quickly. She saw Apple pointing to something to the side where the serene body of water sat, but couldn’t hear what she was saying.

“What did she say?” Ananda asked.

“Master Eagan enjoys fishing off of his pier as well as reading out here by himself.” Willow put her hand on Ananda’s shoulder. “Of course, one of us is never far away from him in case he needs something.”

Ananda nodded. “So what kind of books does he like? What does he normally read?”

Willow’s smile broadened. “He’s not unapproachable. You can ask personal questions like that directly to him.”

“Sure, if he shows himself, or if I win another challenge.” And if she couldn’t get the basics of the Lifestyle down, she doubted a second win would be in her future. Maybe she should start dancing her heart out now while the cameras followed behind them.

“Do you want to win?”

What a loaded question. Ananda wasn’t sure at this point what she wanted. Her body wanted Eagan. No doubt about it. Her logical mind wanted to advance only to show off her dancing abilities bit by bit. And her spirit wouldn’t allow her to be degraded by being beaten and humiliated. So why did her insides flutter when she stood for a possible whipping and when he’d spanked her?

“Yes, I want to be Master Eagan’s submissive.” Ananda followed the women around the large house that was surrounded by a tall brick wall. Guess the man loved his privacy.

“You might have a good chance, especially after last night.”

“You mean dinner?”

Willow shook her head. “I mean *after* dinner.” She winked. “And didn’t Apple warn you about wearing your mask?”

“You saw what happened in the kitchen after dinner?” Ananda’s face felt hot with embarrassment.

The kitchen was dark. The only light came from the fridge. How in the world had Apple seen them? Maybe she’d followed Eagan to the kitchen. She had mentioned that she and Apple weren’t too far from his side at any moment.

“Anyone who went to the show’s website saw you and Master Eagan.”

At that proclamation, Daisy turned around. “Saw you and Master Eagan do what?”

When Ananda replied, “Nothing.” Willow supplied simultaneously, “The spanking.”

The group of women stopped at those two words. As much as Ananda wanted them to admire the beautiful Grecian-looking guesthouse, which included impressive white marble pillars and statues of half-naked men and women, that sat behind Eagan’s mansion, all eyes were on her.

“You got spanked?” Iona asked.

“Now, when she says ‘spanked,’ does it really mean his hand on your ass or are you talking about something else?” Poppy quickly asked as she made her way to the back of the line to confront Ananda.

With a chuckle that started off in a nervous way, but ended up sounding manic, Ananda shook her head to minimize the gravity of the situation. “It was nothing. Five hits and I was on my way.”

“Was this during dinner?” Pansy asked.

“Did he hit you hard?” Sunny licked her lips.

“What did you eat for dinner? You never said.” Meadow licked her lips for a different reason.

“There was a lot Ms. Thang left out of her conversation last night.” Iona’s lethal glare made Ananda look away.

“Apple, aren’t we on some sort of schedule that we have to keep?” To illustrate her point, Ananda pointed to her wristwatch.

“No, don’t try to get out of this conversation. You need to tell us what really went down with you and Eagan Morton.” Poppy stood her ground.

Whenever Ananda tried walking around the obstinate woman, she stepped in her path.

“Ananda is right.” Apple went to the back of the line. “We do have a tight schedule to keep and we’re only halfway done with the tour. Please continue to follow me. You ladies will have time for private conversations afterward.”

Great. Ananda couldn’t wait for that. As it was, every one of the women shot daggers each time they looked at her.

At first she kept her gaze down to the ground, barely looking up. The more she thought about how she shouldn’t feel ashamed of what happened, she raised her head. This was a game of sorts, as strange as it might be. She was playing it to get close to the end. The spanking may have given her an advantage, but certainly not the win. It was still anyone’s game.

The tour had them going through the bottom section of the house, to the other bedrooms on that level, the social room, the library and the kitchen. As soon as Ananda stepped onto the hardwood floors in the kitchen her body trembled. She glanced at the spot where he made her put her hands on the counter as he disciplined her.

“Follow me back to your bedrooms, ladies. I have an announcement to make.” Apple walked with slow, precise steps to the room where Ananda and three other women were calling home for now. Once all of the women piled into the room, Apple and Willow faced them.

“Did you all enjoy going through Master Eagan’s house?” Willow asked with a beaming smile.

Ananda and everyone else nodded and mumbled that the tour had been enjoyable. Ananda secretly wished that the focus hadn’t been turned to her midway through it. Now, she felt like the center of attention. She knew as soon as Willow and Apple walked out of the room, the ladies would pounce on her.

“I’m glad you enjoyed the tour. Your reward challenge will happen today.” As though she cued them, the camera crews came up behind the two women and focused their lenses on the contestants’ faces.

Ananda swallowed.

“You ladies will be tested on the information about the house so I hope you were listening to me as I showed you around.” Apple scanned everyone’s faces. “The contestant who answers her question correctly will be rewarded with a special fitting.”

“Fitting? What kind of fitting?” Lily perked up. “Like a ring? Like a wedding ring?”

Apple shrugged her shoulders. “I don’t know. Just be prepared. Testing will happen just before dinner and the winner will be announced shortly afterward. By the way, you cannot look out of the window or roam the house, until dinner tonight.”

Pansy swiftly moved away from the window and clasped her hands in front of her.

“No cheating. Good luck.” With that, Apple waved to them and walked out.

“No cheating?” Poppy stared at Ananda. “Looks like one of us already has a jump on that.” She took a few steps to get into her face. “Don’t mean you’re going to win.”

Ananda put her fists to her hips and squared off against Poppy. The hell if she would be stood down right here.

“I never said I would. Trust me. You’ll all get your chance for individual time with him. Better make the most of it.” Although her time had nothing to do with the spanking, she wasn’t about to reveal that. It was bad enough that they thought she was some sort of cheater now.

“Hmph. Like I said earlier. Watch your back.” Poppy walked out of the room to her own room.

Behind her walked the other six women. Left in her room were Meadow, Sunny and Iona. All in their masks, each woman returned to bed, while staring at Ananda.

“Looking at me, ladies, won’t get you to win the next contest.” Ananda busied herself with trying to remember certain aspects of Eagan’s house. Had she known she would be tested on the information she would have paid more attention.

“We’re just trying to figure out what you’re up to.” Iona fell back against her pillows and kicked off her sandals. “Why did Eagan have to discipline you?”

“How did it feel?” Sunny asked. Her eyes lit up.

“Did it hurt?” Meadow asked, and shrank back into her bed.

“I thought BDSM wasn’t about pain?” Ananda scanned the women’s faces.

“Not a lot of pain.” Iona smirked.

“If I lose this competition, I’ll be in a lot of pain.” Sunny shook her head.

“Why is that?” Meadow plopped on her stomach and rested her chin on her fists.

Without looking up, she said, “I just need him, that’s all. After my former Master released me, I’ve been feeling a void inside of me. I never realized how crucial it is for me to be someone’s submissive. It’s as important as having air or needing food.” She chuckled. “You don’t know what I’m talking about.”

But Ananda wanted to understand. She wanted to know how a person could feel that way.

“So now what do we do for the next six hours?” Iona rolled her eyes.

“Take a nap.” Ananda curled onto her side.

She needed to start thinking about what this competition meant to her and why she couldn’t get that damn spanking out of her mind.

* * * * *

Aspen smoothed down Eagan’s lapels, while wearing a simple black eye mask.

“How are you doing?” she asked and brushed off some lint on his sleeves.

“It’s harder than I imagined.” He turned to the full-length mirror to gaze at his appearance. He looked together. So why was his head cluttered with thoughts of Begonia and Ophelia?

“How’s that, sir?” Aspen took two steps back and clasped her hands behind her back as she’d been trained.

“I never thought there would be women wanting to be my submissive and would want to compete for that privilege.”

Aspen smiled. “I believe Master underestimates his power and worth.”

Financial and show business-wise? Absolutely not. After the harsh blow from Ophelia, his worth as a Dominant was shaky.

He kissed her. “You have everything you need up here?”

“And then some. I’m fine.” Aspen stood off to the side to let him pass.

“The offer still stands to put you up in a hotel until all of this is over.”

She shook her head. "I understand what you're trying to do. However, please do not ask me to not do what I love. I'm here for you always."

He held her thin wrist in his hand. His hand encircled her thin wrist. "And the diet?"

In a manner unlike Aspen, she pulled her hand back from him. "Fine, sir. Thank you for inquiring."

He still worried about her. He never saw her jogging, in or out of the house.

A knock sounded at his door.

"Enter." Eagan stood in front of Aspen as though lions were going to come charging through the door.

Nina stepped inside. She looked cute today with her hair piled on top of her head and wearing a top that, when she moved the right way, showed off her flat stomach.

"Ready, Eagan?" she asked.

He worried about her, too, but she seemed to be holding up well.

He glanced at his watch. "Let's start the show."

Aspen stayed behind in his room as he and Nina walked downstairs. Phil caught up with him at the top of the stairs going down to the foyer. He babbled something about camera angles and the types of questions Eagan should ask, but Eagan's attention was squarely on the eleven women waiting for him.

As though on its own volition, his gaze was drawn right to Begonia. Tonight, she wore a mini black dress with a deep plunging neckline that went down almost to her navel. She stood up straight and stared at him with each step he took down the stairs.

Ignoring Phil, Eagan strolled to Tony. "Have you done the introductions yet?"

"I sure have." Tony scratched his head, then rubbed his chin.

"You doing all right tonight?" Eagan watched his friend hug his body as though he couldn't control his hands.

"I'm fine. Just nervous."

Tony did shake a bit. Had it been over five years since he'd been on camera? Shame. He had such a talent for making viewers fall in love with him.

"You're doing fine. The first show was a hit." Eagan didn't want to tell him it was because of his late night antics in the kitchen.

"Bullshit. The viewers hated me. I saw the message board."

Damn.

"This is going to work. Don't worry. Just keep doing what you're doing. I wouldn't have brought you here if I didn't trust you."

"I won't let you down." He chewed his lower lip then took a deep breath and stood up straighter.

“I know you won’t.” Eagan gave him a knowing nod, then turned to the women.

“We’re rolling, Eagan,” Phil called from behind him.

“Good evening, ladies.” Eagan scanned each one of their masked faces to see their reactions.

“Good evening, Master Eagan,” they all replied in perfect unison.

He paused for a millisecond longer when his gaze fell on Begonia again. Then he turned away and continued. “Did you enjoy the tour of my house and grounds today?”

The ladies all nodded, except for Begonia.

“Master Eagan, why weren’t we allowed upstairs?” she asked.

He cleared his throat before answering. “Those areas are off limits for now. The further you get into the competition, the more access you’ll have in my home.”

She nodded, but something in her soft brown eyes looked like she didn’t quite believe him.

“As Apple and Willow explained to you after your tour today, you all will be tested on your knowledge of my house and surrounding area.” He started with Lily at the front of the line and strolled down the length of ladies, until he got to Begonia. “I’ll ask one question and one question only. The one who answers my question properly, will get the reward. I’ll announce what that reward is after the challenge.” Electricity surged in their stares, but Eagan wasn’t about to break it.

Begonia shifted her weight in her skyscraper heels, the ones that made her legs look like they went all the way up to her armpits.

“The first one I’ll talk to tonight is,” he paused before making his announcement, “Venus.”

She shrieked as though the man was a game-show host and she’d just won a new car. Eagan didn’t reward her exuberance with a reaction.

“Apple, please bring Venus to the dining room.” Eagan walked to the room with a bevy of camera crews following behind him.

He purposely didn’t request Begonia first, to play with her mind. Plus, he just wasn’t ready to deal with her yet. A day later and his heart still thudded over what had happened between them. He had to shake her up for the questioning. Despite Phil’s insistence that she last on the show, it would all depend on Begonia.

Eagan sat in the chair at the end of his long table. The camera crews all scurried around him and behind him.

“Miss Venus,” Apple announced and presented the busty blonde to him.

As he suspected, Venus sauntered into the room. She wore a flesh-colored tube dress that clung to every curve on her body. As visually appealing as she was, he wasn’t excited by her. Perhaps whatever she would say would sway him. For now, he was still on guard.

"I'm so glad you wanted me first," she said in a provocative way. Her black mask accentuated her gray eyes.

Before she sat down, Eagan held up his hand. "Wait."

She froze in her spot.

"Turn around. I want to see you." Actually, he wanted the viewing audience to take a gander at her. No matter what he suspected of her, she was an attractive woman with an incredible body.

Venus did a slow turn with her hands in the air. By the time she faced Eagan again, her nipples poked proudly through her dress.

"Have a seat." Eagan pointed to a chair next to him.

After she sat down, the cameras moved in tight to her face. Eagan noticed how she licked her lips and leaned in closer to him. Was all that for him or the cameras? With her, he wasn't sure yet.

"You walked through my gardens and saw all of my plants and flowers. Which flower is my favorite?" He knew Apple had specifically mentioned this, so any contestant paying attention should know this.

Venus chewed on her lower lip then glanced at the cameras. "Your favorite?"

"Yes. And please don't say that Apple didn't tell you. I watched the playback of the tour this morning."

Venus rubbed her hand over her neck, touching her collar. Maybe she felt she would be losing it soon. No worries for this contest. This was the reward challenge.

A smile spread across her face. "The Venus Flytrap of course."

Eagan drummed his fingertips on the table. "Thank you." He directed his attention to Apple standing at the doorway. "Please bring in Meadow next."

"Did I get it right?" Venus asked.

Of course she didn't get it right. With the cameras right in her face, it would have been a perfect time to burst her bubble. Instead, he said, "You'll know when I make the announcement to everyone."

Although she opened her mouth to continue arguing, Venus nodded and left the room without a word. Apple escorted Meadow into the room and led her to the seat Venus had once occupied. Eagan wasted no time in grilling her.

Instead of easing her into the questioning session, Eagan went right to it. "I like to read outside."

Meadow cut him off. "On the pier! I know this one! I remembered."

The hairs on the back of his neck stood at her interruption. When he remained quiet, the smile melted from her face and she listened to him again.

"What do I drink while I'm reading?" he asked.

This time she chewed her bottom lip. "I don't think Apple mentioned that."

He knew exactly what Apple had said. At the time, she mentioned that he drank Sechung oolong tea, Meadow was chatting with Pansy, which is why he asked her this question.

"Want to render a guess?" he asked.

She paused then shook her head.

"Apple, bring in Poppy, please."

Defeated, Meadow slinked away, passing Poppy on her way out. Poppy's dark skin showcased her body beautifully. Her full lips were painted in a dark berry color.

"I saw Venus and big girl look all upset. I'm ready for you. I was listening hard." She sucked her teeth and leaned back in the chair. Her harsh comment took away from her beauty. "What you got for me?"

"Whose painting hangs in my guest bathroom?" he asked, knowing she wouldn't know the answer.

"What? I thought you were going to ask what color are your drapes and shit, uh, stuff."

Eagan stared at her, waiting for an answer.

"I don't know."

This was going to be a long day. Once Poppy was escorted out, the remaining women who saw him were no better. They either fumbled through a pathetic answer or they didn't bother to guess at all.

Sunny was the next-to-the-last to see him. So far no one had impressed him nor gotten any answer correct. She sat down and placed her hands on her lap.

"You visited my library earlier," Eagan began. "Who's my favorite author?"

Sunny sat pensive for a moment. Just as Eagan was going to ask for the final contestant to be brought to him, she said, "Apple pointed out your J.D. Salinger book next to your chair by the window."

He nodded. She was the first one to answer the question correctly.

"Thank you, Sunny."

"However, I doubt that's your favorite author." She sat up straighter. "I think it's Hemingway."

Eagan blinked. "Really? Why is that?"

"You have so many of his books on your shelf, more than any other author, plus his biographies. I noticed that when we walked around the room."

Answering the question properly impressed him. Actually knowing what he liked simply from observation bowled him over. She nailed it. If Begonia didn't answer her question correctly, Sunny would win the reward challenge.

“Thank you for your comments.” He didn’t want to tell her that she was right even though she was. He would save that for afterward.

Sunny bowed her head and stood. Before leaving, she faced Eagan again. “Seems you have a soft spot for the wounded. Hemingway, Tony --”

“Thank you for your answer. Apple, show Sunny out, please.” Eagan gritted his teeth. He wasn’t about to sit and have this stranger evaluate his life like some third-rate shrink.

Hemingway was a great writer. Tony was a talented man. His mother and brother were fine without him. Sunny was just a contestant on a reality show. And she had him pegged.

The last contestant stood at the doorway. Begonia. In her four-inch stilettos, she swayed toward him. Now, her body he loved. Her strong legs appeared sculpted and carved. Her long neck stemmed gracefully from the top of her dress. Even her plump lips enamored him.

She waited for him to give her permission to sit down. She was learning and very quickly at that.

“Last one. I hope you were paying attention.” Eagan stared at her to see her reaction.

A slight smile curled at the corner of her mouth like she knew a secret. “I’ll do my best.”

He opened his mouth to ask the final question, and she cut him off.

“Are you going to ask me about the kitchen?”

Eagan bit the inside of his cheek to keep from smiling. “Is the kitchen the area where you do your best work?”

Her smile widened. “So I’ve been told.” She crossed her long legs.

“What kind of refrigerator do I have?” The question was basic, but it was all a head-game. He brought up the refrigerator to remind her of where he’d found her early that morning.

“Sub Zero.” She nodded her head as though she’d answered the question correctly.

Eagan’s shoulders relaxed. How could she have answered the question incorrectly?

“Thank you. You can go back to the living room with the other contestants.” He looked away from her.

“That wasn’t the right answer?” She slowed in getting up.

“I’ll let you know along with the other ladies.”

“No, please, tell me now. I’m right, aren’t I?”

He stared at her. Something in his stare must have communicated his thoughts.

She sighed and leaned her head back. “I thought for sure that was the right answer.”

“I’ll confirm if you’re right or wrong when I go out to the living room. There will only be one winner.”

Begonia stood and sauntered back to the doorway. Eagan had almost forgotten the low back on the dress she wore. Her dark honey skin glowed, making him want to lick her all over.

She turned at the doorway, waited a beat, and stormed back to him. In his face, she panted.

“Black Outhouse Hollyhock,” she began. “That’s your favorite flower. Sechung oolong tea is what you drink when you read. Frida Kahlo’s “Frida By The Gulf” is the painting in your bathroom. Your front door comes from an old church in Spain that was destroyed. Your dungeon is on the second floor in case your house ever gets flooded. The first car you ever bought was a 1965 Lotus Roadster that you still drive. The three fruit-bearing trees you have on your property are apple, pear, and fig. Your favorite fish to catch is the catfish although you prefer deep-sea fishing. And none of your guest bedrooms have a TV because you want to encourage your guests to read and write.”

With each right answer, Eagan’s cock rose.

“If Sunny would have shared her question with me, I probably could have answered that, too. Just because I didn’t know the one answer, doesn’t mean I don’t know you.” She spun around and stormed out of the dining room.

“Damn, she was good. She’s winning the reward challenge, right?” Phil asked after he made one camera follow her out.

Eagan bolted from his chair. “You’ll find out along with the rest of them.”

“Damn it, E.”

“Where’s your sense of adventure?”

Eagan strolled to the living room once his raging hard-on subsided. One of two things would have to happen soon. He would either have to get rid of Begonia or fuck her. Either decision would do him in.

He stood before the throng of women scattered about his living room.

“Ladies, please line up for Master Eagan,” Apple said. Willow stood on the other side of Eagan, always with a smile.

“Time for the announcement of the winner for this challenge.” Tony stepped forward. “Did you like what you heard from the women?”

Eagan volleyed his attention from one end to the other. “Quite frankly, no, I didn’t.”

Every woman frowned, especially Begonia.

“I was hoping that a lot more women would have paid attention to what they were learning about me and my home. I was shocked to see such disregard for the information given to them.” Again, starting from Lily, he meandered down the line, staring each woman in her eyes. “Some of you guessed at your answers hoping to get it right.”

Pansy stared down at the floor.

“Others didn’t even venture a guess.”

Meadow looked close to crying with fat tears cresting on her lower lids.

“Only two of you impressed me.” He stood in front of Venus, but looked at Sunny and Begonia. “One had her answer correct, while the other answered everyone else’s answers correctly.” He moved down to Begonia. Through her dress, he could almost see her heart beating. “Unfortunately the rules of the game were very clear. I ask you one question and you answer *your* question correctly.”

Begonia pressed her full lips together in a tight line.

“Therefore, the winner of the first challenge is Sunny. She answered her question correctly and was the only one to do so.”

She bowed her head. “Thank you, Master Eagan.”

He turned back to Begonia. “I’m sorry, Begonia. Although you are quite knowledgeable on different facts about me, you did not answer your own question correctly. I have a Viking refrigerator. I thought for sure you would have gotten that answer correct.”

“Guess I was looking in the wrong place.” Begonia’s eyes narrowed. “Or maybe I was distracted.”

Eagan raised his hand and stroked her cheek. “Distracted seems to be the appropriate answer.”

He brought his hand down and walked to Sunny. With her small smile and hands behind her, she looked happy. Appropriate, but happy.

“For your reward, Sunny, you’ll be fitted with a custom leather and silk corset tailored specifically for you.”

Her eyes widened. “Thank you so much, Master Eagan.”

“Come with me. You and I will eat dinner alone tonight.” He glanced at Begonia. “The rest of you will eat in the kitchen where you ate last night. Be prepared for tomorrow.” He waited a beat before speaking again. “One of you will go home.” Then stared at Begonia.

No matter how good she was in the contest, he had to send her home. She wasn’t a true submissive. And he wasn’t truly convinced he could forget her that easily.

Chapter Eight

Restless couldn't describe how Ananda felt. After dinner, when she and the other ladies all went to bed, she laid on top of her comforter tossing and turning. She'd flip one way and caught a glimpse of Iona sleeping across from her. Since she couldn't stand her, she turned the other way and saw Sunny sleeping. If that smile on her face meant anything, the woman probably had a memorable dinner with Eagan.

Damn. How could Ananda fuck up her chance with Eagan? She could have been fitted with a corset had she remembered to look at the damn name on the fridge.

Meadow's snoring kept her from falling asleep.

"That's it." She hopped out of bed and tiptoed to the door. She had to take a walk and she didn't care if she got caught or got kicked out. It was only the second day and she wanted to claw out of her own skin.

Ananda waited until Meadow let out a long, loud snore before opening her door and creeping out. Mask in place this time, she slinked low and in the shadows to keep from being in the camera's eye. Instead of heading to the kitchen like last time, she decided to be dangerous and head upstairs. From the little tour, she knew Eagan's room was on the third floor. So she would hang out on the second floor.

Great thing about marble. It didn't squeak. She stayed close to the wall, keeping her head down, her face covered with her hands. Once she got onto the second floor, she pressed her back against the wall. The cool wall felt good against her sweaty palms.

Ananda got to a doorway with a sheer curtain over it. Peeking in the corner, she saw Willow sleeping in a little ball in the middle of a huge bed. A small lamp cast a low hue in the room to make her visible. Ananda went past her room and to the door at the end of the hall. This had to be Eagan's office. Knowing her luck, though, it would be locked.

She gripped the knob and turned, finding no resistance. Ananda's heart pounded as soon as she cracked the door open. She poked her head around the door and saw the bottom of an impressive-looking desk. Jackpot!

With one foot inside, she felt invincible. She'd managed to get out of bed, roam the house and get into Eagan's private office.

Ananda closed the door behind herself and felt around the wall for a light switch. She found the office. Surely, she could find a way to illuminate this cloaked room. Her fingers tripped on a switch and she flipped it up. When she turned, she had to cover her mouth to keep from screaming.

Eagan Morton himself sat at his desk, his hands clasped together and resting on top. He looked all-together cool. The jacket he wore for the questioning and dinner covered a chair next to his desk. The top two buttons of his shirt had been relieved of their duties, exposing a tiny peek at his chest.

He planted his hands on top of his desk and pushed himself up. "Let me guess. Begonia?"

Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! This wasn't good.

"Not the bathroom, I take it." Humor usually got her out of sticky situations. This wouldn't be one of those times.

He walked around his long mahogany desk and stalked her. Though her hand rested on the doorknob behind her back, Ananda didn't dare turn it or try to run. Why escape the inevitable?

Eagan stood a few feet from her, but didn't utter a word. At least Ananda had hoped he didn't say anything on his trek to her. Her heart pounded so hard it sounded in her skull.

"First, I catch you in the kitchen, and now you dare to leave your room again, come upstairs and sneak into my office. Is this some sort of thrill for you, Begonia, or are you sleepwalking?"

"I guess you wouldn't believe me if I said I was sleepwalking, would you, Master Eagan?" She chewed on her lower lip and backed further into the door when he moved in closer to her.

"Oh, no. You can drop that Master Eagan stuff. You can't be here for this competition. A true submissive knows how to listen and follow directions. I'm supposed to test *your* limits, not the other way around. In the short time that you've been here, you've done the complete opposite. You know what that means." Eagan stood a foot away from her and reached around to the doorknob behind her back.

With Eagan so close, Ananda took a deep breath, taking in his heady scent. Dear God, she wanted to lick him right there and then. Her heart thrummed harder for a different reason now. She arched her back forward to both be accommodating to his hand's request for the knob and to press her chest against him.

“You know what I have to do, don’t you?” he asked again in a hoarse whisper.

Ananda curved her head up to look him in the eyes. “No spanking this time?”

He moved in closer. “It didn’t correct the problem the first time, did it?”

“I’m sorry.”

“What’s going on here?”

She licked her tongue over her lips. “I want to be your submissive.”

He shook his head. “No, why are you here?”

“I felt restless and I couldn’t sleep. I wanted to take a walk around your place.”

Eagan put his hand against the door on the other side of Ananda’s head, crowding her space. “I’ll ask this one last time. If I don’t think you’re being honest, I’ll send your ass packing right here and now. Now tell me. Why are you *here*?”

She swallowed hard. “I couldn’t stop thinking about the spanking last night.” That was honest. Her restless night had nothing to do with the dinner or being in a strange bed. It had everything to do with Eagan and the subtle control he had over her body.

“So you felt it necessary to come into my private office.” He brought his hand down to her shoulder. “At least you’re wearing your mask.” He lowered his head so that his mouth was by her ear. “Not that you need it in here, since there are no cameras.”

Eagan’s warm breath made her tremble. Ananda let the knob go and brought her hands to his waist. He faced her, his lips inches from hers.

“You really shouldn’t be in here.” He brushed his lips over hers.

On instinct, she licked her tongue over his bottom lip. The electric connection between them couldn’t be broken. Every pore in her body needed him at that moment. She forgot about dancing or the competition or the money.

“I’ll go,” she whispered.

She turned to the door, her back to him. Her body ached as soon as she touched the knob again to leave. Would he really let her go?

“Begonia, turn around.”

His commanding voice demanded that she do exactly what he requested. Ananda pivoted. In a strange move, he retreated from her and sat on a black leather couch against the wall.

“Come here.” He pointed to a spot directly in front of him.

As though of their own will, Ananda’s feet moved to him and stopped at the assigned spot. Eagan gazed at her for a moment. Then, he scooted to the edge of the couch. His hands touched her legs. As soon as he connected to her flesh, she jumped.

“No. I can’t do this. We shouldn’t do this.” He pulled his hands away from her body, leaving her cold.

“You’re right.” Ananda ran back to the door.

Before she could touch it, Eagan was behind her. He slammed the door with his fist. Grabbing her waist, he turned her around. His mouth devoured hers in a powerful kiss, one that blinded her momentarily as she grabbed his shoulders to steady herself.

His full lips surprised her. He captured her mouth with passionate need, yet was yielding enough to be tender.

Eagan broke from the kiss long enough to pull her T-shirt over her head and toss it to the floor. While he pulled her panties down, Ananda worked on his pants, feverishly undoing his belt and zipper.

His hard cock tented his pants, so much so that she had a hard time getting the zipper down. Even if she had to rip the pants off of his body, she was going to get them down. As soon as the garment hit the floor, she wasted no time pulling down his white silk boxers.

Impressive was too tame of a word to describe this man's dick. Thick and long and angled in just the right way that she knew as soon as he slid it in her, he would hit her G-spot.

Before she could admire it any further, Eagan turned her around.

"Hands on the door," he growled.

Without argument, she did so. One hand gripped her waist. The other held his cock and teasingly slid the plump mushroom tip up and down her slick pussy lips. Just like with the spanking, she curved her ass upward and pushed back against him.

Ananda didn't know if he took the hint or if it was out of need, but in one strong thrust, he pushed the length of his dick inside of her. The temporary blindness from the kiss couldn't compare to the paralysis that overtook her entire body. If Eagan didn't have his hand around her waist, she would have collapsed to the floor.

When she regained her footing, Eagan held onto her hips with both hands and with a steady, yet hard, rhythm, pumped himself in and out of her. Damn, could this be happening? Was she actually fucking *the* Eagan Morton, the man she lovingly referred as Ego Morton? No matter what she said in the past, right now the man fucked like a god.

Resting his chest on her back, he slid one hand down between her legs and found her clit. His other hand busied itself with her breast, cupping it, massaging it, playing with her nipple between his index and middle fingers.

Her foot hooked around his ankle. She wasn't about to let him go. The harder he pounded in her, the more she wanted to scream. She let out a couple of yelps, but managed to contain herself, until he curved his hip to the left and managed to hit a sweet spot inside of her.

"Oh, God!" Ananda screamed.

"No!" Eagan pulled out of her.

Instead of telling her to get dressed and leave, he took her hand and stumbled back to the couch again away from the door. He instructed her to lie on her back. Once down, he

climbed on top of her, wasting no time in plunging into her again. To keep her quiet, he kissed her, sliding his tongue in her mouth.

She wrapped her legs around him and undulated her hips. The motion must have pleased him. He thrust into her faster and harder, pressing against her clit while hitting her sacred spot. She'd never had a lover this good, this self-assured, this masterful. She wanted more of him.

Her insides tightened. Sweat poured from her body as Ananda held onto Eagan's shoulders. He broke from the kiss and panted.

"I have to come," she said. Burying her face into the side of his neck, she let out a muffled scream, as she pounded on his back.

Her orgasm catapulted his. Gritting his teeth, Eagan pushed himself one last time inside of her, holding it, as he shot hot cum into her.

Eagan held himself inside of her while she stared deep into his eyes and stroked the side of his face. Lifting her head to kiss him, it shocked her when he pulled out of her suddenly and stood.

He lifted his boxers and pants and held them up in one fisted hand. As Ananda sat up on the couch, he retrieved her panties and shirt.

After tossing them to her, he said, "Despite what just happened, if you fail at a challenge, I will eliminate you from the contest." He turned away from her. "I'm looking for a submissive, not just some sex slave. I need the whole package."

So much for cuddling after sex. She slipped on her panties and padded to the door, stopping when she reached Eagan. "I didn't plan this. I wanted you to know that."

Nothing.

Damn him. And how could she make herself so vulnerable to him, so much so that she didn't even think about protection. That was definitely not her way.

Ananda dressed and returned to her room taking a back hallway Eagan showed her, sated and pissed all at once. How could this man deny the intense connection the two of them felt just now? Even Ananda forgot about her desire to showcase her dancing the moment she and Eagan had kissed.

* * * * *

"I had sex with one of the contestants last night," Eagan said to Phil.

Phil's eyes widened and he did his usual finger raking through his thinning hair. "Christ, Eagan. Are you shitting me?"

"Why do you think we're talking here in my office?" As much as he wanted to tell Phil everything, he would leave out the fact that it was in this very room that he'd fucked the delectable Begonia.

“No cameras. Wise.” Phil paced, shaking his head as he moved. Then, he stopped. “Wait. I would have that on camera somewhere. Where did you do it?”

Eagan glanced up at his friend. It wouldn’t take him long to figure it out.

“The garden?” Phil scratched his head.

“I didn’t know cameras weren’t out there either.” Good to know, if he needed some private time to himself that he could hide among his favorite flowers and plants.

“Holy shit! In here? You had sex with her in here?”

“Little louder, Phil. I don’t think the audio guys got that.”

“How could you, man? You couldn’t hold off for a few weeks before you nailed one?”

“It wasn’t like that.” Not at all.

Phil would never understand though. He wouldn’t understand the animal attraction that pulled Eagan and Begonia together. He couldn’t know the unadulterated bliss of sliding his cock inside of her and hearing her moan. Thank God, the cameras weren’t able to capture her hurt expression when he told her that he would still eliminate her if she fucked up.

“So which one was it? The hot blonde with the rack?” Phil wiggled his eyebrows.

“Phil.” Eagan slipped on his jacket and adjusted his cuffs. Knowing he would have to talk to Phil about this touchy subject, Eagan told Aspen not to worry about grooming him for tonight’s taping.

“Oh! Maybe that hot Puerto Rican chick with that nice ass?” Phil licked his lips.

“I swear I can’t tell you’re married sometimes.”

“And you seem to forget that you’re a multimillionaire who could lose all of that in a second, if you put Mr. Willy in the wrong girl. Now if you eliminate her, she could say you’re getting rid of her because of the sex. Plus the fact that, if she wasn’t on any contraceptives at the time you two hit it, you could be paying out the ass for child support. Uh, you did use protection, didn’t you?”

Condoms? The only thing Eagan had thought about was sliding into was her sweet pussy walls. He’d hoped Begonia wasn’t one of those opportunistic women who would sue him for all of his money. Not like he wouldn’t have deserved the treatment.

“I just wanted to let you know, in case something goes down.” Eagan reached the door.

“So, are you going to tell me which one it was?” Phil hopped from one foot to the other like an anxious child.

“Yes, I’ll tell you.” Eagan signaled him to move in closer to him so that he could whisper. When Phil was within earshot, Eagan said, “She was wearing a mask.”

“You fucking asshole!”

Eagan strolled out of his office looking more confident than he felt. He had eleven women waiting downstairs for him, one he’d just bought a thousand-dollar corset for, and another he’d had sex with on the couch in his office, and the week wasn’t over yet.

When he hit the foyer, he kept his gaze from Begonia. He knew she was shooting him daggers. No use pretending that she didn't want his head on a platter.

"Ladies, here's the man of the hour." Tony held up his hand to Eagan and backed out of the shot.

"Good evening, Master Eagan." The robotic tone started to sound too rehearsed.

Eagan felt like the man behind the voice on *Charlie's Angels* rather than a Dominant. He hoped with whittling the women down, the addresses to him would sound more sincere.

To start the evening, he went down the line of contestants and gave them all a kiss. At Begonia, he leaned in to kiss her lips. She turned her head and he got her cheek instead. Though she had every right to give him the cold shoulder, he didn't need the treatment in front of the other contestants or the cameras. He gritted his teeth and stepped back.

"Good evening. As much as it pains me to do so, I'll have to eliminate one of you ladies tonight. In the short time you all have been here, I feel like I'm starting to get to know you all." At his last statement, he glanced at Begonia, who rolled her eyes in disbelief. "But I know you don't know me completely. So tonight, we're going to play a little 'Simon says,' but change it to 'Master Eagan says.' With the help of Apple and Willow, they'll give commands saying 'Master Eagan says' and state whatever the task may be. If you move on a command where that phrase isn't the preface of the sentence, you're automatically out. The winner of this challenge will have immunity for the next show. Does everyone understand?"

All of the ladies, including Begonia, nodded.

"Great." Eagan stepped back and allowed his slaves to move forward. He kept a careful eye on the group to see who would make the first mistake.

"You ready, ladies?" Willow jumped up and down.

"Let's do this," Poppy said.

"Okay, let's begin." Apple cleared her throat. "Master Eagan says to turn around and face the wall behind you."

All of the ladies complied.

"Master Eagan says raise your hands in the air."

They all did in unison.

"Put your hands down now," Willow said.

Eagan's heart sank when Begonia and Magnolia brought their hands down to their sides. Begonia's actions shouldn't have shocked him, though. She proved she couldn't take direction well.

"Sorry, Magnolia and Begonia. You're both out." Apple tapped each woman on the shoulder and asked that they stand off to the side.

"Master Eagan says put your arms down," Willow said. "Shake them out if they hurt."

Meadow shook her arms, then stopped and cursed out loud.

“Yep, you know the drill. You’re out, Meadow.” Apple pulled her from the line and had her join Begonia and Magnolia.

“Master Eagan says turn around and face him.” Apple raised her voice.

The remaining eight women turned back to him. He surveyed their stance and mood to gauge how they were doing. Venus, as usual, looked overly confident. While Poppy and Lily looked bored. Time to shake things up.

“Master Eagan says --” Before Apple could get the phrase out, Eagan touched her shoulder.

“I’ll take it from here.” Eagan stood in front of the women. “I say put your hands out in front of you.”

In one smooth, unified motion, they did so.

Eagan strolled down the line, examining each hand.

“Been a while since you’ve had a manicure done, huh, Poppy?” he said, goading her.

“What? These nails are tight?” She brought her hands in and examined her fingernails. “See. Look at them.”

“You’re out.” Eagan jutted his thumb over his shoulder to where the other booted women stood.

“What?”

“I didn’t tell you to drop your hands, did I?”

Poppy shook her head as she stormed from the line.

“I say put your hands down.”

In a fluid motion, the ladies dropped their hands back to their sides.

“Sunny, wiggle your fingers if they hurt.” Eagan watched her.

Not one muscle moved on her. She was good.

“I say take off your shoes.”

The remaining six stepped out of their heels and stood next to them.

“Freesia, stand your shoes up together. One is knocked over.”

“Oh, sorry, Master Eagan.” She bent down. As soon as she touched the shoes she, too, cursed. “You got me.”

“Sorry, Freesia. Listening is just as important as reacting.” He patted her back as she got out of the line.

“I say hop on one foot.”

Five women raised one foot in the air and hopped slowly, but in a steady pace.

“I say stop hopping.”

As quickly as they started, they stopped and lowered their other foot to the floor.

“I didn’t say to put your other foot down. Bring it back up.”

Only Lily did.

“Damn!” she exclaimed. “I mean, shoot.”

“Nice try, Lily. Let’s give her a hand for playing so well.”

Both Daisy and Rose clapped. When they discovered they were the only ones clapping, they looked at each other and tilted their heads back.

“Daisy and Rose, please join Lily off to the side.”

Venus and Sunny were the last two left. Sunny didn’t surprise him. She came to this competition as a whole with her game-face on. Venus hanging in for the last two shocked him. He thought for sure she would have been gone at the first round instead of Begonia.

“Down to two. You ladies are demonstrating that you listen and take direction very well. Let’s see how you fare for the rest of the game.” Eagan paced in front of them then stopped. “I say take off your panties.”

Sunny did so immediately, whereas Venus remained still.

“You’re out, Venus.”

“Not fair, Master Eagan.” She raised the hem of her dress and showed off her naked pussy with its landing strip of matching blonde hair. “I don’t wear panties.”

Eagan nodded. “Nice to see and good to know.” He heard the crew behind him, including Phil groaning at the sight. “Lower your dress before the crew has a heart attack.”

Venus dropped her dress and put her hands on her hips.

“I say take off your --”

“Wait! Venus lost. You didn’t say ‘I say.’ Sunny is your winner.” Willow pointed to Sunny, who only smiled demurely.

“That’s not fair. How can I be eliminated for that?” Venus stomped her foot.

“Willow is right. Congratulations, again, Sunny. You have immunity for the next show.” Eagan faced Venus. “You played very well. Don’t feel that I didn’t recognize or appreciate that.” He took her hand and kissed the back of it to show he meant every word. Then, he turned to the women off to the side. “Please join Sunny and Venus here for the elimination.”

The group huddled around the winner.

“Thank you for playing along, ladies. Unfortunately, one of you will have to go.” He glared at Begonia. “Since you were one of the first to be eliminated from the game, I’m sorry, Begonia, I’m going to have to release you.”

“Wait.” Begonia held up her hand just as Eagan held out his to get her collar. “I won the challenge from the first day. Don’t I have immunity?”

Damn, she was right.

Instead of admitting she was correct, he wanted to play with her. Eagan strolled to Begonia. Their gazes connected in an intense stare.

“This is my show. I can forego that ruling and ask you and Magnolia to leave.”

A gasp sounded in the group of women.

Begonia didn't blink. “You could. But then where would your integrity be? If you make your show a free-for-all, viewers may not care about your final choice. So would you still like for me to leave, Master Eagan?”

Without waiting a breath, he answered, “Yes. However, because I did say in the previous show that you had immunity, you will not be released tonight.” Begrudgingly, he stepped over to Magnolia. “Tonight, I'm releasing you, Magnolia. Trust and listening are huge parts of being a submissive. I wish you luck in finding the right Master for you.”

Magnolia unclasped her necklace and put it in his hand. Then she slipped off her mask. Underneath hid a striking woman. Her skin had an almond shade to it, which her dark hair accentuated. With her light brown eyes, she looked almost Native American.

“My name is Mireyah. I've always been curious about the Lifestyle and wanted to go far in this contest. I thank you for giving me a small taste of what to expect.” Mireyah bowed her head, then hugged all of the other women, giving them her goodbyes.

“I'm sorry you have to go.” And Eagan meant that. She seemed like she wanted to stay in for the long haul.

“And cut. Nice, ladies.” Phil clapped his hands. “You'll have a couple of days off before we tape the third show.”

Eagan didn't wait to hear Phil give him any instructions. He headed to the stairs to work off some aggression. The call from Dris Markham, which he answered last night before Begonia arrived, still gnawed at his patience.

After Eagan had convinced Dris over a month ago to hang in with the *Infinity* project, the man made more and more demands. This time a personal masseuse for around-the-clock massage care -- in other words, Eagan footing the bill for Dris's “happy ending” sessions. Bastard!

“Eagan, wait,” Phil called after him. “Aren't you going to do dinner with the winner?”

Eagan peered over his shoulder. Though Sunny had won, he'd already dined with her last night. She proved to be pleasant company, speaking only when spoken to and obeying his every command. However, if he was going to learn about these women, he would have to start spending time with all of them.

“Venus,” he said from the bottom step.

Venus flipped her long, blonde hair from her shoulder and bounced over to him. “Yes, Master Eagan?”

“Care to join me for dinner this evening?”

She beamed and her nipples jutted forward. Guess she was happy.

“I would love that, sir.” She confirmed her delight by hopping up and down.

“I’m going to make some calls and freshen up a bit. You may want to change as well.” He turned to Apple. “Please escort Venus to the dining room in about twenty minutes.”

“Yes, Master Eagan.” Apple bowed her head.

As he went up the stairs, he glanced down at Begonia. The disbelief she showed in her eyes struck his gut like a punch. She ran past the crew to go outside. Good. If her head was full of steam, she would need the summer breeze to cool off.

After discarding his jacket and tie in his bedroom, Eagan prepared to go back downstairs to his office, when he heard a noise outside. Glancing out of the window, he saw Begonia chucking rocks into the water, only the stones she was throwing weren’t ordinary rocks.

Eagan took the back stairs down to the outside. He didn’t need a swarm of camera crews on top of him when he confronted Begonia. He also didn’t want the confrontation on camera, although two women ejected on one night might make for really good television.

Eagan burst through the backdoor leading to his garden. He stormed along the path to Begonia near the edge of where the woods began.

“Hey!” he screamed.

Begonia jumped and whipped around. He noticed right away she had taken off her red stilettos. She stood barefoot on the thick green grass. The feeling must have been heavenly under her feet and between her toes. Surprisingly, she did, however, leave her mask on. Eagan would have thought that would have been discarded along with the shoes.

“Do you know what you’re doing?” he asked once he got close to her.

“I’m releasing some tension, sir.” She gritted her teeth in the response. “You just told me on camera that you don’t want me here. Doesn’t bode well for me making it to the end.”

Eagan wanted to be pissed at her, but his harsh statement spoken back to him choked the words in his throat. He cleared his throat and approached her slowly.

“They can edit that out.”

She shook her head. “Doesn’t take away from the fact that you said it and meant it.”

He did mean it, just not in the way that Begonia thought. Everything about her, from her disposition to her body, reminded him of Ophelia. He wasn’t ready to repeat that chapter in his life again.

“These rocks that you’re throwing into the water are imported from Thailand. I’m estimating that you’ve probably thrown about a thousand dollars worth of rocks.”

“I can’t win with you.” She threw another handful into the water. “Spank me. Tie me up. Tickle me to death. Kick me out of the house. I don’t care any more.” She snatched her shoes from the ground. “People are right in what they say about you. You should be called Ego Morton.” She stormed to the house, stopped, and turned back to him. “Master Eagan.” She completed the statement with a courtly bow.

Before she could storm away from him again, Eagan grabbed her wrist. "Egos are for people who brag and have nothing to show for it."

"Ha! You're the pot calling the kettle black. What do you have to show? A big house with sex slaves. A garage full of cars that you can only drive one at a time anyway. A house full of women who all want something from you."

"I don't have sex slaves." He pulled her to him. "And what do you want from me? You honestly want to be my submissive, doing everything I demand and more?"

"Fucking you?"

"Language." Although hearing her curse engorged his cock as much as touching her did.

"Oh, sorry. Having sex with you. Manual stimulation." She ran her hand up the front of his pants, brushing over his erection. As soon as she touched him, she stepped closer to him. "Fellatio."

"You're playing a dangerous game here." His voice lowered. "Being my submissive is not an easy task. It's more than just sex."

"You wouldn't know it from the last two shows we just shot. Trivia on your house? Playing 'Master says?' If the rest of the shows go like this, this will be a cakewalk." Begonia got quiet when Eagan refrained from responding. She chewed her lower lip then said, "Why don't you have a submissive now? What happened to her? Or is all of this just for show, for your career?"

Eagan took a deep breath before answering. "She couldn't handle the relationship." He released Begonia's wrist from his grip.

"Too tame?" She smirked.

"Too intense." He started to walk by her. "Enjoy your dinner tonight."

"You? Intense? We barely see you. And when we do, you're --"

Eagan twirled around and silenced Begonia with a kiss. Never before had he felt such a current of emotions than he did with Begonia. She tested him, questioned him. From the intensity of her return kiss, she wanted him as much as he wanted her.

Holding her waist to steady her, he backed her up into the woods and up against a tree. The motion sensor light that had illuminated the backyard area extinguished, cloaking them in darkness again.

He broke from the crushing kiss to bark, "On your knees."

As Eagan's heart pounded, he waited for Begonia to argue with him. She seemed the most resistant to the Lifestyle. Her slow descent made him blink. Her nimble fingers easily found his belt and zipper, releasing his hard-on.

Begonia's fingers wrapped around his shaft. Although Eagan should have stopped this, he couldn't. His body wouldn't allow him to not experience this woman and everything she had to give to him.

"No hands." Eagan commanded.

After a beat, she eased her fingers from around his cock. Her tongue flicked against the tip until she slid the entire length of him in her mouth. Eagan growled and clawed the tree, embedding bark under his short fingernails.

Begonia bobbed her head, sliding her mouth up and down the length of him. Though cool for a summer night, sweat rolled down Eagan's back, between his shoulder blades. Her warm tongue curved around his girth as though molding itself to him. Did she really want this life, him, or was this all an act?

No matter what, her mouth felt incredible on him. Too good. Eagan felt his sac tighten. He leaned his head back and pumped his penis in and out of her mouth, fucking her mouth, until she held him entirely.

Enough was enough. Eagan gritted his teeth to suppress the moan he so wanted to release just as he discharged his jism into Begonia's mouth. She swallowed every drop.

Eagan brushed his fingers, clearing off as much of the tree bark from his hands as possible. Then he stroked her face, the part exposed under the mask.

"Good. Very good." Eagan nodded.

Without instructing her, Begonia pulled his pants up and stood to properly dress him again. After securing his belt, he leaned forward and gave her a sweet kiss on the lips.

"Learn about BDSM," he whispered to her. "Please."

Touching her face, he felt her nodding her head in agreement. She must have understood where he was going. Although he wanted to keep her longer in the house and in the competition, he wouldn't be able to protect her if she didn't know or understand about BDSM and what it meant to him.

Eagan turned away from her. He'd almost forgotten he had a dinner date waiting. The motion lights flashed on, spotlighting the entire backyard. He took that opportunity to glance over his shoulder. Begonia stood by the tree watching him walk away.

Damn. He should have never looked back. He wanted her even more. How would he get through the other nine women?

Eagan flew into the dining room area and assumed his chair next to Venus. The blonde beamed as though she'd already won the competition. Something about her demeanor he did not like or trust. Sure, she was opportunistic. Every woman in the house was. Venus had something else sinister about her. Despite her fawning over him, he knew an act when he saw one.

"There you are," Venus said and wiggled in her chair. "I was starting to think you were standing me up." She shook her head. "Miss Venus doesn't like to be kept waiting, Daddy."

Miss Venus? Daddy? Eagan blinked at her statements. Apparently, her looks had gotten her to a level where every man around her turned to putty. Eagan wasn't one of those men. He didn't take orders from someone who was supposed to want to be a submissive. And he definitely didn't like the whole "daddy" line. Despite his earlier spanking of Begonia, Eagan wasn't a big spanker. He knew the technique and he was good at it. It just wasn't his cup of tea ... until Begonia.

"I won't be joining you for dinner." Eagan stared pointedly at her. "You need to understand your role in this house. I'm the Master and you are the collared submissive. That means that you work on my time table and I make the rules."

He watched Venus's bottom lip drop and her eyes got so wide they looked inhuman.

"I'm leaving, but you may stay and enjoy your dinner. I'll send Sunny in here to join you so that you're not sitting in solitude."

"I don't want to sit with her!" Venus spat back, then crossed her arms like the spoiled brat Eagan suspected her to be.

"Again, you're forgetting about my first rule. This is not about you. This is about me and what I want. I'm supposed to be testing your limits." And what he wanted was to be away from her and get closer to Begonia. "Willow."

The waif trotted to him. "Yes, Master Eagan?"

"Please get Sunny and allow her to eat dinner with Venus." He turned to Venus. "Enjoy your dinner."

He had to get away from her before he would have to discipline her bratty ass. Plus, from the corner of his eye he caught Begonia sneaking into the house and going back to her room.

Eagan had to get his head into the game. Although his little head had already picked its winner, Eagan had to seriously decide who he wanted as a submissive. Maybe one more visit with Begonia would help him decide.

Chapter Nine

A few days had passed and Ananda's body still trembled over what she'd done with Eagan. She'd held his cock in her mouth ... and loved it. As much as she had professed to Darnell, weeks before she got on the show, that she would not play submissive to anyone, and especially not get down and be someone's sex slave, she'd done just that.

When Eagan's baritone voice bowled over her, telling her to get down on her knees, she felt powerless to defy him. Though she felt her body lowering, Ananda wanted some part of herself to scream, "Stop! Don't! What are you doing?" Nothing. Her body craved him. Worse yet, her soul wanted to serve.

Ananda shook her head.

"Sistafriend, what is up with you?" Poppy asked from across the table during lunch. "You have been spacey and acting all strange since the last elimination. You were really scared about being sent home, weren't you?"

Ananda twitched up a nervous smile. "Yeah, I sure was." She got up from the table, unable to finish her lunch.

A show would be taping today. She had to be ready. And since she hadn't seen Eagan since the night behind his house, she had no idea what to expect.

Going back to her bedroom, she passed Apple in the hallway. As usual, Apple smiled. This time, though, she gave Ananda a sly wink, a knowing wink. Maybe Apple knew something about the competition, about something Eagan may have shared with her that had to do with Ananda.

Ananda turned and stared at the mysterious woman walking away from her. No time for asking questions, not that Apple would have answered them anyway. Ananda understood where Apple's loyalties were.

Ananda plopped herself on her bed and curled her legs up to her body. Within the last week, everything she thought she knew went out the window. Now, she had no idea who she was and what she wanted. When she started this competition, she wanted to only showcase her dancing and not do a damn thing for Ego.

Just the thought of him sent her body into small, almost orgasmic spasms. She craved him like a drug. The feeling wasn't normal. Maybe he had drugged her. Yes, that had to be it.

Ananda came to this house to show off her dancing skills and so far, except for the leg stretch, she hadn't done any of that. Time to get her head back into the game. She had a destiny to fulfill that had nothing to do with Eagan Morton. He had held her back. Told her she had no talent. She had to prove him wrong. Great sex or not, Ananda had a life before him and would have a life after him.

She slid her hands under her pillow and touched something hard. Lifting her pillow, she uncovered a thin book about BDSM. *The ABCs of BDSM* was the title sprawled across the cover. Who the hell would leave her this book?

She glanced at the doorway? Apple? Had Eagan given the book to her to leave under Ananda's pillow to find? His last haunting words of advice had been for Ananda to learn more about the BDSM Lifestyle. This would do it.

Ananda slammed the pillow back down over the book when she heard voices of the other contestants coming down the hall. One rule she did remember from the contract for this show. No contestant was allowed to have any book or aid to help them win the contest. That was why contestants couldn't use the phone to call friends to learn how they were doing in the contest or what to expect.

"You had better start getting ready," Sunny said to Ananda.

"Ready for what?" Ananda sat up on the bed.

"Apple said the reward challenge is going to start in about an hour. We all have to get dressed and go back to the table where we just ate lunch. I guess this is the reward challenge we're preparing for now." Iona went through her armoire and tossed something that looked like two strips of fabric onto her bed. "Considering you almost got your ass booted the other night, you had better be on your A-game." Iona strolled to the bathroom then stopped and turned around. "What am I saying? Go ahead and fuck up, so Eagan can send your ass home." She laughed as she ducked into the bathroom, closing the door behind her.

"Don't worry about her," Meadow began. "She thinks she's a shoe-in to win."

"And what about you?" Ananda began. "What do you think about your chances?"

"Considering he hasn't bounced me out already because I'm the biggest one here, I feel like my chances are as good as everyone else's. But we'll see." She walked out of the room, leaving Ananda and Sunny alone.

Ananda didn't hear the fair-skinned woman crossing the room until she shook Ananda's bed by sitting on it.

Still in her mask, Sunny's blue eyes sparkled. "Are you scared about the competition?"

Ananda nodded, baiting her to see where she was going with her questioning.

"Master Eagan and the rest of us can tell you really don't want to be here and do this competition. It's obvious."

Obvious? Ananda didn't think she had put off a really negative vibe, but she let Sunny finish her statement. If Sunny saw something odd with Ananda's demeanor, then she wanted to know what it was to correct it. Why not hear it from the woman Ananda felt was her closest competition?

Instead of arguing with the woman, Ananda asked, "So what should I do to prove I want to be here?" Not that she needed to do much more than what she and Eagan had done during the week.

Sunny placed her hand on Ananda's bare knee. "Listen. That's the best advice I can give you."

Not that the touch was overtly sexual, Ananda felt tingles overtaking her body as soon as Sunny touched her, an unusual response to a woman she barely knew or talked to on a regular basis despite the fact that they shared a room.

"As someone who has been a submissive, I can offer some advice. I'd like to help you, if you need it."

Ananda wouldn't fall for that trap. As much as she despised Iona, the woman had a point. This was a competition, not a summer camp. Ananda couldn't trust anyone in the house and she certainly couldn't ask anyone for help.

Ananda nodded to Sunny who smiled in response.

"It would be great if the two of us made it to the final two, wouldn't it?" Sunny's smile went from one end of the house to the other.

Was this woman for real? Did she really want to help her or was she looking to get a leg up in the competition.

"It would be interesting," was all Ananda would say in response.

Sunny's smile melted. "I guess we should get ready. Can't keep Master Eagan waiting."

Keeping Eagan waiting was the least of Ananda's concerns. How in the world could she shake her growing feelings for him in order to show off her dancing and get out of this place?

* * * * *

"A contestant gave me oral sex the other night." Eagan kept his gaze directly on his computer monitor and away from Phil's direction. He knew the man wouldn't be happy about this news.

"Are you fucking kidding me?"

And Eagan was right.

“What? Are you offering sex to the losers as a consolation prize or something? Jesus Christ, you’re setting yourself up for a lawsuit or paternity suit or something.”

Eagan peered over at his anxious friend long enough to watch him rake his fingers through his dark, yet thinning, hair.

“Stop worrying.” Eagan shut his computer down.

“Is there a great reason why I shouldn’t worry? Are you killing these contestants off as you do them?”

Eagan screwed up his face. “Little extreme, don’t you think?”

“No, I don’t. You could lose your money, your house, this show, everything, if you don’t start keeping it in your pants. How have you managed to survive this long in the biz by acting this way?”

Eagan bolted from his black leather swivel chair. “Hey! Stop making it sound like this is a normal thing for me. I’m not one for the casting couch. This thing just happened.”

And every time he looked at Begonia, he wanted whatever was happening between them to keep on happening. What was wrong with him? He’d never wanted a woman as much as he’d wanted her. Ophelia edged Begonia out, but not by much. No matter how hyper and high-strung Phil was, his friend was right about one thing. He had to stop having sex with Begonia, if for no other reason than to say that he ran this contest fairly.

“So is the woman or women that you had sexual relations with still in the house?” Phil braced his hands on top of Eagan’s desk, awaiting his answer.

“Does it matter?”

“Hell, yes, it matters. If she’s here, she’s going to think she can skate by in the contest without trying, because the moment you eliminate her, she’s going to out you. And if she’s out of the house, she’s going to blab to the media what kind of lover you are.”

“Are you forgetting that ousted contestants are holed up in suites at The Westin until the show is over?”

“You think they’re going to forget what kind of guy you are in the sack after a month? Damn. Are you that bad?”

“You are a piece of work, Phil, you know that? If I didn’t love you ...” Eagan adjusted his cuffs after slipping on his jacket. “On to another topic. I don’t like the way the shows are going. They seem way too vanilla. What happen to the shows I planned out?”

“So far the network loves the first two episodes. They were worried you would be way out there with the BDSM stuff. But they’re digging the little games and challenges. Sometimes tame is good. The ratings have been steady.” Phil slapped Eagan on the back. It was the first time today that the man smiled.

“And what about you? I thought you wanted me to go for it.”

Phil chuckled. "I did. Then a Cine-tastic exec contacted me to do some work for him because I was able to, quote, keep Eagan Morton in line, end quote. Play nice, Eagan, and it will be good for all of us."

The thought of being the network's pet made Eagan's stomach churn.

"What are the viewers saying on the boards?" Eagan headed to the door.

"They're like you. They want to see some extreme stuff. Hey, we can't be rough and tumble every show, right?"

Wrong. That wasn't how Eagan lived his life. Time to shake things up a bit.

"So what's on the agenda for the reward challenge today?" Eagan grabbed the doorknob.

"Teaching the women proper table etiquette."

Eagan cocked his head. "*After* they already ate lunch?"

Phil swallowed hard, evident from the way his Adam's apple bobbed up and down. "We thought it would be better for the women to work on empty plates and glasses so that they wouldn't be distracted."

Eagan shook his head. "Great direction, Phil. You ready?"

He didn't wait for his friend to answer. Eagan ambled down the steps. At the bottom, he found Tony pacing. Nerves during the first two shows were understandable. For him to be pacing now seemed really out of place.

"Hey, Tone. How are you?" Eagan stood next to his young friend and tried to gain eye contact.

Tony's glassy eyes darted back and forth. His pupils were so wide, his eyes looked black. Eagan crossed his arms, determined not to grab this man and choke him.

"What's going on, Tony?" he asked calmly.

"Everything all right?" Phil bounced by the duo and headed to the camera crews.

"Just fine. Give us a minute." Eagan turned so that his back was to the crews and he blocked Tony from their view. "I'm only going to ask this one more time. What's going on, Tony?"

Tony laughed and shrugged. The motion looked more like he was wincing than making a noncommittal answer. "Nothing. Nothing. I'm fine. Just fine. No problems. No problems."

"You're repeating yourself." Eagan stepped closer to him. "You know I know what that means, right?"

Tears welled in Tony's eyes and his bottom lip quivered. "I can't do this without a hit, E. I feel so much pressure to do well, like everything is riding on this. It's too much."

Eagan took another step closer to him, getting right in Tony's face. "I wouldn't have entrusted my show to you if I didn't believe you could do this."

Tony wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and ran his shirtsleeve under his nose. It was moments like this that reminded Eagan just how young Tony was. In Eagan's mind, Tony would always be that kid from *Vamp High School*.

"Are you using now?" Eagan stared into his eyes. He could always tell if a person was lying that way.

Tony shook his head so hard tears flew off him. "No. I haven't. I can't get any here." He chuckled. "You got this place locked down tight."

"It's for my protection as well as yours." He put his hand on Tony's shoulder. "Look, go get cleaned up. Have Nina take care of you. And we'll wait for you to come back down."

"No, go on with the taping without me. I'll just slow you down."

Eagan put his other hand on Tony's other shoulder. "I need you here. You're very important. Go get cleaned up and changed and we'll see you down here, okay?"

Tony nodded.

"Do I need to call your sponsor?"

Tony paused before shaking his head. A twinge in Eagan's gut signaled that he should have ignored Tony's answer and called his sponsor anyway. He wanted so much to trust his friend. Eagan had given him a second chance for a reason. Hopefully, Tony recognized that.

Tony went toward Eagan like he wanted to hug him. To dissuade him of that feeling, Eagan took a couple of large steps back and pointed up the stairs. Although Eagan was more than willing to help the young man, there had to be a line in their relationship, even though he loved Tony like a brother.

Perhaps that was the problem. Eagan hadn't hugged his own brother in a while. How could he grant that level of intimacy to a non-family member?

He called Nina on the downstairs intercom to let her know Tony was on his way up to change. Eagan strolled to the Phil and the camera crews. From where he stood, he had a great view of the remaining ten women sitting at the table.

"We're just waiting for Tony, then we can start," Eagan announced.

"What is he doing? Taking a potty break? We're on a tight schedule." Phil glanced at his watch then peered at the stairs.

"Don't worry about him. He'll be fine." Eagan looked into the dining room again. This time, he found his intended target.

Begonia sat at the end of the table, nestled between Meadow and Sunny. As though he had called to her, Eagan watched her blink, then turn her gaze to his direction while the other women continued talking among themselves. Her penetrating stare made him want to challenge her. Was she actually trying to stare him down? Then she licked her tongue over her lips.

Damn. The more he looked at her, the more he wanted her. He had to get her out of the house. He wanted her for all of the wrong reasons.

“Did you read over the specs for the show?” Phil asked.

Eagan tumbled the show idea around in his head. Another vanilla set up. The idea made Eagan’s head pound. He had to shake things up. The time to do it was now.

“Eagan?” Phil questioned when Eagan didn’t respond.

Before Eagan could say anything, Tony sauntered down the stairs. He rolled up his shirtsleeves, a definite Tony move, then he hustled over to the crew.

“Sorry to keep y’all waiting.” Tony smiled.

The expression seemed genuine. His whole demeanor had changed from scared kid just a few minutes ago to that suave heartthrob that garnered him legions of female fans. He could have a successful career again if he wanted it. Tony just had to want it bad enough.

“It’s about time.” Phil stormed toward Tony until Eagan stood between the two of them.

“Let’s just start the show. No matter what happens, you keep that camera rolling, got it?” Eagan faced the cameraman, but Phil was the one asking the questions.

“What are you talking about? Eagan, what are you planning?”

“You ready to get started, Tony?” Eagan patted the man on his back.

“As ready as I’ll ever be. Let’s do this.”

Tony did his usual intro. He talked about the previous contestant that was just booted off the show. Then he talked to a few ladies around the table. Each one of them had an opinion about how they were doing in the contest. Eagan would for sure put a stop to anyone feeling they were leading the pack, as far as this competition was concerned.

Tony introduced Eagan, who strolled into the room. As soon as Tony got out of the room and out of the shot, Eagan put his hands to his hips and surveyed the women.

“Good afternoon, Master Eagan,” the women all said at once.

Eagan remained quiet, watching each one of their reactions to his silence. Poppy looked around the room, then stared at Phil and the crew as though asking for help with her eyes. Meadow chewed her plump lower lip. Pansy twirled a curl around her finger. Begonia continued staring at him.

“You were all probably told what today’s task would be,” Eagan began. He thought he heard Phil exhaling in relief behind him. “You all are going to be learning the proper table etiquette because I expect my submissive to be a lady at all times, at home and in public. However, behind closed doors is another story.” He cleared his throat. “Everyone stand up now.”

The ladies all glanced at each other first before immediately standing. As usual, Eagan kissed each woman. This time Begonia didn't turn her head. Gone, though, was the passion in her kiss, which she'd had that first day.

"In public, I expect you to wear what I want you to wear without underwear underneath."

A few of the women gasped. Sunny nodded. Venus beamed. Begonia finally broke her stare to direct her gaze at her plate.

"At home, I would want you completely naked."

"Cut!" Phil screamed.

Eagan pivoted and with a glare he hoped could melt steel, he cut his attention between Phil and the hapless cameraman, and said, "I said keep rolling!" He stared at Phil. "Phil?"

"Shit! Shit!" Phil paced in front of his chair. "Keep going." He shook his head and kept his gaze from the room as though not watching him would absolve him from the blame.

Eagan returned his attention to the women. "Like I was saying, in my house, as my submissive, I would expect you to be naked at all times. However, for this contest, you don't have to be naked."

Almost every woman released a long breath. Freesia wiped her forehead.

"I do want you to be without underwear, so right now take off your bra and panties."

The ladies all stared at him.

"What if we don't wear any in the first place?" Venus raised her hands in the air.

Her gravity-defying breasts strained against her tight yellow tube top. And the band she wore around her hips had to have been a belt originally and not a skirt for the outfit.

"If you are not wearing bra and panties, or if you're wearing them and you do have them off, I want you to sit down. Those who have to take off your undergarments, I want them folded neatly and placed underneath your chairs. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Master Eagan," was the mumbled response from all of them.

Venus sat down. The rest of the women moved at a snail's pace to first remove their panties. For the bras, some women were creative. A couple undid their bras under their shirts and pulled the undergarment through their sleeve.

Others were clever and had on strapless bras so they were easier to remove from under their tops. Sunny and Lily, both former submissives, took off their tops completely, then shed their bras for Eagan, the other contestants, and the world to see.

Eagan tried not to stare at Begonia, but his gaze directed him to her several times during this ordeal. She was one of four remaining standing. She, like a few others, did the trick of pulling her bra through her sleeve. Pity. Begonia had such wonderful breasts. Eagan wouldn't mind seeing them again.

She folded her undergarments with care and placed them under her chair. The last one standing was Poppy.

With her arms crossed over her chest, she cocked her head. In her red mask, she personified angry, black woman.

“Are you waiting for something, Poppy?” Eagan asked.

“Nope. I just ain’t going to do this.” She shifted her weight to her other leg.

“And why not?” Not that he wanted to humor Poppy, but he was curious to hear her reasoning.

“It’s stupid.”

That reason boiled his blood. “Are you saying my lifestyle is stupid as well?”

She didn’t respond. Instead, she gazed at her fingernails.

“Are you on your menstrual cycle? If you are, we can accommodate you.” He signaled to Willow to get extra towels, before Poppy stopped her.

“Oh, hell, no! I’m not admitting that on TV.” She waved her hand in front of her.

“Do you want to participate in this exercise or not, Poppy?” This time he crossed his arms over his chest.

“Count me out.”

“Leave the room now. I don’t have time for this.” When he barked the command, he noticed Begonia had jumped as though he’d said those words to her. Begonia had nothing to worry about. She’d complied. For now, she was safe.

In a coquettish move, Poppy drew her arms together to squeeze her breasts and show off her cleavage. Then, she said, “What? No spanking like you did with Begonia?”

Eagan glared at Begonia then turned back to Poppy. “I don’t reward submissives who behave badly in order to get punished. If that’s what you’re expecting, you’ve got the wrong Dom. Leave.”

Poppy pushed her chair back under the table and stomped back to her room. Eagan secretly hoped that in the immunity challenge later on that Poppy wouldn’t get it, so he could eliminate her once and for all.

“Now that everyone is ready, let me tell you what the winner will get. The winner gets a seven-course gourmet meal at Belle, down at the beach, with me. You will also receive another prize when we get there, but I’ll save that for later. For now, watch and listen.”

Eagan allowed Willow and Apple to conduct the mini-lesson on table etiquette. He strolled around the table, silent, watching all of the women pay attention to his slaves as they taught the basics. They showed them what forks to use and when, the proper spoons for soups and desserts, and even how their napkin should be used. Later, Eagan would show a select few women how he wanted them to use the napkin. The use certainly had nothing to do with dabbing the corners of their mouths.

Eagan stared at Begonia as she listened and watched the lesson intently. As soon as he stood behind her, he could feel her tension radiating from her body. Her breathing increased the more he stared at her from behind. She rubbed the back of her neck as her shoulders rose and fell with each hurried breath.

Ever so slowly, Begonia craned her head around to steal a peek of Eagan. When she caught him staring back at her, she wiped her chin against her shoulder to play off her blatant attempt to catch a glimpse of him.

At the end of the lesson, Eagan sat at the end of the table. "The next dining lesson, ladies, will have you learning what it's really like to eat with me at home. It's a different experience than going out to dine." He scanned the women, gauging all of their hopeful expressions in their eyes. "For today's challenge, I reward Sunny as the winner."

As usual, the demure woman smiled a Mona Lisa smile and bowed her head, so different than Venus's hop and giggle.

"You will be accompanying me for dinner tonight."

"Thank you, Master Eagan. I look forward to it." Her soft voice floated over the table.

"And you also get to invite three contestants to go with you."

All of the ladies sat up straighter and smiled in Sunny's face, as though they were all best friends.

Eagan held up one finger. "Be sure to choose carefully."

Sunny nodded. "I'll have to invite my fellow submissives. Lily and Pansy." Then, she turned her attention to Begonia. "And I'm also inviting Begonia."

Begonia lifted her head and faced Sunny. Her eyes carried an expression like she didn't believe Sunny had called her name. Begonia might not be too happy about being picked, when she and the rest of the women heard his next bit of news.

"Are you sure Lily, Pansy, and Begonia are the women you want to take with you to dinner?" he asked before dropping his bomb.

"Yes, Master Eagan."

He stood. "The rest of the ladies who were not picked will have dinner furnished here. You can also rest assured. Tonight, you will not be eliminated from the contest." All of the women put their hands over their hearts and breathed a long sigh of relief. However, Eagan wasn't finished with all of his news. "Wait. Before you all get too happy. The contestants going to dinner, you all are on the chopping block. Since you won the immunity challenge from last time, Sunny, you're safe. Lily, Pansy," he paused before addressing Begonia, "and Begonia, one of you will be eliminated tonight. Elimination will be based on what you learned here today. Make a mistake and you're out. Understood?"

Lily and Pansy nodded. Begonia looked like she was mumbling curses under her breath.

“You are more than welcome to practice here at the table for as long as you want.” Eagan strolled by them. “I’ll be leaving for dinner at exactly seven o’clock. If you’re late, you’re eliminated.” He turned back to them at the doorway. “Enjoy the rest of your day. And I’ll see you four ladies later.”

“Cut!” Phil screamed. “Christ, Eagan --”

Eagan didn’t wait to hear Phil’s rant. There were more pressing things on his mind right now, like, did he want to get rid of Begonia now, or keep her around longer?

Chapter Ten

“Thanks, Sunny.” Now pissed off, Lily’s Chinese accent became more pronounced. “I was going fine in this contest until you had to drag me to dinner.”

“Yeah, now one of us is on the chopping block.” Pansy crossed her arms then glared at Sunny. “Except for her.” She jabbed her finger into Sunny’s shoulder.

“Hey!” Ananda pulled Sunny away from the coven of women. “Sunny couldn’t have known what Eagan was going to do. She thought she was doing us all a favor by inviting us to dinner.”

“Some favor. I hope Eagan is not like my last Master.”

Begonia blinked at Lily’s admission. She knew some of the contestants there were submissives and knew about the Lifestyle. Lily didn’t strike her as being one of them. Cordial Sunny fit the mold as someone who could be and had been trained. Glancing at Sunny now, Ananda wondered if she could be like her. Trainable. Obliging. Submissive.

The women, all crowded in Ananda’s room, moved in closer to Lily.

“What was your last Master like?” Meadow asked, then devoured her lower lip.

“Rough. Very rough. He was really into rope bondage.” Lily shook her head. “Some days it was good. Other days, I didn’t want, or need, a knot rubbing against my clit, you know?”

Ananda and a couple of the other women crossed their legs as though feeling her pain ... or pleasure. Ananda imagined that the right sized knot placed in the ideal spot would feel heavenly crushing against the clitoris. The thought of it made her hardened nub throb. She sat on her bed and listened to the other women.

“Who else in here besides Sunny and Lily are already submissives?” Poppy asked.

Ananda scanned the room waiting for someone to make a move. Finally, Rose brought her hand up.

“That’s all?” Ananda pressed.

Ananda nearly fell off the bed when Daisy and Freesia raised their hands.

“For real? You two?” Poppy pointed to the duo. “I thought I was the only freak.”

Freesia shook her head. “I’ve been in the Lifestyle for about ten years.”

“I’ve only been in it three years.” Daisy lowered her hand.

Freesia continued, “Master X and I had a great relationship. He knew exactly how to read my body and I knew how to make him happy.” She stared at Ananda. “There was this connection between us that I couldn’t explain. Every time I saw him, something triggered inside of me. Do you know what I mean?”

Although Ananda knew exactly what the woman was talking about, she played dumb and shook her head. “So why aren’t you with him now?” she asked.

Freesia bowed her head for what seemed like an eternity. When she brought her masked face back up, tears filled her eyes. “He died of cancer about a year ago.” She poked her fingers in her eyeholes to wipe away her tears. “He begged me to start serving another Master during his final days. I refused to do it. I wanted to serve that man until the end, and I did. Since then, I haven’t had a Dominant to take care of. A friend of Master Eagan told me about this show and I got in.”

“So you want to go from one white master to another?” Poppy sucked on her teeth.

Gone were the tears. Rage now filled Freesia’s eyes. “Master X was a proud African-American man who treated me the way I wanted to be treated.”

“Like a pet?”

“Like someone he couldn’t live without.” Freesia shook her head. “Color had nothing to do with serving. You do it because it’s what you want to do.” She scanned the women’s faces and, again, stopped at Ananda’s. “And don’t expect to fall in love with your Master like I did. We were different. We dated before he revealed his true self to me, so I already loved him. Eagan just wants a submissive to serve him. I guarantee you there will be no love involved in that relationship, which would be perfect for me.”

Daisy said, “Poppy, what’s your deal here? You seemed all happy and ready to do this competition when you first got here. Now you’re criticizing everyone and being disrespectful to Master Eagan. If you don’t want to be here, go.”

“What? And miss all of the excitement? Never. Besides, I’m a Sam. Always have been. Always will be.”

Ananda leaned over to Sunny and whispered, “What’s a Sam?”

“Smart-Ass Masochist.” Sunny turned to Ananda. “Just means she mouths off and expects to be punished for it. Most good dominants don’t fall for that.”

Ananda nodded. Was that what Ananda had done? Had she provoked Eagan on the last couple of occasions when they were together for his attention? Had she wanted to be punished? The thoughts all seemed foreign to her. No way could she want that type of attention. Could she? She returned her attention to Poppy.

“If you’re so proud of your chosen lifestyle, why did you act like you were afraid of Eagan when he broke out the whip?” Poppy put her fist to her hip.

Freesia took a step back. “I really was afraid. I’m into BDSM and Master X was an excellent Master, but there were psychological limits he wasn’t willing to push with me, and ones he couldn’t do himself.”

Poppy got into Freesia’s face. “But Eagan is willing to go there and then some. If you win this contest, you think you can tell that man that you don’t want to be whipped?”

Freesia stood her ground. “If he’s a good Master, he’ll know how to read your body. He won’t push you any further than you want to be pushed.”

“And what if he wants to test you?” An evil smile slithered over Poppy’s face.

“Shouldn’t you worry about that, too? You’re not here just to make new friends, right? There’s a possibility you could win this contest, too.”

Poppy shook her head. “Possible, but not likely, not after what I did earlier at the taping. I’m sure he’s regretting that Sunny didn’t pick me to go out to dinner tonight.” She cackled and pointed to Ananda. “But that chick there. Oh, she’s definitely hitting the bricks tonight.”

“Why the hell would you say that?” Ananda sprang from her bed.

“Because you don’t listen, you’ve been fucking up the entire time you’ve been here, and he wanted to bounce your ass the last time we all went up for elimination.” Poppy sauntered to the door. “If I were you, trick, I would start packing bags now to get ready for the big heave-ho. Lily and Pansy, y’all ain’t got nothing to worry about. Do everything right and you’ll be coming back to the house before she does.”

Everything Poppy had said was right. Even having a couple of trysts with Eagan wasn’t enough to keep her in the house. He’d made that abundantly clear. Tonight, she had to be smart. No time for screwing up.

While all of the other women occupied themselves comparing notes on the next person to leave the house, Ananda crept out of the room. Talk of her going left her mouth dry. She needed a glass of water.

The cameramen all occupied themselves with the gaggle of women clucking away at their chances. Just as she thought, no one paid any attention to her leaving the room.

Ananda reached the kitchen. Remembering where the glasses were, Ananda reached into the cabinet over the sink. With one push under a small tap in the refrigerator door, she poured ice-cold water into the glass. Before she could get it to her mouth, she screeched at the person she saw standing behind her and fumbled her glass in her hand.

“Shh!” Willow said and brought her hands up, as though shushing a small child. “I’m not trying to scare you.”

“You could have fooled me.” Ananda set her glass onto the counter and wiped her mouth.

“What are you doing out of your room?” Willow asked.

“I was just thirsty. I was going to get a drink, then go right back to the room. I promise.”

“You know the rules. Anything you need, you call me or Apple on the intercom.” She shook her head. “You know Master Eagan won’t like this.”

A statement like that meant that Willow planned on squealing to her Master. Great. So much for behaving.

In the silence of the kitchen, Ananda heard a piano being played. She turned her head to hear the song better.

“Want to see?” Willow asked with a smile.

Ananda nodded.

“Follow me.”

Ananda was already in trouble. Might as well go for it all, before getting bounced. She followed the nearly naked woman out of the kitchen and down a long, dark hallway. Down a short flight of stairs, Willow stopped at a heavy door. She put her finger to her lips to signal her to keep quiet. Ananda nodded again, although in the dark hallway, Willow probably didn’t see the gesture.

Willow pushed the door a hair to look through a small sliver of a crack. She crouched down, allowing Ananda to stand over her to see. Through the small space, she watched Eagan behind a piano in a large open studio. His back faced Ananda and Willow so Ananda felt safe watching him secretly.

Ananda broke her gaze from him once to scan the room. Mirrors lined the walls on two sides. Windows from ceiling to floor covered the other two sides and showed off an impressive waterfront view.

What a life. Ananda could live and die in this room. It had to have been the best damn dance studio ever.

“Master Eagan normally plays when he’s wound up,” Willow whispered. She peered up. “I don’t think he’s having as much fun with this contest as he thought he would.”

“Has he talked about who he thinks will win this thing?” Ananda had to know what was in his head. If she knew that, she might have a shot. Not likely, but she could dream.

“No, he hasn’t said anything to me. You would have better luck asking Apple or Aspen.”

“Who?” That was a new name Ananda hadn’t heard before. Who the hell was Aspen and where had she or he been in this entire contest?

The music stopped at the same time Eagan said, “Willow, who are you talking to?”

Oh, shit! So much for lying low.

* * * * *

Eagan thought he had heard voices while he played. Not uncommon now with all of the people roaming his home lately. However, they all knew to stay away from his dance studio, his sanctuary. And he’d heard two voices. One he knew was Willow’s. Her light voice proved distinctive enough to be distinguished even in a room of crying, moaning, and begging submissives and slaves at a play party.

He’d also seen their reflections in the mirror. Willow’s dark hair in its pixie cut stood out to him first. The person standing over her proved harder to recognize.

Eagan turned around on his bench and faced the door. “Both of you, come in here now.”

Willow stood erect and entered the room first. Waiting a few seconds after her, another person strolled inside. Begonia. Was the woman looking to get herself eliminated or what?

“I’m sorry, sir.” Willow chewed her lower lip. “I didn’t think you heard us.”

Eagan stood. “I did.” He glared at Begonia, who now found it difficult to look him in the eyes. “So what are you doing here?”

Begonia opened her mouth, but Willow cut her off. “I heard you playing and I asked her to come with me to watch you.”

“So you went to Begonia’s room and retrieved her?” Eagan stalked toward the duo.

“Um, no, sir.”

“So Begonia was out of her room when you decided that it would be great for the two of you to have your own concert?”

Willow lowered her gaze to the floor.

“No, look at me,” he demanded. He waited until she looked up again before addressing her. “The rules are very clear here. Contestants are only allowed out of their rooms during taping and if escorted by you or Apple.”

He saw Willow’s small mouth open until he cut her off.

“And that’s escorting with my permission. I didn’t give you or Begonia permission to take her on another tour of my house, did I?”

Willow shook her head.

“I want to hear it, Willow.”

The petite beauty took a deep breath before speaking. “No, sir.”

He pointed to Begonia. “You, come on in here now.” Then pointed to Willow. “You, go get Apple and have her do an enema on you.”

Willow’s bottom jaw unhinged. “Yes, sir. I will.”

“Leave me alone with Begonia, please.”

“Yes, sir.” Willow grabbed Eagan’s hand and kissed the back of it. “Thank you, sir. Thank you.” She ran out of the room faster than a crack of a whip.

Next, it was Begonia’s turn. Eagan stood in front of her, peering down into her soulful eyes. Her smell made him feel light-headed.

“Willow must really like you,” he began. “She never breaks the rules for anyone.”

“And as soon as she does, you punish her for it.” Begonia crossed her arms over her chest.

Eagan chuckled. “Don’t let her fool you. Willow loves enemas. She loves anal play in general.” He turned away from her.

“So you rewarded her?”

Eagan understood the underlying question. Did Eagan want Begonia there? Was he actually grateful Willow had brought her to the room? He was, but she didn’t need to know that.

He turned away from her and went to what looked like a solid wall. With one push at a corner, the wall opened revealing a professional sound system. He pushed several buttons until Lakme’s “Flower Duet” played.

He loved waltzing to this tune. And if Begonia was going to be in his presence and looking so delectable, then he would have to touch her.

He marched toward her. “Since you’re here, I’ll teach you how to waltz.”

“I would like that, sir.” She spoke softly and smiled so hard that she must have thought she had been rewarded.

“Take this back home to your friends at the dancercise class.”

Begonia’s smile melted. Reality must have hit her that he could still drop her if she didn’t play her cards right.

Eagan held up his hands. “Take my left hand and put your other hand on my shoulder.” She did so, keeping her arms raised in seemingly perfect position.

He blinked at the natural way she fell into position. “Did your instructors teach you that in class or are you really a dancer?”

“I watch a lot of ballroom dancing shows.” Begonia’s already impressive posture improved, making her look even longer and leaner. Her shoulders went back and she stared at him.

“Let’s see if you paid attention.” He placed his hand at her waist and stepped forward.

Begonia took a long step back, impressing him even further. He wasn't going to push her like a professional, but she seemed to be going for it, so why not?

"Nice position." Their rises and falls matched perfectly. Every nerve in his body tingled from just the smooth way she handled the dance.

"Thank you, sir." Begonia had looked him in the eyes the entire time, then turned her gaze away.

"Have you ever heard this song before?" he asked.

"Yes. It's very beautiful." She twirled on the floor with him.

"Keep your head up. Shoulders back."

She did so and cleared her throat.

"Do you know the meaning behind the song?"

She paused, then answered, "No, sir."

His stomach tightened. He didn't feel she was being one-hundred percent honest with him, but he didn't question her. Why would she lie about her dancing experience? If anything, especially now, she should have been honest and bragged about not only being a great cook, but a wonderful dancer, which she was. With every step, she impressed him more and more.

"This song is a conversation between a servant girl and her mistress," Eagan began. "There's a love there that's not fully expressed, but you can feel it." He pressed his hand harder into the small of her back. "Notice how their voices complement each other. It's a harmonious union."

"It's a very beautiful song." Begonia moved her body in closer to his, mashing her breasts against his chest.

Damn. If she knew how good that felt she wouldn't do this, especially not in this room.

Eagan leaned forward and whispered in her ear, "Cameras."

It was all he had to say for her to gaze up to the ceiling then to the corners of the room. Then she brought her attention back to him and nodded.

"So why did you have a dance studio built into your home?" she asked.

"Although I love producing, my first love is dance. I took several years of it growing up and it just stuck with me. The discipline, the holds coupled with the softness of expression. It's all so very reminiscent of BDSM. It's all about perfect positions, trust in your partner that he --" He dipped her back. "-- or she will never let you fall." Then, he brought her back to her feet. "It's also about mind games. You let the audience think you and your partner are truly in love, but in all actuality, you may hate each other."

"So it's more like acting than anything else."

Eagan's smile disappeared. He broke his hold from her. "If you want to look at it that way, you can."

After Eagan turned off the music toward the end of the song, Begonia said, “Thank you for the dance.”

He turned to her. “I hope you cook as well as you dance.”

“I hope I’m here long enough for you to experience my cooking.”

Eagan stood in front of Begonia. Things he wanted to tell her tumbled in his head. Who was she? What was she truly doing in this competition? Did she feel the same way about him as he was starting to feel for her, and if so, did it scare the living daylights out of her, too?

Instead, he took a step back. “See you at dinner tonight.”

Begonia released a long breath. “Yes, sir.” Then she bowed her head and swayed out of the room.

The sway grabbed his attention. And had he kept dancing with her, she would have captured more of his heart. Who was Begonia and what was she trying to do to him? He had to find out. Only one person had the answer.

Chapter Eleven

Ananda stared at her reflection in the bathroom mirror before the mask covered her face. Her body hummed each time she thought about her dance with Eagan earlier that day. Every time she'd been with him, he revealed more and more of himself, which was murder for her. The more she knew about him, the more she started to like him.

Damn. Where was Darnell when she needed him? He could always point out the faults that Ananda never noticed. Damn telephone rule. If she had access to the phone, she could call her best friend to see how she was doing and know what Eagan was thinking.

Ananda heard some heavy footfalls. Outside of the bedroom door, she saw Lily and Pansy scurrying down the hall. Ananda glanced at her watch.

Shit! If it was right, she only had a minute. She quickly donned her mask. As soon as she ran out of the bathroom, Sunny was there.

"Ready?" Sunny asked and took Ananda's hand.

"As ready as I'll ever be."

Ananda walked hand-in-hand with the woman who had immunity. Sunny could have easily blown off this dinner if she wanted and not get eliminated. Sunny had made it very apparent that she didn't plan on losing this competition. The way things were going it looked like she would be walking away from this as the winner.

Ananda and Sunny ran to the limousine waiting in front of the house.

"Right on time, ladies," Richard said and tipped his hat. He closed the door behind them as soon as they leapt into the car.

Besides Ananda and the other three contestants, a cameraman with his lens pointing toward their faces and a boom operator sat in the back of the car with them. No Eagan, though.

“I thought Master Eagan would be riding with us.” Pansy expressed disappointment through her light brown eyes.

“More head games, I’m sure.” Lily crossed her thin legs. “He’s probably already at the restaurant waiting for us.”

“Have you all thought about going to a public restaurant wearing our masks?” Ananda asked.

The women all got quiet and glanced around at each other. Guess the gravity of taking this act public hadn’t hit them, until Ananda brought it up. It had definitely hit her as soon as Eagan mentioned what the prize would be. It was one thing to play submissive at home. It was another to do it in public. What would people think of her?

The one great thing about the mask was that it afforded her a tiny piece of privacy. Only Darnell would know who she was ... Darnell and her mother. Ananda balled her hands into fists.

“I hadn’t thought about it,” Sunny finally answered coolly. “Think about it, ladies. Do you really think that if you win this competition that you’ll be confined to the house? I’m sure Master Eagan will take you out in public and treat you the way he’ll treat us tonight. Tonight will be a great indication of whether you all want to stay in this contest and the Lifestyle. But Lily and Pansy, you two already know that.”

If they did, why did they look so worried?

The limo pulled in front of a restaurant called Belle. Ivy crawled over the building and posts in front with pink and white flowers blooming all over. No wonder Eagan liked this place. The man seemed to have a thing for flowers, trees and all things natural. So what was up with his unnatural affection for BDSM? Ananda didn’t get it.

Richard opened the door, but Ananda and the other ladies stay cemented in their spots until he presented his hand to escort the first brave woman out. That woman was Sunny. She grabbed his hand and stepped out of the car first.

“No time like the present.” Ananda took Richard’s hand and hauled herself out of the car. She didn’t wait for the other women to get out.

One of the valets opened the front door, staring at her and Sunny with his head cocked as they walked through the doors.

“You must be guests of Mr. Morton.” The maitre d’ beamed.

No where in the world would a restaurant employee smile at two masked women. Had they stepped into an alternate universe?

“Step this way.” He led the women to a large table that sat in the middle of the restaurant.

It was then Ananda noticed two things right away. One, Eagan was not at the table already. And two, aside from the valets, maitre d’, and wait staff, the restaurant was completely empty.

“Are you all closed today?” Ananda asked as she was seated.

“No, ma’am. Mr. Morton paid to have our establishment to himself.” He handed each woman a menu, then went over the specials. “I sincerely hope you enjoy your dining experience.” He bowed and walked away.

“We’re here all alone?” Lily asked in a whisper. “That’s kind of a relief.”

“But it’s not a real experience.” Sunny shook her head. “I was looking forward to mingling with the mainstream crowd.”

“I guess this way Eagan and the camera crews can really catch who’s making mistakes throughout dinner.” Ananda lifted her menu. When she saw Sunny had left hers sitting on the table, she thought better of it and set hers down as well.

The camera crews and boom operators moved in. A tickle went through Ananda’s belly as soon as they showed up. Eagan was near. She felt it. Something was going to happen.

As she suspected, through the main opening, walked in the man of the hour. Eagan Morton wore a black suit with a crisp white shirt and a striking red tie. Damn, she wanted to fuck him, right here, right now.

As he approached the table, Ananda noticed Sunny starting to stand. Ananda stood up, then Lily and Pansy followed suit.

“Good evening, Master Eagan,” Ananda and the other women said in unison.

“You all look wonderful tonight.” Eagan scanned the group.

Ananda felt his stare fall on her for a little longer than he had looked at the other women. At least, that’s what she had hoped.

“Please, sit.” He waved his hand down to direct them to resume their seating again. Then he sat in the middle, facing the door. Sunny sat to one side of him, with Ananda sitting next to her. On his other side sat Pansy, then Lily next to her. Ananda had hoped being away from him would keep him from catching her mistakes.

“I hope you all brought your appetites.” Eagan snapped his fingers in the air to get a waiter. “They have some of the best food in the state.”

“I hate to disagree with you, sir, but you haven’t tried my cooking yet,” Ananda said.

As the waiter stood by Eagan, ready to take his order, Eagan ignored the man to turn to Ananda.

“Do you have your own restaurant?” he asked.

“No. No money to start one. But I think you would enjoy eating my treats.” Ananda hadn’t meant for that statement to sound as salacious as it did.

When she saw him raise his eyebrow, she knew she’d gotten his attention. He didn’t acknowledge her comment. He, instead, turned to the waiter and ordered drinks for everyone without bothering to ask what each woman wanted.

“Congratulations, again, Sunny, for winning another challenge.” Eagan nodded. “You ladies had better be on your toes to stop her. Keep it up, you could win this competition.”

Sunny, keeping reserved as usual, smiled slightly and bowed her head. “That would make me very happy, sir.”

“Really?” He turned his body to face her. “What else would make you happy, Sunny?”

She blinked, as though not knowing what Eagan was fishing for with his question. Ananda had a pretty good idea, but she sat back and waited.

“Excuse me, sir?” Sunny asked.

“You’re in my contest called *Love My Way*, my attempt at finding the perfect submissive. So, tell me, what would make you happy? I’m just looking for a little bit of honesty here.”

Sunny took a deep breath, then answered. “Serving makes me happy. I enjoy pleasing other people. You want me to wake up every morning and have your coffee ready for you to your specifications, I’ll do it. You want me to run your bath for you, bathe you, dress you, I can do that.”

Eagan waved his hand in the air. “I have slaves for those tasks. I’m looking for something deeper. Something more. I expect a connection with my submissives, which I can’t get with my slaves.”

“I’m open to whatever you want to do, sir.” Sunny straightened her back and met his gaze directly.

“Wax play?” He crossed his arms over his chest.

“Yes.”

“Electric play?”

“If it pleases you.”

“Anal play?”

She smiled slightly. “I would hope so.”

Eagan chuckled. “Looks like I found your weakness. What about mind games?”

“I understand that’s part of the scene. I’m not new to the Lifestyle, sir. I’m ready for whatever you want to throw at me.”

“Interesting choice of words, Sunny.” He reached into his jacket pocket. “Pull your dress down.”

Sunny didn’t pause. She slid the top of the dress over her shoulders and, with some help from Ananda, pulled the dress down to her waist, so that she was nude from the waist up. From his jacket, Eagan pulled out a shiny, silver chain. At each end hung clamps with red tips on the handles.

“Throughout dinner, you’ll have these on.” Eagan palmed her breast, circling her nipple with his thumb, if only to just get it distended.

Sunny closed her eyes and rolled her head back as he touched her. Ananda knew the sheer pleasure Sunny must have gotten from the touch. She'd experienced it first hand, although she couldn't talk about it to anyone.

Then again, why not? Why hadn't Ananda said anything to the other contestants? Ananda stared at Eagan and it became clear. What they had between them, although brief and fleeting, was theirs and theirs alone. Ananda desperately wanted it to mean something more than just sex.

"Your nipple is a little hard to coax out, I see." Eagan slid the pink nub between his index and middle finger. Just as the waiter returned with the drinks, Eagan leaned forward and licked Sunny's nipple with his tongue.

"Oh Jesus!" The waiter fumbled the tray, spilling two of the five drinks sitting on top of it and nearly giving Pansy and Lily a wine shower. "I'm sorry. I just, uh, wow. I'll get, um, uh, some more. Be right back. Damn!" He trotted off, looking back with each step.

Eagan never stopped. He sucked her nipple into his mouth and, not only got Sunny to moan at the table, but he brought out her nipple. Palming her breast in his hand, he carefully clipped on the first clamp.

Sunny's body recoiled at first, then relaxed. Sunny's other nipple behaved much better than her first one. It poked out proudly, ready and waiting for its clamp. Eagan held her fleshy orb in his hand and affixed the clamp to it as well.

"How's it feel?" Eagan hooked his finger in the chain just before she answered. He tugged on the chain making Sunny grip her chair in one hand and slam her other hand against the table.

"Wonderful, M-m-master Eagan," she finally answered.

"I'll only keep it on for five minute intervals." He glanced at Ananda. "You will be responsible for removing her clamps and relieving her, understood?"

Relieving her? What the hell did he want Ananda to do, rub the woman's tits here at the table? Lick them like he had?

Sunny flopped her head over toward Ananda. The both desperate and needy look in her eyes spoke volumes to Ananda. Sunny needed both pleasure and relief. If Ananda had to do it, she was at least glad it was Sunny. Besides Meadow, Sunny was about the only one she tolerated in the house.

"Yes, sir," Ananda said to Eagan.

"Not a minute longer than five minutes. You could seriously hurt, Sunny."

Great. Now Ananda not only had to be on top of her game as far as dinner etiquette was concerned, now she had to play personal submissive to Sunny. And she was doing this contest because ...?

Eagan turned to the other two women. "Pansy, stand up."

The woman with the oak-colored skin and curly chestnut hair pushed herself back from the table, then stood.

“Come to me.” Eagan signaled her to come closer to him with a motion of his finger.

The self-professed former submissive took tentative steps forward, then stopped about a foot away from Eagan.

Eagan turned around in his chair, his feet spread apart. “Are you wearing panties?”

“Yes,” Pansy answered softly.

Eagan cut a hard glare at her.

“Yes, sir.”

Answering properly didn’t seem to make him any happier.

“I thought I made it very clear that I didn’t like my submissives wearing underwear unless necessary. Is it necessary for you to wear them, Pansy?”

She swallowed. “Yes, sir.”

He nodded. “Thank you for your honesty. Please take a seat.” As soon as Pansy sat back down, Eagan called for Lily. “Step forward now.”

Lily adjusted her mask and then resumed the spot Pansy left vacant.

“Are you in the same condition as Pansy?” he asked, staring directly into Lily’s eyes.

“No, sir.” She shook her head, letting her straight black hair swing back and forth.

He nodded. “And are you wearing underwear?”

She shook her head. “No, sir.”

“Spread your legs.” He reached into a different pocket inside of his jacket.

Ananda’s heart pounded, waiting to see what he would pull out this time especially since he’d asked Lily to spread her legs. She split her attention between her watch and the action. According to her watch, she had another two minutes before she had to check on Sunny.

From Eagan’s jacket pocket he pulled out a contraption with thick, black rubber bands and something that looked like a silver egg. He instructed Lily to step into the rubber thong-like device. Then he asked her to pull up her dress so he could get a better view.

“Are you wet?” He peered up at Lily.

She swallowed hard, evident from the sound and her pained expression. Lily’s throat must have been as dry as Ananda’s at this point.

“I-I-I don’t know, sir.” Lily gripped the hem of her dress as she stood naked from the waist down in front of him.

“Let me just check.” With the device around her knees, Eagan slid his index and middle fingers between her pussy lips.

Ananda had to cross her legs to douse the flame he'd just ignited. She wasn't sure what had happened with Eagan within the last couple of days, but she liked this attitude from him.

Eventually, the more he stroked her, the more it became evident that Lily was wet and ready for whatever he had planned for her. The sounds of her juices smacking against his fingers echoed in the desolate restaurant. Again, the waiter who had dropped the drinks earlier picked this moment to return to the table.

"Holy Christ!" This time he dropped the tray a few feet from the table. "Oh God! I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry. I'll get this cleaned up and get you your drinks."

Eagan didn't break his gaze from Lily. Her body moved back and forth with the motion of Eagan's hand.

"Begonia, how's Sunny doing?" He didn't turn around when he addressed her.

Ananda looked at her watch. Shit! She was about a minute late.

"Uh, fine, Master Eagan." She removed one clamp, making Sunny's shoulder slump down as though the clamp had held it up. Then Ananda removed the second one.

Once both were removed, Eagan turned around. "You have to relieve her. Caress her skin. Make her feel good. The feeling of the clamps coming off is intense. You'll see one day."

Ananda nodded. She swallowed, closed her eyes, and leaned in forward. As though on its own volition, her mouth found and latched onto Sunny's nipple. The connection made the woman suck air between her teeth. Ananda touched her other teardrop shaped breast, circling her nipple with her fingertips.

It must have felt good to Sunny. She smoothed her hand over Ananda's head and all the way down her back. Sunny's intimate touch coupled with her moans of appreciation and the feeling of her nipple on her tongue propelled Ananda to continue soothing this woman.

With each moan, Ananda saw this as less of a chore and more like a reward. She opened her eyes and let go of Sunny's breast.

"Better?" Ananda kept her fingertips touching lightly over Sunny's nipple.

Sunny smiled and nodded. "Very nice. Thank you."

Ananda smiled back at the woman as though they shared something special. Actually, they had. It wasn't every day Ananda licked a strange woman's breast. Actually, there were no days that she had ever done that. Darnell would have been proud of her.

Ananda turned to Eagan, who had been staring at them.

"Put the clamps back on in about two minutes." His fingers never stopped massaging Lily's pussy.

Lucky girl.

Eagan finally stopped. He retrieved the silver egg dangling from the rubber straps. He slowly inserted the egg into Lily's soaking cunt, then brought the rubber thong up to Lily's waist.

“Pansy, come here. Lily, have a seat.” Eagan pointed to Lily’s chair.

Pansy walked over to Eagan again.

“Bend over and open your mouth.” He held up the fingers he’d used between Lily’s legs.

Without waiting a beat, Pansy bent at the waist and parted her lips. Eagan circled her lips with the tips of his fingers before sliding the duo into Pansy’s mouth. She held his hand in both of hers and sucked his fingers, as though she was tasting the best wine on earth.

“Very nice.” Eagan turned to Sunny. “Looks like you picked a good group of women to come to dinner with us tonight.”

Sunny nodded as though speaking was too much for her.

Eagan slid his fingers from Pansy’s mouth and wiped his hands on a white napkin that was set up in a teepee fashion on his plate. “Pansy, you will hold this remote control.” He placed a small, white controller that had a black switch on the side of it and a wheel on top. “Whenever I tell you to, I want you to turn this on like this.” He clicked the switch on the side.

At once, a muffled buzzing noise sounded and Lily started writhing in her chair.

“To make the vibrations more intense, you roll this knob up like this.” Eagan twirled the knob, making the buzzing sound like a low hum.

“Oh, God! Oh, God! Yes! Yes!” Lily laid her head back and gripped the table. She undulated her body like she was fucking an invisible man nestled between her legs.

“Be sure to turn it down first before turning it off. You don’t want Lily starting off high. It could be way too intense for her.” Eagan brought the vibrations down then turned it off. He handed it to Pansy just as he turned to Ananda. “Has it been over two minutes yet?”

Fuck! Ananda kept forgetting she had a job to do this evening.

“Yes, sir. She’s ready.” She picked up the clamps.

Thank goodness Sunny’s nipples were still erect. Ananda tried getting the clamps in the same position Eagan had had them. She must have done it right. Replacing the first clamp caused Sunny to squirm in her seat. Doing the second one extracted a small yelp from the woman.

“So now that everyone has a job tonight, I think it’s time that we order.” Eagan glanced around. “Where’s the waiter with our drinks?”

“He’s having a hard time adjusting to our scene.” Ananda smiled, which brought out a pleasant smile from Eagan.

A new waiter returned with their drinks this time. He barely batted an eye seeing Sunny half-dressed at the table wearing nipple clamps. Maybe in his circle of friends this type of behavior was normal. Or maybe the young man didn’t care.

Eagan ordered dinner for all of them. As he ordered, he casually pulled on Sunny's chain. Sunny's breathing increased. She grabbed the table. With her other hand, she sought something next to her. Without warning, Sunny snatched Ananda's hand from her lap and held it tight.

To attempt to soothe her until she was allowed to take the clamps off, Ananda stroked Sunny's arm and hand.

In between orders, Eagan told Pansy to turn on the vibrator. The hum didn't stop Eagan from giving his order, or the new waiter from taking it. The more normal they were about everything going on around them, the more it seemed normal to Ananda.

Could she do this Lifestyle in real life? Sure, in an isolated setting this behavior was doable. Could Ananda do this in front of friends, family, her mother?

Eagan dropped the chain and, being more aware of the time this time, Ananda quickly removed the clamps. She pulled Sunny's chair around so that she could have access to her other breast. Ananda licked her breast, as her hand caressed her unattended tit. The more she pleased Sunny, knowing that it pleased Eagan, the more Ananda's body tingled.

"I don't know about anyone else but I'm already enjoying tonight's events." Eagan nodded his head to Pansy.

Pansy cranked up the vibrator and nearly popped Lily out of her seat.

"Oh, yes! Oh, yes! Yes, yes, yes!" Lily palmed her breasts and squeezed her nipples.

"No, no, Lily. You know the rules. No masturbation while in the contest." He wagged his finger at her. "Rubbing your breasts is considered an act of self-pleasure."

Lily smoothed her hands down her body and gripped the seat of her chair. "S-s-sorry, Master Eagan. It just feels so good."

"Pansy, you can turn it off now."

She did so and left the remote by her wine glass.

"Sir?" Lily struggled to catch her breath as she faced Eagan.

"Yes, Lily."

"I can't take much more. I need to come. Please, no more."

Eagan smiled. "So you at least remembered the rule that no contestant can have an orgasm during the show unless allowed by me." He glanced at Ananda before picking up his glass of wine.

So Ananda's orgasm had been approved? Good for her to know that now.

Salads were the first to be served. Ananda replaced the clamps back on Sunny's nipples after the allotted time. Eagan picked up Sunny's chain and tugged on it slightly causing her to moan and gasp in pleasure.

He dropped the chain and glanced at the salads. "These do look tasty, huh, ladies?" Eagan snapped out a napkin and placed it across his lap.

The salads did look appetizing. Ananda's growling belly echoed her sentiments. Instinctively, her hand reached for her fork. As soon as it hovered over the utensil, she realized what contest she was doing, and instead moved her hand to Sunny's breasts, where she removed the clamps instead. The removal came a bit too early, but she had to do something with her hands.

Pansy wasn't so smart. The woman not only picked up her wine glass and took a healthy chug of the sallow colored drink, she also doused her salad with an oil-and-vinegar dressing.

Just as she picked up her fork, Eagan barked, "Pansy!"

She dropped her fork, but instead of thinking he was reprimanding her for eating without being given permission, she picked up the remote and turned it on, leaving it at the full blast setting she'd left it from last time.

This time Lily did hop out of her chair and collapsed to the floor.

"Turn it off now." Eagan crouched over Lily and whispered something in her ear as he stroked her hair. He helped her back into her chair.

Only after Lily's breathing steadied itself and the table had become composed did Eagan speak again.

"You may now eat and drink." He glared at Pansy, who only cursed under her breath and shook her head.

The realization hit her that she'd fucked up. Ananda just hoped all cameras were all Sunny and Lily at the time she had her close call. Otherwise, she would definitely be going home.

* * * * *

Aside from Pansy's mistake, dinner had gone off very well. Eagan had to applaud the women for their bravery and willingness to step out of the house to try something new.

All toys were returned to Eagan. He would have them cleaned and sterilized back at the house.

The waiters served dessert, a decadent piece of chocolate-and-white cake with a drizzling of red sauce.

"The dessert looks so wonderful, Master Eagan," Sunny said.

She beamed from ear-to-ear, but she had the right. She spent the entire night wearing nipple clamps that must have felt good to her from her reaction. And the way the woman moaned when Eagan tugged on them caused a slight twitch in Eagan's pants. It wasn't until he watched Begonia licking and touching Sunny's breasts that he wanted to come out of his chair.

Eagan wanted to push Begonia's buttons, knowing the woman was new to the Lifestyle and, from her application, had never been with another woman before. The way Begonia touched and caressed Sunny's breasts showed she was willing to try new things. Most importantly, she wanted to please Eagan.

"Please, everyone, have some dessert." Eagan pointed to the huge piece of cake on a white plate.

Sunny picked up the plate and cut off a small piece then handed it to Begonia, who did the same thing. Begonia passed the plate across the table to Pansy, who immediately gave it to Lily.

"You don't want any cake, Pansy? You don't like my choices?" Eagan stared at the woman who had already made a huge error this evening.

"No, sir. I mean, I don't want any cake, Master Eagan. I appreciate all of your choices tonight. Dinner was wonderful." Pansy bowed her head.

"Then why are you turning down the cake? Please don't say it's a vanity thing. I don't think a small piece will put twenty pounds on you." Besides, Eagan liked his women with a little meat on her bones. For him, the strong women like Begonia, Sunny, and Meadow could take a hard session with him in his dungeon.

"Sorry, sir. I'll try it." Pansy dragged the plate back in front of her and cut off a small piece. She stared at it on her fork for a while, before cutting her gaze to Eagan, plastering a fake smile, and finally popping the sweet treat into her mouth.

"How is it?" Eagan asked.

Pansy nodded at first then stopped. Her eyes got wide before she spit the food onto her plate.

"Strawberry sauce," she said in between gasps. "Allergic to strawberries. I'm going to be sick."

Chapter Twelve

Before Eagan could react, Begonia sprang from her chair and grabbed Pansy's hand. She pulled the woman through the restaurant to the bathroom.

Eagan bolted to his feet and called a waiter. "Get Sergio and my driver."

A camera crew had followed Begonia and Pansy, while the other one stayed with Eagan. As soon as Richard showed up, he had his driver take Sunny and Lily back home. He would figure out a way to get home after making sure Pansy would be fine.

Sergio, who had been in the upstairs portion of the restaurant eating dinner, rushed down to attend to Pansy.

"If you have to take her to the hospital, do it. I don't want her hurt." Eagan slapped his friend on the back and pointed to the direction of where the two ladies had gone.

As Eagan paced outside of the bathroom, he flipped his phone open. The first person he called was Phil, who he'd allowed to be home tonight to take care of his sick son.

"Why the hell don't I have a list of these women's allergies?" Eagan screamed into his small phone.

"What happened?"

Eagan imagined his friend raking his fingers through his hair. "We're eating dinner and one of the contestants had a violent reaction to eating strawberry sauce."

"Holy shit! Is she going to be okay?"

"Sergio is in there now with her. I need to know everything about these women. Their allergies, their medical histories, their --"

"Talking to them might do the trick," Phil said, cutting off Eagan.

"Just do your job, Phil."

“That’s not my job, Eagan. Call your co-producer, Nina. Maybe this will get her to concentrate on her job more.”

Eagan hung up on Phil. He didn’t understand Phil’s last statement, but he did need to talk to Nina. She was always the calm in his storm.

“Nina, I need to have all of the contestants tested for allergies of every kind, especially food, latex and rubber.”

“Um, okay. Everything all right?” Nina’s soft voice sounded even more faint, as though Eagan had woken her out of a deep sleep.

Hell, it was only midnight. She couldn’t be asleep this early.

“No, but it will be.” Eagan disconnected the call.

At that point, Sergio walked out of the bathroom.

“She’s looking a little green around the gills, but I think she’ll be okay. I called for a private medical transport and I’ll take her to my office. I just woke up my nurse. Good thing you’re paying her double-time to come in on a Saturday night.”

“I’ll pay her that and then some to make sure Pansy is okay.”

“Don’t worry, man. She’ll be fine. Thank that other woman in there. She helped her out a lot.”

Begonia had sprung very quickly into action, something that didn’t escape his notice. When all of this was over, he had to thank her properly. Medical transport arrived within ten minutes and carted Pansy by Eagan on a stretcher.

“I’m sorry, Master Eagan.” Tears welled in Pansy’s eyes as she wheeled by him.

“We’ll talk when you come back to the house.” He saw her loaded in the back of the truck with Sergio riding with her.

Sergio gave Eagan a thumbs-up sign before the truck pulled off. The second camera crew that had been with Begonia and Pansy strolled to the door.

“We’re following Sergio to see if we can get some good shots.” The boom operator adjusted the long-neck mike in his hand. “You coming with?”

Eagan heard a door close and saw Begonia standing by the bathroom door. “No, I’ll catch up later. I’ll have to get Begonia back home. Call me with any updates, you got it?”

“Not a problem, boss.” The cameraman gave him a salute before walking out of the restaurant.

“Mr. Morton, let me assure you that this has never happened to any of our patrons before.” The maitre d’ stumbled over himself apologizing, while Eagan stalked toward Begonia.

“It was a freak accident. Let it go.” Eagan reached in his pocket to get a one-hundred dollar bill folded so it fit in his palm. He shook the man’s hand with the bill in his hand.

“Thanks for the great service and food. I’ll be back again, hopefully under calmer circumstances.”

The man’s smile widened and he bowed his head as he stuffed the money into his pocket. “Call us whenever you like.”

“I want to make sure my friend here is okay. Could you and your staff give us a minute?”

“Certainly. Let me know if you need anything.”

“Actually, I’ll need a limo service to come pick me up.” Eagan gave him the name and number to a service he used often for clients coming into town.

“Yes, sir.”

When the maitre d’ walked away, Eagan moved in closer to Begonia. Standing in front of her, he stared into her eyes. Begonia returned his stare, matching intensity. He walked forward making her take steps back until her back was to the bathroom door again.

Eagan looked over his shoulder to see if anyone was watching, not that he cared. He pushed the door open behind Begonia and she took a backward step inside.

From the ceiling to the tiled walls to the marble tiled floor, everything in the bathroom was in a dark slate gray. The only object not in that color was a deep crimson circular couch.

Eagan took Begonia’s hand. Wordlessly, he motioned to have her stand on the couch. She understood where he was going and obliged. Then he stood in front of her, her pussy directly in front of his face.

His hand slipped between her legs, making her open them wider. She moved her feet apart, then bent her knees. She wanted it as much as he did. Eagan smoothed her hands against her outer thighs. She understood that message as well, taking the hem of her skirt and hoisting it up to show off her naked pussy.

Eagan preferred his submissive be completely shaven and smooth. The appearance helped in other aspects of the Lifestyle, like wax play. That would be another thing on his agenda, getting the women appointments with his personal waxer.

Eagan lightly touched Begonia’s light brown curly pubic hair, which caused her to flinch. He peered up at her. His fingers parted her nether lips.

“Don’t come,” was the only thing he said to her.

He lightly touched her protruding clit with the tip of his tongue. She leaned back against the ridiculous red cone that trumpeted from the center of the circular couch. Eagan took another lick and another.

She tasted so sweet, like nectar from an exotic fruit with no name, only found deep in the rain forests, and bearing on one tree. The more Eagan tasted her, the more he knew she was the sustenance he needed.

He spread her lips wider and covered her hard nub with his entire mouth. Her moans echoed in the expansive bathroom. She combed her fingers through his hair, eventually fisting it when he gently sucked her clit.

His tongue dipped down to her pussy opening. She panted, eventually gyrating her hips so that she was now fucking his mouth. God, Begonia was a wild woman. She would be so much fun to play with after a hard day of work, or even on a good day at work. He just had to have her.

Eagan slipped his middle finger inside of her tight channel and that's when things changed.

"No!" Begonia scrambled away from Eagan and crawled down from the couch as though not trusting her legs to support her had she jumped.

Eagan, not accustomed to being told no, especially from a submissive, grabbed her wrist. "What do you mean, no?"

Her eyes behind the mask looked wild. Eagan wanted so much to tame her.

"If you use your finger with what you were doing, I'm going to come. No question, sir." Her body trembled as she responded.

Eagan could tell she wanted to do the right thing for him, but she had to go about it the proper way. Pulling back from him wasn't the answer. She had to find the strength inside to do what he demanded of her.

As he approached her, a knock sounded on the door. Eagan split his attention between Begonia and the door. When his cell phone chirped, he had no choice but to stop his previous activities.

He pulled Begonia behind himself as he retrieved his phone from his front jacket pocket. When he opened the door, a nervous waiter stood on the outside.

"Um, your car is like here." The waiter pointed to the front door.

Eagan waved to him as he walked by, and answered the phone at the same time. "Yeah."

"Just me." Sergio cleared his throat. "Pansy will be fine. We gave her a couple of shots and it cleared her up right away."

"Can she walk? Is she still awake?" Eagan stormed outside to the car.

"Uh, yeah. Why?"

Eagan glanced at Begonia behind him. "I still have eliminations to do. I'm doing that tonight." He helped Begonia into the car and sidled in behind her. "People might be surprised at who I get rid of tonight." He disconnected the call then gave his address to the driver.

Eagan would have much rather been taken home in a stretch limousine, but he guessed this would have to do.

“Costume party tonight?” the driver asked as he split his attention between the road and the rearview mirror.

“No.” Eagan turned his attention to Begonia. “I wasn’t finished with you back there.”

Even in the darkened car, he noticed her blinking.

“I told you why I wanted you to stop.” Begonia spoke low and turned to the driver.

“Because you didn’t want to risk having an orgasm?”

The driver cleared his throat and stepped up his observation in the mirror. Now Eagan really wished he’d had a limo so that he could activate the privacy glass.

“Yes. I didn’t want to get in trouble.”

“But you are in trouble. You openly disobeyed me and now you’re arguing with me.” He shook his head. “Why can’t you fight for me? Is it that hard to fight an impulse, to do what I demand? You gave up so easily.”

Begonia looked out of the window. She crossed her arms over her chest and crossed her legs. The shop had officially closed.

“Sorry to have disappointed you, Master Eagan.” The car remained silent until about five minutes before the driver got to Eagan’s house. Then Begonia said, “Thank you for letting me have at least one orgasm.” She turned back to him.

The car pulled in front of Eagan’s house and stopped. When the driver got out, Eagan turned to Begonia. “You could have come a second time tonight, had you complied with my demands.”

The driver opened the door and Eagan got out first. Then he held his hand out to Begonia. After waiting a beat, she finally accepted it.

In the house, Begonia parted ways with Eagan, going down the hall to her room. Seeing Apple standing at her room, he asked her to gather all of the contestants together tonight. Eagan would take care of getting the crews together. He still had a show to run ... even if his life seemed out of control.

* * * * *

“Where have you been?” Iona asked as she sat on her bed.

“Is Pansy back yet?” Ananda slumped down on her bed and removed her shoes. She wanted so much for this day to be over.

“Pansy? What does she have to do with anything?” Iona sat up straighter.

“She had a bad allergic reaction at dinner. They rushed her away to get medical treatment. I was the one who got her to the bathroom and stayed with her until they transported her out of the restaurant.”

Meadow and Iona’s eyes got so huge, they looked like they would fall out of their heads at any moment.

“Where’s Sunny?” Ananda would have thought she would have relayed this news to the group.

“Taking a shower. So what happened at dinner? What did Pansy eat that made her so sick?” Meadow sat at the edge of her bed.

Just as Sunny emerged from the bathroom with her mask in place, and before Ananda could recount the night’s events, Apple appeared in the doorway.

“Be ready in five minutes, ladies. Master Eagan would like to see you all in the foyer.” Apple backed out of the room.

“For what?” Iona got up on her knees on top of the bed.

“Eliminations.”

The word hung in the air like a bad virus.

“I can’t believe after a night like we had that Master Eagan is still going on with eliminations.” Sunny dropped her towel when she got to her bed and slipped on a simple slipdress.

“Believe it.” Ananda slipped her shoes back on. “And I think I am going to be going home tonight.”

Although Ananda hadn’t made a mistake through dinner, she figured he would get her on the nipple clamp duties and what she had done, or rather not done, in the bathroom. His words still haunted her. *Why can’t you fight for me?*

The thought boiled her blood. How dare he? She never gave up on him. She was protecting herself. Why couldn’t he see that?

“Master Eagan is ready for you all now.” Apple smiled while dispensing the news.

Dead woman walking. Ananda made the torturous walk down the hall along with the other women until she got to the foyer. Then she made her way to her usual spot. Knowing Eagan, it would be the last time she would be in this spot.

Tony made his way from behind the cameras. Everyone was tired, but everyone had to work on Eagan’s schedule. Tony made his usual introductions, not as snappy as he normally would when he was fully awake. The intros were passable enough for this late taping.

Eagan stepped into the spotlight. He scanned the women.

“Good evening, Master Eagan,” they all said in unison.

Eagan looked at his watch. “According to my watch it’s morning time. Care to try that again, ladies?”

Damn him. Damn him for dragging out this elimination and damn him for his fucking ego. Ananda now hoped to be the one going home.

“Good morning, Master Eagan,” the women said with a little more pep this time.

“Nice. Sunny, Lily, Pansy and Begonia, step forward.”

Ananda moved forward and waited for the other women to move in next to her. Pansy moved a bit slower than the rest. Ananda thought Tony had a lot of luggage under his eyes. Pansy looked like she had the whole American Tourister collection under hers. She looked exhausted and beaten. Why the hell was Eagan doing this tonight? Why couldn't he have waited until morning?

"As you all know, the rest of you ladies are all safe. You are not up for elimination." Eagan turned to Sunny. "Because you have immunity, Sunny, you're safe. Go back into the line."

"Thank you, Master Eagan." She bowed and fell back into the line.

"Lily, you're safe. Return to the line." Eagan pointed behind her.

"Thank you so much, Master Eagan. And thank you for the special dinner. I loved it." Lily nearly skipped when she went back to the line.

In the bottom two again. Ananda threw her shoulders back and held up her chin. If she was the one to leave, then she would do it in style.

"Tonight, I gave you all surprises. Two of you got to wear some toys. Sunny had on nipple clamps during dinner. Lily had a vibrating egg inserted inside of her. You two ladies were responsible for their pleasure." He turned to Ananda. "You forgot to remove Sunny's nipple clamps on a couple of occasions."

"I'm sorry, sir." And Ananda did mean that. No matter what Ananda felt about Eagan, she would never purposely hurt anyone.

"Pansy, you started eating without permission."

She bowed her head but Ananda wasn't sure if it was out of shame or exhaustion. Could have been a combination of both.

Eagan stepped closer to the duo. He stared at Ananda first then over to Pansy. "Decisions like this are never easy, but they have to be made. Begonia?"

Her heart pounded. As much as Ananda had convinced herself that she wouldn't care if she went home, her heart told her something different. She took a deep breath, inhaling Eagan's scent. No, she couldn't leave that or leave this man. Not yet. She still had a point to prove.

"Begonia, you're safe. As a matter of fact, because you were the first to respond to Pansy when she first got sick, you're the winner tonight and have immunity for the next show." Eagan turned to Pansy. "That means you have to go, Pansy. I'm releasing you. Take off your collar."

Pansy reached behind her neck and undid the clasp. "Is this because I got sick?"

Eagan shook his head. "Not entirely."

She placed the necklace in his hand.

“The challenge tonight was for you all not to make a mistake during dinner. Although I brought in a new challenge, you all weren’t judged on that one. However, getting sick is a big factor. You should have told me you were allergic to strawberries and that’s why you didn’t want to eat the dessert. Why didn’t you tell me? If you can’t trust me with that information, then we can’t have a true relationship.”

Pansy removed her mask. Underneath hid a gorgeous creature with dark eyebrows that were perfectly arched, a slender nose and full, wavy dark hair.

“I don’t know why I didn’t tell you. Just like I don’t know why I started eating. Nerves, I suppose. I never topped anyone and what you had me doing felt like topping Lily. I got confused.”

“I understand. This is the type of relationship I would have my submissives doing in real life, so if you can’t handle it now, then you’d be unhappy had you won this competition.”

Pansy bowed her head. “My name is Gloria. It’s been a pleasure serving you for the short time I did.”

Eagan stepped close to her. “My car is going to take you directly to the hotel. You’ll have around-the-clock care until you feel one-hundred percent.”

Pansy wiped away a tear and nodded. Eagan flashed a sneering look at Ananda before turning away.

“Eagan, wait!” the director called to him.

The women and Ananda all waited to see what was going on. Although they couldn’t hear him since he was whispering, Ananda caught him pointing to Gloria and her.

Eagan shook his head. He said, “My decision is final!” Then stormed upstairs.

“What the hell was that about?” Iona whispered to Ananda.

Ananda wasn’t sure. Later on tonight, or rather, this morning, she would find out.

Chapter Thirteen

“What the hell are you doing?” This time, it was Phil’s turn to pace.

Eagan sat behind his desk, calm, serene, quiet. What else was he to do while Phil ranted and raved?

“First, you go off and do this dinner thing.” Phil waved his hands in the air.

“You knew taping had to happen. You knew I was taking the winner and three contestants to dinner.”

“Yes, but I didn’t know you were going to have nudity. I didn’t know you were going to lick a woman’s breast on camera.”

“I couldn’t get to her nipple.”

Phil’s eyebrows furrowed together. “Why are you so calm about this?”

“And why are you so irrational? This is going to appear on cable, for God sakes. Even you called it Skintastic. What’s the big deal? You’re afraid the execs won’t still court you after this?”

Phil turned his back on Eagan. It was in that moment, Eagan felt something under his desk. Something clawed at his belt and zipper.

“The big deal is that the first couple of shows were kind of tame,” Phil said with his back still to Eagan.

Eagan grabbed the hands and rolled his chair back. The first thing he saw was the top of a mask. It wasn’t until the intruder looked up that he saw who it was.

Begonia.

Eagan volleyed his attention from Phil to Begonia. What the hell did she think she was doing? She should have been in bed and not wandering around early in the morning in his house.

"I'm afraid they're going to pull the show." Phil shook his head and made a slow pivot around to Eagan. "I thought a wild show would be great, but now I'm not so sure."

Eagan let Begonia's hands go and put his finger to his lips signaling her to remain quiet.

"They're not going to pull the show. Our ratings are solid. Besides, it's not the sexiest thing on TV now. But give me a few more episodes. I'll get us there."

Phil chuckled and put his hand over his eyes. Eagan took that moment to lower his chair. Then he moved under the desk even more.

Phil said, "Let's forget all of that. Why didn't you change your decision about getting rid of Begonia?"

The hands that were working fast and furious on his zipper suddenly stopped.

"I'm not going to flip flop my decision after I've rendered it. I'm not a politician."

Her hands eased the belt from the loop and unfastened his pants. He must have answered correctly.

"But I have tape that shows she did reach for her utensil first."

Her hands stopped again. Did that mean that she had made the mistake and hadn't come clean to him or was she innocent and pissed off?

"Let me show you." Phil opened up Eagan's wall cabinet and cued up the video footage.

At this point, Begonia had his pants undone. Since his erect cock sprang from his boxers, she found it easily. She wrapped her fingers around him and moved it up and down his shaft.

Eagan's body felt lit up like a neon sign. He braced his elbows on his desk and tried concentrating on Phil's blathering. Who could think during an exquisite surprise handjob?

Phil played the tape. Though Eagan tried to keep his eyes open, he closed them occasionally to enjoy the treatment. Begonia was perfect. Just the right amount of pressure, the right speed. He could definitely see her doing this for him every morning.

"See!"

Eagan snapped his eyes open and looked at this screen. "What?"

"You just didn't see her hand hovering over her fork, but instead she takes the nipple clamps off of that chick? By the way, hottest thing I have ever seen. I can't believe you had her take off her dress in the restaurant." Phil turned around. "And the other girl with the vibrator in her. How do you think of these things?"

Begonia pulsed her fist at the tip of his dick. Damn, what a feeling.

"They just come to me."

"I guess since you gave her immunity, you're not getting rid of Begonia for the next show either, huh?"

Begonia reached under his penis to cradle his balls. Hell, no, he wouldn't be getting rid of her any time soon.

“Why are you obsessed about me getting rid of her? You were the one after the first show who told me to keep her.”

She stroked him harder and faster.

“The message boards are lighting up. They’re surprised you got rid of your first real submissive tonight. Iris and Magnolia weren’t submissives to begin with.”

“What did the viewers expect, that my final six would be the former submissives? If they’re not up on their game, they’re not, oh, advancing.”

Begonia kissed the tip of his cock in the middle of his explanation. Eagan’s blood raced through his body like he was on some wonderful drug.

“You all right? You don’t look so good.”

“I’ll be okay. I have a woman under my desk right now jerking me off.”

The room got quiet. Even Begonia stopped moving. Phil stared at him for a while until a smile curled up at the corners of his mouth.

“You are too funny. Look, I got to head home. It’s too late. I’ll start editing here tomorrow, then we can talk about set up for the next show.”

“I already know what I want to do for that show.” It was a show Eagan couldn’t wait to do. This would be the show that would definitely bring out each woman’s commitment to him and the contest.

“Cool. I’ll see you later. Tell the girl under the desk I said hi.”

Eagan nodded and waited for Phil to leave before moving a muscle. Knowing how his friend was, Eagan clicked a button on his universal remote that locked his door.

“No trust, man,” Eagan heard Phil say from the other side of the door.

“Good night, Phil.” Eagan pushed back from the desk and picked up his phone. He punched in the number for his security guys at the front door. “Make sure Phil makes it to his car okay. He looks a little tired and may fall down the steps.”

“Got it, Mr. Morton. We’ll make sure he gets down safely.”

Eagan hung up the phone. That would ensure the man wasn’t sitting outside his door waiting to hear what happened next.

Eagan peered down at Begonia, who finally crawled from under the desk. She stood in front of him, wearing a T-shirt that just covered her high, rounded ass.

“What are you doing here?” Eagan asked, although his body wanted to scream, “More! More! More!”

“I thought I was doing pretty good until you stopped me.” She pointed to his erection that slowed in deflating.

“This isn’t a game.” He thought about his statement and rephrased. “Okay, technically, this is a game. What we have going on between us, that’s not a game. I don’t want you thinking that because we’ve had sex that you’ll last in this competition.”

“I get it.” She folded her arms over her chest. “You’re quick to tell me that every time we get together.” She chuckled to herself. “Amazing. You have the gall to ask me why I won’t fight for you, and yet, you never fought for me.” She stared at him and carried an expression on her face as though she was recalling an instance involving him. “Never.”

“I can’t show favoritism toward one contestant.” No matter how much he wanted her.

She grabbed his cock and got in his face. “Then stop reacting to me.”

Eagan gripped her wrist. “Yeah, easier said than done.”

In anticipation of Begonia’s return to his office, Eagan snatched the top drawer to his desk and pulled out a string of condoms. He ripped one off the chain, opened the package with his teeth then rolled it down the length of him. He ignored the niggling feeling that all of this pre-planning meant that he truly wanted her and no other.

Ignoring the thought, he turned her around. He lifted her shirt and guided her down to his awaiting prick.

Begonia reached between her legs and helped guide him inside of her. Her pussy welcomed him, pulling him in to her tight channel, and holding him there until she got him all the way inside of her.

“Lean back.” Eagan wrapped his arm around her waist and held her close as he pounded inside of her.

Begonia gripped the arms of his chair as she undulated her hips back and forth. “*You* try not coming now.”

He heard her say this through gritted teeth. If nothing else, he loved her spunk and attitude.

“I don’t have to.” Eagan slid one hand up her shirt and his other hand sought her clit and found it. “I’m the Dom here. I can do what I want. What I want now is to hear you come.”

She rocked on top of him, moving him in and out of her tight pussy. Eagan held onto her waist. Her smooth skin felt like velvet under his touch. He didn’t want to stop touching her, not right now, not tonight, not ever.

Eagan kissed her back then planted small nibbles around her shoulder. She even tasted sweet like honey. What he knew for sure was that he ached for Begonia’s touch.

Sliding his arm around her waist, Eagan pulled her back against him so that her back rested on his chest. One hand busied itself caressing her breast. The other rubbed her protruding clit.

At both touches, Begonia released the sweetest most guttural sound that he’d ever heard. The sound of her ecstasy pumped his heart until he had to match the organ’s ferocity with his own.

Eagan thrust his hips up, matching her movements. Their bodies moved in a rhythmic harmony that not even he and Ophelia had achieved this soon.

Begonia reached behind herself and held the back of Eagan's head, moving him forward so that his face nestled next to hers. She smelled of wildflowers, a scent that drove him wild.

Blood pumped through his veins like a percolator. This was a first. *He* couldn't hold out from coming before his submissive.

"Come, now!" he demanded.

Begonia ground her sweet cunt on him and released the most magnificent growl. It sounded like a moan she'd been storing in her body for years. Eagan cupped her breast, twirling his thumb around her nipple. When her slick inner walls constricted around him, he couldn't hold back. He came deep inside of her, hard and fast.

Without being able to stop himself, Eagan kissed Begonia on the side of her face, an intimate gesture he didn't want to give her. How had she done it? How had she got in his head so fast? And how had she captured his heart?

"This has got to stop." Eagan slipped himself out of her, stood while still holding her and allowed her to sit and compose herself as he discarded the prophylactic and fastened his pants.

"Why? I haven't told anyone and I won't. You haven't told anyone."

"I have."

Begonia stopped moving.

"I told Phil I had sex with a contestant. But I didn't say which one. As far as he's concerned, he thinks I'm doing the contestants leaving the show."

She stood and sauntered to him. Even her walk got him excited. "Would you really eliminate me?"

"If you failed, yes, I would. It's the nature of the contest." And the part he hated.

"But is that your nature? What is it that you want?"

Sexually, no doubt about it, he and Begonia were compatible in every way. However, the woman bucked every rule and norm about his Lifestyle. He didn't see her potential to be trained. Pity. She was the one he wanted. Not since Ophelia had he felt his heart being pulled. If he wasn't careful, he would fall in love with her.

She walked to the door then turned to him. "I won't fail."

"Actions speak louder than words. Show me."

"I would, but you won't let contestants masturbate." She winked at him and walked out of the office.

"Begonia."

She stopped in the doorway and turned to him.

"Did you reach for the fork first?" If nothing else, he had to know.

She took a deep breath. "I nearly made an error in judgment. I won't do it again."

That was a “yes,” if Eagan had ever heard one. Even if he knew that before elimination, he still wouldn’t have gotten rid of her. At least, not yet.

“You don’t know the real me. What I did at dinner was just a taste. You want more? Do you really want to know?”

Gone were the cutesy comebacks. Begonia simply nodded.

“Good luck tomorrow.”

No more “Guess the toy” games. No more table etiquette. If Begonia wanted to be with him, be his submissive, show that she could be trained, then the next few challenges would test her limits. He just hoped the censors didn’t shut down his show.

* * * * *

The real Eagan Morton. For the last several days, Ananda thought of the possibilities behind that statement. If the man who had licked her pussy, made her suck his dick, and fucked her like no one ever had wasn’t the real and true Eagan Morton, then she couldn’t wait to meet the man behind the myth.

Ananda sat in the center of her bed. Right about where she shoved that BDSM book someone slipped to her under the mattress. She had to take temptation away from her. She was a lot of things, but a cheater wouldn’t be one of them. If she was going to lose, she would do it going down gloriously in flames. And if she won, it would be because she listened, learned, and did her best. Fucking *the* Eagan Morton didn’t hurt either.

“The waiting,” Meadow began and let out a long sigh. “It’s the waiting I can’t stand. I sometimes wish we would just tape a show every day and get this over with in a couple of weeks instead of a couple of months.”

“I know what you mean, Meadow.”

The days in between tapings, Ananda couldn’t find Eagan even with the F.B.I. tracking him. When the man wasn’t working the show, he was working his business. It wouldn’t surprise her if he flew out of town on the days he was gone.

The only people she saw besides the contestants were the camera crews, the director and the slaves. Except there was one slave that had her curious. Who was Aspen and where was she hiding?

“So what do you think Master Morton has in store for us next?” Meadow sauntered over to Ananda’s bed and sat down as though Ananda had invited the woman to do so.

“I don’t know. Whatever it is, it’s going to be a doozy.” Ananda had remembered Eagan’s warning from several nights ago. This time she would learn about the real him, the man behind the stories, rumors and tall tales.

“How do you know?”

Ananda couldn't tell her she knew because Eagan had told her after fucking her brains out. "I overheard a crew member talking about it." She hated lying. Unlike Eagan, he had the luxury of telling the truth about having sex with one of the contestants because there were so many of them. There was only one Eagan Morton. Thank God.

"So what do you think your chances are? I mean, you have immunity so you'll at least make it through the fourth round. But overall, what do you think of your chances?"

Considering what Ananda had done over the last couple of weeks, she would have thought she had a great chance. With Eagan's constant reminders, she knew her possibility of winning was the same as everyone else's. Well, not everyone.

Ananda glanced at Sunny's bed. Without a doubt, Sunny was the front-runner here. Ananda couldn't fault the woman. She'd been a submissive, so she knew the Lifestyle. She'd seen her without her mask and knew she was gorgeous. And she was kind to boot.

Meadow glanced at Sunny's bed as well. "Yeah, I think she has a better shot than any of us. She's won more contests. I haven't won any. I know we're just in the beginning of the show. But I wanted to win at least one before I got the boot."

"And you will. Don't beat yourself up so much. It'll happen." Ananda put her hand on Meadow's knee to comfort her.

Meadow glanced at her hand then returned her attention to her again. "Can I ask you kind of a personal question?"

Uh oh. When the questions start off like that, it was never good. Ananda smiled anyway and humored her. "Sure. Ask away."

"I heard what you did the other night to Sunny. How did it feel to lick another woman's breast? Are you a lesbian or bi?"

If Meadow was asking her these questions, Ananda knew she would be hit with worse questions than this when she saw her family again.

"My sexuality didn't matter. I was doing what Master Eagan had instructed. You'll learn about that in this contest. It stops being about you and it's all about him."

Ananda had expected making a statement like that would have made her skin crawl more. It didn't. She felt calm about defending her actions. And had she actually in a way defended Eagan Morton? What was wrong with her?

Apple appeared in the doorway wearing her usual transparent smock, chastity belt, and megawatt smile.

"Taping for the next show will start in an hour," Apple began. "Master Eagan suggests you wear something loose and comfortable."

"For what?" Meadow moved closer to the edge of the bed.

Apple only smiled wider. "You'll see." Then she walked away.

“Loose and comfortable. Do we have anything like that in our closets?” Meadow jumped from Ananda’s bed and darted to her armoire.

While Meadow searched for the perfect ensemble, Ananda was trying to decipher what in the world Eagan would do to them today. What did that man have up his sleeve?

Chapter Fourteen

The remaining eight women and Ananda all lined up as usual in the foyer. No shorts or pants in their clothing choices, all of the women wore dresses or skirts with a simple cotton top. Ananda found a tank dress that went down to her knees. Coupled with flat sandals, she felt prepared for whatever Eagan had in store for her.

The camera crews got themselves set up, shining a light right in their faces. It was high noon and in the summertime. Who needed extra lighting right now?

Tony jumped over cable cords that slithered over the floor until he got to his spot.

“Welcome back, folks. As you can see we’re down to nine lovely ladies. Pansy was the third contestant released. Here’s a clip from that show.”

“And cut.” Phil clapped his hands once. “Great take. Let’s do another with you standing in front of the women.”

Tony nodded and did the take again. Ananda had paid attention to him until someone else snagged it. Gazing at the top of the stairs, she caught a shirtless Eagan Morton. Without a bra, Eagan would surely see her erect nipples. And without panties, her pussy juices had no where to go, but down her legs.

He sauntered down the steps, taking his sweet time. His gaze scanned over the women until he got to Ananda. Then he stopped. He stared at her as he continued down the steps and over the floor toward the taping area.

Eagan came up behind Phil and tapped him on the shoulder. He whispered something in his ear, to which Phil nodded.

“Great take again, Tony. You’re on fire today.” Phil put on his baseball cap backwards and tucked his hair back behind his ears. “Okay, ladies, we’re about to start the challenge. Tony, do your introduction.”

“To start our fourth challenge, I give you none other than Eagan Morton.” Tony stepped back and let Eagan move forward.

As soon as the other women saw him, they gasped, the same reaction Ananda had had but she kept it inside. Wearing black silk pajama bottoms and nothing else, not even shoes, Eagan looked like he just rolled out of bed. Only his hair, as usual, was impeccable.

Now that Ananda could get a full view of him, she admired the planes of his hairless chest. For forty-five, he had abs that a twenty-one year old man would want. Cobblestoned and completely lickable.

“Good afternoon, ladies.” He paced in front of them, kissing them as he got to each of them. This time Ananda kissed him fully on his lips. She wanted him to know she was in this contest to win.

“Good afternoon, Master Eagan.” As usual they all said it in unison.

“You’re probably wondering why I’m wearing just these pants.” Eagan tugged on the sides of the pants. “This is what I wear when I’m playing with a slave or submissive. If you see me in this outfit, you know it’s playtime.”

Good to know for the future. Ananda was curious about who he would be playing with today.

Eagan put his hands to his waist making Ananda stare at his flat stomach. “So far in this competition, in this show, you all have had it easy. Well, easy stops today.”

Ananda swallowed. She clasped her hands together, but with all of the sweat, had a hard time keeping them together.

“At this point, you should all consider yourselves submissives. You are *my* submissives. What I say, what I want, what I dictate goes. Is that understood?” He strolled down the line like a drill sergeant.

“Yes, sir,” the group answered like good, little soldiers.

“As my submissives, I expect a few things. One,” he held up his index finger, “you will obey me. You may ask questions, but you will always obey me.”

Ananda and the other ladies nodded.

Eagan held up two fingers. “Two, leave your hang-ups at the door. If you have a problem with nudity, touching other women, or making love to another woman, there’s the door. I’ll wait a minute to let those who want to excuse themselves go.”

Eagan turned his back on the group. Ananda had already licked the nipples of one woman. She looked down the line of other women. A couple of them shook their heads and stared at the floor. Others remained motionless. But no one stepped out of line.

Eagan returned his attention to the women. “You’re all in? Good. That’ll make the next few tasks easier for me to administer.” He padded his way down to Ananda’s end of the line. “And the last thing. From now on, when I enter the room, you will get down in a position that shows subservience to me. You will remain in that position until I tell you to stand.”

Uh oh. Eagan wasn't kidding when he said he would be showing the real him.

"Apple and Willow will show you the position."

The two ladies walked to the center of the room. They lowered themselves onto their knees then sat back on their haunches. In perfect unison, they extended their arms in the air with their hands flat then they lowered themselves to the floor, their palms flat on the floor and their foreheads touching the floor. And they remained still while Eagan sauntered around them.

"Perfect. Perfect position." He stood behind Apple and Willow. "From now on, you will be out here on the floor at six a.m."

"Six a.m.?" Poppy questioned.

Eagan stopped and glared at the dark-skinned beauty. "Problem, Poppy?"

She let out an exasperated sigh and cocked her hip. "No, Master Eagan. It's all good."

"Don't speak again until I'm addressing you. Talk again and you'll be out of my house, understand?"

Poppy opened her mouth, but instead nodded her response.

"As I was saying, you will all be down here every morning at six a.m. Once I come down, I will tell you when you can stand and eat breakfast." He observed the group. "I know what you all are thinking. What time will I be down? Will it be five minutes later? An hour later? A day later? Or will I be waiting for you promptly at six a.m.? I don't know, so you won't know. That shouldn't matter to you. What should matter to you is that you are doing what I ask. If I want you waiting down here for whatever length of time, you do so and be proud to do it."

Ananda heard her heart pounding in her head. As much as her sensibilities screamed for her to run from this nutbird's house, the forcefulness of his tone and his demand over her body kept her there in her spot wanting to hear more, wanting more.

"Also, when I do allow you to stand, you will eat breakfast when I tell you it's time to eat. You will all accompany me into the dining area, where you will be expected to be in this position until I tell you all that you can eat. Up, ladies."

Apple and Willow sat up on the knees, their backs straight, their gazes facing forward, their arms down by their sides.

"You will be in this position by your chairs. Food may be on your plate, but you will not touch it until I say you can get up and eat. You will do this for every meal, breakfast, lunch, and dinner." He stopped in front of Meadow. "Self-control is a big part of BDSM."

Meadow's lips tightened into a line, but she uttered not one word.

Eagan walked away from her and took a spot in the middle of the floor. "You will love me. You will hate me. This contest is about finding someone I can easily train. Everything you've learned so far should have prepared you for this stage of the game. All I can say now, ladies, is good luck. You're going to need it."

Ananda swallowed, but couldn't get anything down her throat. The man who stood before her now scared her and excited her at the same time.

"For this challenge, you will get down into the morning position and stay there. Whoever lasts the longest will get a shopping spree at Nordstrom's."

New clothes would be wonderful. New shoes would be even better. Ananda looked down the line at Meadow. She already saw the disillusioned woman sighing.

"Get down into position now."

All of the women lowered to their knees. In unison, they raised their arms in the air, then bent over to the floor. Kneeling on the cold marble floor sent shooting pains up Ananda's legs and back. She wouldn't let Eagan be right about her ... that she couldn't see anything through.

Ananda heard smacking feet stop in front of her.

"Begonia, you need clothes that badly?" Eagan asked her.

Yes, she did. However, that wasn't the answer Eagan was fishing for and she knew it. "I'm not kneeling for clothes, Master Eagan. I'm doing this because you asked me to do this."

She felt a hand on her back and it sent shivers down her spine.

"Good answer. Maybe you can be trained."

She heard his feet padding away.

"Keep the cameras on them, guys. I've got some business to finish."

Damn. Eagan really was a son-of-a-bitch. Ananda couldn't believe he'd left them in this position. What if they were like this for days? Ananda didn't plan on giving up. She would see this to the end.

Within what felt like only ten or fifteen minutes, Ananda heard, "This is crazy. All of this for clothes and shoes? I'm out."

Ananda didn't recognize the voice right away.

Tony said, "Rose, you're out. Please go to your room until you're called."

"Fine. Good luck, ladies. When you all realize how stupid you'll feel for doing this for just some clothes, you'll get up too."

Rose missed the point. This test was more than just clothes and shoes. This contest and everything else they did for Eagan had to do with pleasing him. Hopefully, her knees wouldn't be stiff from being in this position all of the time.

Thirty minutes later, Ananda heard a groan, then a curse.

"Fuck this. Rose is right. This is crazy."

Now, that whiny voice Ananda did recognize.

"Sorry, Poppy. You're out." Tony's voice still sounded light and cheery.

"I know that. You don't have to announce it."

It surprised her, though, that Poppy wasn't the first one out, instead of Rose, who used to be a submissive. Was Eagan that hard of a Master? Was he asking for too much?

Another hour went by without relief. Ananda wanted so much to stretch her legs out behind her and get an all over body massage after this.

She heard soft sobbing far from her.

"Help me, please. I can't stand."

Ananda caught the scurrying of feet to help a contestant in need.

"Sorry, Lily. You're out. Please help her to her room and make sure she's okay," Tony said, his voice full of sympathy.

As each hour ticked away, another woman dropped. Next was Daisy. She complained about her back. Then Freesia dropped, however, when Freesia attempted to stand, she stumbled and fell into Sunny, who broke from the position as a result. Sunny argued that she shouldn't be counted out of the competition because of it, but after a call to Eagan, he ruled that she was out.

So "the favored one" ran out of juice with Eagan. That was the one bright spot in this whole thing.

Now Meadow, Iona, and Ananda were left. Looking at Iona's clothes at the start of the competition, she knew the woman wouldn't give up without a fight. Iona loved clothes and shoes more than she loved doing reality TV shows.

Ananda's stomach growled. It was way past dinnertime. It had to be at least seven or eight at night. She'd missed lunch. This was crazy. Maybe Rose and everyone else was right. For just a few material items, did Ananda really want to go through all of this? As a dancer, she could be damaging her needed asset, her legs. But if she gave up now, Eagan would say he was right about her, that she had no fight inside of her.

This had to do with more than just some trinkets. This was about dignity and integrity. A low rumble sounded in Ananda's ear. She couldn't turn her head, but she cut her eyes to the side as much as she could. Was that snoring? Who had fallen asleep? Ananda had hoped it wasn't Meadow.

She was glad Meadow had hung in there. She knew the floor hurt her knees, legs and back as it did Ananda. The woman deserved applause just for hanging in there.

Suddenly, Ananda felt something fall against her. Damn it! Iona had fallen asleep and had now rolled on her. Since Eagan had booted Sunny out for breaking position when Freesia fell on her, Ananda knew she would be next if she didn't get Iona off of her.

"Hey! Venus is asleep and she's on me. Get her off!" Ananda tightened every muscle in her body to keep in her same position.

A stampede of feet went over to Venus. Two guys picked her up.

"Wha -- What's going on? Hey, I'm still doing the contest," a sleepy Iona professed.

“Sorry, Venus. You not only fell asleep, but you fell on another contestant and almost cost her the contest. You’re out.”

“I can’t believe I did that!” She growled and stomped back to the bedroom.

Yep, Iona would be a fun roommate to be with tonight.

Down to Meadow and Ananda. If she concentrated, just got out of her head, Ananda could last a long time in this contest. Then she thought about Meadow’s words earlier, how she complained that she hadn’t won any competitions and felt she would be going soon. Ananda had won a couple. She lasted longer than she thought. She’d proven to herself at least that she had heart and determination. Eagan should recognize that.

Ananda heard sniffing next to her.

“I can’t do it, Begonia,” Meadow whispered.

“You’re doing fine. Hang in there.” It was an odd conversation to have down on the floor. If Ananda was truly competitive, she would have told Meadow to give up and walk away. That wasn’t her style. She liked Meadow.

“Everything hurts.” Meadow cried harder. If she continued, she would break from her position.

“Stop crying, honey. It’s okay.” Ananda spoke in a soothing voice to calm her, but it didn’t seem to help.

“I’m giving up. You won ... again.”

“No!” Ananda quickly brought her head up a millisecond before Meadow lifted her head. “I’m out. Meadow is the winner.”

Tony scanned the two of them. “Honestly, I don’t know. Can you guys look at the replay?”

Ananda didn’t wait for them to officially announce the winner. She saw the back of Meadow’s head still on the floor when Ananda had lifted her head. Ananda crawled over to Meadow and embraced the woman. She kissed her on the side of her face.

“No matter what these judges say, you won. Be proud of yourself.”

Meadow wept uncontrollably and held onto Ananda. “Why? Why would you do that? You had it.”

“That’s right. I had it.” Ananda pulled back from Meadow. She wiped her tears, using her thumbs. “Now you have it.”

Ananda struggled to stand. Blood rushed through her legs causing a feeling of a million pinpricks over her skin. She limped around for a while to get rid of the feeling. Would she have to endure this every day?

“Little help here.” Meadow held up her hands.

Ananda grabbed her hands and hoisted the woman to her feet. Meadow nearly fell backward into the coffee table until Ananda caught her. Ananda guided her friend to a chair, then rubbed her calves and ankles.

Meadow had the same dark crimson blotches on her knees like Ananda. Yep, this would be murder to her dancing career.

“It looks like Meadow moved her head first,” one crewmember said.

“No, but look. Begonia’s head is up. Meadow may have moved, but Begonia is out of position.” Another crewmember pointed to a small screen.

From upstairs, Eagan, now dressed in a T-shirt and khakis, but still no shoes, bounded down the stairs. He bypassed the debating crewmembers and went straight to Ananda and Meadow.

Glaring at Ananda, he asked, “Did you quit? Did you give up?”

Ananda blinked. She knew Eagan could tell when she was lying. So why even try? “The better person won, sir.”

“That’s not what I asked. Did you quit?”

She hated that term. Ananda didn’t quit. She allowed someone else to win. “I didn’t quit. I didn’t give up. The best person won.”

“I watched this from my office. There are microphones attached to both of you. I heard what you said.” Between gritted teeth, he said, “You quit.”

If he wanted to consider it that way, fine. Ananda knew what she did. Her level of commitment hadn’t faltered.

“Apple! Willow!”

The two women rushed to the foyer.

“Get the other contestants and get them in here now.” Eagan pointed to the floor and paced the room. “Stop looking at that goddamn screen. I saw the same thing you all did.”

Ananda held Meadow’s hands while still crouched at her feet.

Meadow leaned down. “You think we’re in trouble?”

“At least one of us is.” Sweat covered Ananda’s hands.

One by one the women all filtered into the foyer. Ananda stood to take her place in line and tried helping Meadow to her feet.

“No. You two may remain seated.” Eagan pointed to Ananda and Meadow. “Some of you did a hell of a job. I’m impressed at the level of dedication many of you showed.” Eagan walked over to Sunny who kept her gaze down to the floor. “Sunny, I know you wouldn’t have given up. That was just bad luck.”

She nodded. “Thank you, Master Eagan.”

“The last two in position were Meadow and Begonia. I watched the live camera feed. I’m declaring --” He paused and looked at the both of them. “-- Meadow the winner.”

The cherubic woman smiled and wiped away more tears streaming down her face. The other ladies applauded.

“The person who lasted the longest, however, was Begonia. Meadow, you moved your head first. But because Begonia quit, Meadow showed more integrity than Begonia.” Eagan stood in front of Ananda. “I’m so disappointed in you. I thought you were going to win this.”

“Circumstances changed,” Ananda said softly.

“I didn’t say you could speak! Stay silent, or immunity or not, you’re out of here right now.”

Several of the other contestants looked around at each other.

“Immunity? I thought this was the reward challenge.” Rose stepped away from the group.

“What gave you that impression? I just called it a challenge. I didn’t specify if it was a reward challenge, immunity challenge, or both. It’s both.”

The women all groan. Some cursed.

“Therefore, since Begonia has immunity, she stays. Meadow, not only do you win the shopping spree, but you also have immunity from elimination in the next challenge. By the way, did I tell you all the spending limit?”

Ananda didn’t want to know, but the other women shook their heads.

“There is no limit. And there is no time limit. Go there when the store opens, stay there when it closes. Buy whatever you like.”

Meadow clapped her hands. If anyone deserved that, it was her.

Eagan pointed to a spot in front of him. “Poppy and Rose, come forward.”

The two disgruntled women stepped forward.

“Poppy, you talked when you weren’t supposed to and you’ve consistently disrespected my Lifestyle and home.”

Poppy opened her mouth, but Eagan brought his hand up to silence her.

“Not a word.” Then he turned to Rose. “Rose, you’re as bad as Begonia. You simply gave up without trying. That’s unacceptable. I’m releasing you. Give me your collar.”

Rose’s bottom lip quivered. “I didn’t know. That’s not fair.”

“I only want a submissive who is willing to put her best foot forward. You quit, simply because you didn’t think the prize was worthy enough for you. *I’m* the prize. I should have been worthy. You should have done it for me.”

“Please don’t do this. Give me another chance. You said Poppy never listens to you, that she’s disrespectful.”

“And now you’re being disrespectful. Give me my collar now.” He held his hand up waiting for the adornment.

“I can change. I can do better. I swear.”

Eagan shook his head. “No, no, this is you. This is it. You will always take the easy way out. Good luck in finding another Master. I don’t need your services.”

Eagan grabbed Rose’s shoulders and turned the woman around. He touched the clasp of her necklace just as she pulled away again.

A snap sounded and pearls flew everywhere in the room, over furniture, over the floor, pelting the other women. The women shielded their bodies with their hands. Rose held the remains of the collar in her hand, stroking it like a departed loved one.

“What will I do now? Where will I go? I have nothing.” Rose hadn’t removed her mask.

“You all knew this would happen. This is a competition, not a sorority. Pack your things and go, now!” The snap of the final word made all the women jump. He snatched the remains of the necklace from Rose’s hand. Then he pulled her mask off.

Behind it hid a young woman with red hair, soft brown eyes that were now rimmed red from all of her tears, and the most delicate features Ananda had ever seen on a person. Rose looked like a doll with her porcelain skin. And this was the woman Eagan had just crushed.

Eagan stormed off camera and headed back upstairs.

“I’m so sorry, Rose.” Sunny hugged her.

“It’s Marsha. My real name. I didn’t want to reveal it until I was the last one standing.” She buried her face in her hands. “I feel so ashamed.”

“Don’t be. We didn’t know. You’ll be okay.” Freesia stroked Marsha’s hair.

“I know this. The game is really on now. Master Eagan is taking no prisoners.” Poppy shook her head.

If this was the real Eagan, Ananda didn’t want any part of that guy. She wanted the guy who had licked her clitoris so gently that it turned her bones into butter. For whatever reason, that man was gone. Now Ananda really had to be on her game.

Chapter Fifteen

A spray of pearls and platinum chains flew across Eagan's office when he threw what was left of Rose's necklace. Intense energy swirled inside of him until he wanted to scream. A soft rapping at his door broke him from his manic thoughts.

"What?" he snapped.

The door cracked open and Aspen poked her head inside. "I'm afraid I drew the short straw, sir."

Eagan took a deep breath. "You wanted something?" He made his place behind his desk.

"Just to make you happy. I've never seen you like this, Master Eagan. The other slaves and I are concerned." She crouched down and picked up the pearls one by one. "I'm sure the contestants now are very concerned."

"They should be. Being with me is not a picnic."

Aspen stood. "It is a picnic." She approached his desk. "You just happen to bring your own ants." She set a pile of pearls in the center and continued her search. "Want to talk about it?"

Did Eagan really want to talk about the constant calls from Dris and his unreasonable demands? Or the calls and visits from his neighbors about the noise from the camera crews and the goings-on in *his* house? Or maybe what he really wanted to talk about was the one thing he didn't want to talk about, the e-mail from Ophelia, the one that simply said, "Hi."

"Aspen, sit on the couch. You know the spot."

"That I do, sir." She sat at the end and waited.

Eagan sat in the middle then turned over and placed his head on her lap.

“Close your eyes, please.” She slipped her delicate hand over his eyelids to prompt him to close them. Then she put one hand on his chest over his heart and stroked his hair with her other hand.

Eagan took a deep breath and settled his body down. His heartbeat slowed to a reasonable pace. He stopped panting. Aspen had a gift that couldn’t be bottled.

“I have never felt so out of control before.” Eagan spoke low and even.

“Do you know what triggered your new behavior?” Aspen rubbed the center of his forehead.

“The usual. Dris Markham asking for more money.”

“That’s the nature of your business. You’ve never let that bother you before.”

And Aspen was right. He’d always handled actor demands in the same way; he ignored them. An actor who made too many demands was an actor who no longer respected his craft. That was like the elimination tonight. Rose didn’t respect him as a Master. She only looked at the prize. In a way, so had Meadow. The only reason Begonia tossed in her towel was to give Meadow a win. Knowing that made him want her even more. That scared him.

“Magazines are saying that I’m no longer relevant.” Eagan stretched his legs out.

“Since when do you care about what magazines say about you?”

“Since the sales for my last few movies tanked. I don’t want to be the punch line to a joke.”

“You’re still a great producer and director. No one can take that from you. Now do you want to talk about your real problem or do you want to keep discussing things you can fix?”

Eagan smiled. “Have I told you what an invaluable slave you are?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And how incredibly intuitive you are?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And how I enjoy your company?”

“You’re not going to talk about it, are you?”

Eagan sat up. “As usual, you’ve done a great job. I’ll be fine. I promise. No more tantrums.”

Aspen stood. “Shall I finish cleaning up the pearls?”

“Not now. Perhaps later while I’m reading.” He didn’t want to see Aspen on her hands and knees picking up items that were on the floor as a result of his lack of control.

Aspen headed to the door and stopped. “I can get the number for Miss Marsha’s room.”

“Who?”

“Rose, the contestant who’s leaving tonight. I can get her room number, if you would like to make a visit.”

Eagan had been especially hard on the woman. He didn't mean to snap at her. His emotions ran too high and hard for him to stop or control them.

"Yes, get her room number so that I can send her some flowers. Perhaps a gift."

"If I'm allowed to be frank, sir. I don't think throwing money at this will solve the problem."

Eagan blinked at Aspen's candor.

"You verbally spanked her. Time to do some aftercare."

And he knew she was right. He should be there holding her and telling her that, despite his lack of control; she still had worth. She could still be a good submissive to another Master.

"Thank you for your opinion. Let Apple and Willow know to prepare the women for dinner."

Aspen smiled and bowed before leaving the room.

Although he had no appetite, the women all had to eat. After this contest, he would see who listened, who wanted it bad enough.

Eagan's gaze dropped to his computer monitor. On the screen, the one he'd been staring at for the last two hours, was Ophelia's e-mail. What the hell did she want?

* * * * *

Dinner? Eating was the last thing on Ananda's mind. She was sure that the other women felt the same way. After cleaning up, they all trudged down to the dining room. Meadow grabbed a chair and was about to sit down before Ananda stopped her.

"Position, remember?" Ananda whispered.

Meadow nodded and smiled. One by one the eight of them dropped down to the floor next to a chair. Then they waited. Apple and Willow had been in and set salads on their plates and filled their glasses with water and wine. Still no Eagan.

Ananda's stomach growled, but she didn't dare move or acknowledge it. Then she heard the tell-tale padding feet again. Eagan strolled into the room. He stood at the end of the table and stared at each woman before speaking.

"Up," he said.

Ananda and the other women stood.

"You may eat." Then as quickly as he walked into the room, he left.

"He's not eating with us?" Meadow whispered.

Ananda shrugged. There were things about him that she couldn't explain. Perhaps he didn't want to sit among submissives who had so little regard for him. Or maybe he was disappointed in his own actions. Either way, Ananda was going to eat, drink and be merry ... until the next contest.

* * * * *

Eagan strolled around his dance studio alone. He glanced at his watch then looked out the window admiring the reflection of the moon in the water. Usually, about this time, Begonia would make a surprise visit. His cock still throbbed over her last one where she'd hidden under his desk giving him a handjob that rivaled Aspen's.

He'd warned her that things would change. He noticed the confused look in her eyes when he admonished the group. He didn't like doing it. On some level, he had to reprimand them. They knew who was the boss of the house. And they wouldn't question his actions.

Tired, Eagan slid his finger over his piano keys as he headed to the door to go to bed. He made one stroll around the foyer area to see if anyone lingered. No one was in the main area.

Just as he headed to the stairs, he caught someone down the hall.

Begonia.

She gasped when she saw him, but stood perfectly still at her bedroom door. Eagan stopped and stared at her from his spot. He wanted her. He wanted her to come sneaking down the hall and to his office where he could tell her he wasn't the jerk she probably suspected him to be. Or maybe they could go out into the garden again to just explore each other's bodies.

Instead, she slinked into the room and closed the door behind herself. He couldn't fault her. He made the rules. Can't be mad because she was sticking to them. He just had to figure out a way to bring out that old Begonia again, the rebel he'd grown to love. She had to accept him for who he was though. Seeing the fear in her face, she probably couldn't do that.

Damn.

* * * * *

"I need to have my own personal acupuncturist on set with me at all times," Dris whined over the phone.

Eagan rolled his eyes and continued typing a message on his computer.

"I'm stressed. These shoots are hard."

"Dris, have your agent contact me. She and I need to go over the terms of your contract." Eagan sent his message, then stood.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Gone was the scared and exhausted actor. Here was the indignant asshole that lurked just below Dris's shallow surface.

"It means exactly what I said. Now I have work to do." Eagan disconnected the call. He no longer cared that they were in the middle of production on *Infinity*. Eagan was over

placating this idiot. Did he really think he was the only actor out there, that he couldn't be replaced?

Eagan's phone rang before he walked to the door. Looking at the Caller I.D. screen, he noticed it was Dris Markham's agent. The man didn't waste time, did he? Eagan had been serious when he said he had other things to do. He ignored the call and headed downstairs.

Today would be an interesting day. After the last shoot a few days ago, Eagan allowed the women some space to reacquaint themselves with the house, the rules, and why it is that they were there in the first place.

So far, they had been doing well. Every morning at 6 a.m. the women were all in the foyer in position and waiting for him. So far no one had disappointed him, not even Poppy, and especially not Begonia, who he had expected to oversleep or just complain about the treatment. She almost acted as dedicated as Sunny. The turnaround in her behavior impressed him.

Because he'd planned on playing in a manner of speaking today, Eagan had on a pair of drawstring pants and a white cotton T-shirt. The T-shirt was worn only for protection.

He stood at the top of the stairs and waited for Tony to give him his entrance. Once he heard it, Eagan descended the stairs. His customary welcome kisses went by quickly.

Standing in front of them, the women all said, "Good afternoon, Master Eagan."

"Before we get started, there's one thing I want to say." He paced, keeping his gaze down to the floor. Then he stopped and stared at all of them, making sure to look at each woman in her eyes. "During Rose's elimination, I was not myself that day. I allowed some personal issues to affect my mood. For that, I apologize."

The women all nodded, except for Begonia.

"I owed Rose a more personal apology so I went to see her where we have her hidden until after the show is over."

That's when Begonia nodded. Knowing that she understood him and, most importantly, forgave him as Rose had forgiven him earlier that week, calmed Eagan's raging heart.

"I don't rule by fear, but ask for servitude through respect. If you can't respect me, I can't be a good Master to you." He paused. "I'm no one to be feared. Please believe that."

Begonia smiled this time. Her expression accelerated his heart.

"Today, we're going to learn about one of my favorite things." From behind his back he pulled out some rope and tossed it to the floor in the middle of the room.

He noticed right away how big Lily's eyes had become. The other women looked confused. Poppy appeared horrified.

"Rope play. To me, it's like an art." He called for Willow and Apple.

The two women appeared, wearing intricate rope dressing that he'd done earlier that morning. Evenly-spaced knots decorated the ropes that were wrapped around their legs, their breasts and arms. It was the only time he allowed them out of their chastity belts.

He stood behind Willow. "The great thing about it is that with the knots in the right place, this can feel amazing."

Eagan grabbed a part of the rope that crisscrossed at Willow's back. The rope dipped between her legs. With one tug, he crushed a knot against her clit. Willow moaned in an immediate response.

"Feel good?" he asked her.

"Yes, Master Eagan. Thank you." Willow nodded.

"I will teach you all some basic rope tying tricks. The person who picks it up the best will get a reward." He wanted to be sure to announce that this was not an immunity challenge, although he'd hoped they would all take this seriously. "I own a small island in the Bahamas. You and a guest will be taken there on my private jet for a seven-day vacation."

The women all applauded. Eagan's insides tickled knowing he'd regained their admiration again. Eagan showed them basic ties to wrap around wrists.

"The great thing about binding the wrists this way is that it won't tighten if you pull on it, so your submissive doesn't get hurt." Such a knot was tied around Begonia's wrists. "See." He pulled on it, bringing her closer to him. Every time she stepped closer to him his heart pounded. "Or if you have a submissive suspended, it won't tighten up and cut off circulation." He brought Begonia's bound wrists in the air and tugged on it. His mind flashed over images of binding her wrists in his dungeon and fucking her while suspended.

Eagan dropped her hands. "Everyone, pick a partner."

Begonia immediately grabbed Meadow. Daisy and Venus paired up. Freesia hooked up with Sunny. And Lily and Poppy made a team.

"I want you all to practice doing the knots and ties Apple, Willow, and I have just taught you. The three of us will be going around the room to check you all out. Between the three of us, we'll decide the winner."

Begonia, Venus, Poppy and Sunny all attempted their bindings first. Poppy's was nice, but was way too loose. Sunny's was better, and so far, she was the frontrunner to win. Venus's tie was an absolute mess. It was apparent she paid no attention to Eagan or his slaves when they spoke. Begonia's tie was impressive, but not as impress as Sunny's.

The remaining four women took a stab at binding wrists. Freesia learned nothing from Sunny. Her bindings were too tight and would have definitely caused damage. Meadow attempted a binding trick he hadn't shown the group, something she said she learned in the Girl Scouts. Although her attempt was ambitious, it fell short of what Eagan wanted to see. He had to give her credit for trying something new. Daisy faired better than Venus, but not by much.

When Eagan went over to see Lily's work, he had to rub his eyes to make sure he really saw what he saw. In the short timeframe given them, Lily had tied a rope bra around Poppy's chest that also connected to Poppy's wrists.

"When she pulls it, sir, it'll squeeze her breasts and nipples." Lily pulled on Poppy's wrists. Poppy gasped and moaned at each movement until the statuesque beauty nearly dropped to her knees.

"Very nice work. Who was your former Master?" Eagan admired the complicated detail in the bindings.

"Master Do."

"I've heard of him. He's taught you well. No doubt about it. Lily, you are the winner. Congratulations."

The women all applauded her.

"If I were you, I would hang out with Lily until the immunity challenge tonight. You're going to have to learn to do what she did for that challenge." He turned to Meadow. "Although you have immunity, think about the big picture, Meadow. If I'm teaching this to you it's because I want you to know it. So still try to do well tonight."

"Yes, Master Eagan."

Before exiting the taping area, Eagan stared at Begonia as she continued practicing on Meadow. She was the one he wanted to have tied up in knots. As he admired her, he thought of a perfect idea to get her bound.

Chapter Sixteen

Ananda tried tying the ropes around her body, but it wasn't the same, plus she got strange looks from her roommates.

"Do you think he'll have us tie each other up in that way that Lily did today?" Meadow wrapped a rope around her wrist then took it off.

"I don't know. Who knows after what he did the other day." Iona kicked back on her bed like the Queen of Sheba. She really must have thought she had this competition in the bag. Eagan made it very clear that in this game, there were no clear-cut winners.

"A part of me can't wait to get this over with. I just want to move on with the competition." Sunny paced the room and looked more like a professional wrestler than a woman about to be tied up like a Thanksgiving turkey.

"And if *you* don't move on?" Ananda's question stopped Sunny dead in her tracks.

Before Sunny could answer, Apple appeared at the doorway, now back in her trademark see-through shift and chastity belt. "Ladies, the Master is ready for you."

Ananda took a deep breath and climbed out of bed. She smoothed her hands down her dress and followed Apple along with the other women. Instead of going to the foyer, though, she led the group to the living room where cameras were set up.

The center of the room was left empty. Couches, chairs, ottomans and chaise lounges lined the perimeter of the room.

"Master Eagan would like for you all to be in position when he arrives." Willow pointed to the floor.

"Of course he would," Poppy said, then popped her gum.

Ananda didn't question the reason. She lowered herself to the floor and dutifully got into position and waited for him. The sound of gentle rustling whispered by her ears; the other women must have gotten down to the floor as well.

What seemed like an eternity, but must have only been five minutes later, Ananda heard heavy footsteps.

"Up," he said.

Ananda lifted her head, then stood. She didn't look to the side to see the other women. Right now it was just her and Eagan. The way he returned her stare, he must have felt the same way.

After his heartfelt apology, she saw him differently. Eagan was a man with strength of character as well as being an overwhelming presence. The more she was around him, the more she wanted to stay, which went against her nature. She wanted to be free, have the bohemian lifestyle of dancing from one show to the next. Settling down with a Master did not fit her plan. Or did it?

Wearing white drawstring pants and nothing else, Ananda knew this was playtime for him. Her heart pounded, thinking of what he would do to them.

"I thought about having you all do a little rope play on each other." Eagan picked up a strand of smooth, white nylon rope. "Instead, I want you all to be my teacher."

Ananda blinked. The other women's breaths caught.

"I will tie a rope around you and you tell me how to do it. The one who does it the best will win immunity." He scanned the women and his gaze stopped on Meadow. "Since you have immunity, I want you to go first, Meadow."

Meadow stood and took tentative steps toward him.

"Take off your clothes."

Meadow glanced at the camera crews and the other women behind her.

"They're all are going to have to do the same thing." Eagan turned to his slaves. "Willow, help Meadow disrobe."

Willow bowed and assisted Meadow in taking off all of her clothes. She held the garments for her as Meadow stood in the middle of the floor completely naked.

"Now, tell me how to start." Eagan held the rope in front of her.

Meadow's breathing staggered. If she didn't get a hold of herself, she would pass out.

"Calm down. Relax, Meadow. Just look me in the eyes. It's just me and you in here. Think about no one else and nothing else. Got it?"

Although she nodded, her breathing hadn't improved. "I think I'm going to be sick."

"Apple, help Meadow out of the room." Eagan took some steps back from her.

Apple quickly wrapped her arm around Meadow's shoulders and guided the woman out of the room.

“Good thing she has immunity.” Eagan shook his head. “Freesia, come on up here.”

For each woman, he listened to what they wanted. And each woman wanted knots that would rub against her clit. Although they all tried, they all failed. Freesia’s knot sat right at her pussy opening. As Eagan joked, she’d created her own chastity belt. Daisy’s knots landed on her stomach. Venus didn’t want any knots. She wanted the rope strung all over her body without rhyme or reason. Eagan did what she requested and got a mess over her body. Sunny was close in her rope design. She got ambitious and wanted two knots at her clit. Her hope was to have them on the outside of her clit so that they rubbed together. What she got was one knot by her nub and the other behind it.

“I want that same thing Lily did earlier today. I liked that.” Poppy stripped off her top, exposing her perfectly round breasts with their dark areolas.

“Take off the rest of your clothes.” Eagan stared at her until she made her next move.

Poppy shook her head. “What I have planned, I don’t need to be all the way naked. Trust me. You’ll like it.”

He let out a long sigh. “Fine. You’re going to have to tell me how to do tie you properly.” Eagan held up parachute rope.

He must have thought Poppy would have forgotten how to do it but she knew exactly what to do. She even changed it a bit to add a string to hang off of her bound wrists, so that Eagan could pull on it as a leash, which would also pull on her bindings to give her pleasure.

“Very well done. Did you learn that from Lily?” He asked her to turn around to show off his work.

“Not the handle part. I figured out that on my own.”

Ananda couldn’t believe Poppy came up with that. She couldn’t wait to see Lily’s design.

“Begonia, you’re next.”

Ananda stood and stripped out of her dress and shoes without question. She planted herself in front of Eagan, who simply stared at her for a moment.

He blinked, as though snapping himself out of a trance. “What would you like for me to do to you?”

A million thoughts ran through her brain. Licking her pussy again. Fucking her from behind. Fucking her on his desk. She said, “I want an all-over body rope dressing.”

Eagan raised his eyebrows. “Very ambitious. You think you can talk me through that?”

“I’ll sincerely try.”

Ananda had him place knots two inches apart from each other on the strand. Then, she had him hang the strand around her neck evenly and crisscross over her chest. As she talked to him, she felt like they were the only two people in the room.

She had him wrapping the knotted rope between her legs, then down her legs so that he made a seam on the backs of each.

When he was finished, Eagan stepped back to admire the work. "Turn around."

In slow easy steps, she turned.

"Very nice except for one thing." Eagan approached her. "How do I make you feel good in this?" He grabbed the union of rope in the center of her chest and tugged on it. "Do you feel that at your clit?"

She did. Sparks shot off in her eyes like fireworks. "Yes."

He turned her around. "What about this?" He pulled up on the rope at her back.

The sensation of the knot nestled at her sexual core nearly dropped her to her knees. "God, yes!"

"Then it's a well-made design. I would have liked to have had a little handle like on Poppy's. Or better yet." He grabbed her arms and twisted them behind her back without hurting her. "Have your arms bound behind you like this."

"Perhaps this is something Master Eagan can show me another time." She hoped so.

He let her arms go. "Nice job, Begonia. If I gave out awards for most improved, you would definitely get one today." He turned to Lily. "And last but not least, Lily. Step up."

Lily sat still for a while before finally standing. She approached Eagan, but kept her gaze down to the floor.

"Take off your clothes."

Lily wrapped her arms around her body. "I can't. I don't want to do this, Master Eagan."

Ananda had to sit down after hearing Lily say that. She was a shoe-in to win this contest. She knew everything there was to know about rope play from the master of it.

"Lily, I had expected you to be my star today. Is there a reason you're refusing to participate in this contest?"

She sniffled and ducked her hands under her mask to wipe away her tears. "Please don't make me do this, sir. If this makes me go home, then I will go home."

Eagan shook his head and told Lily to resume her seat. He asked Willow to bring Meadow back into the room. Wearing a robe now, Meadow sat among the other contestants.

"Today you all learned about rope play. Some of you truly impressed me with what you came up with." He glared at Venus. "Some of you need a lot more work." Then glanced at Meadow. "And some of you need to start believing in yourselves. But there can only be one winner."

Ananda knew it would have to be her. She came up with something that was not only elaborate and ambitious as Eagan called it, but it also felt really good on.

"That winner today is --" His gaze went from Sunny to Poppy to Ananda. "-- Poppy."

Poppy jumped up and clapped her hands. "It's about damn time!"

"Language, Poppy."

She covered her mouth. "Oops! Sorry."

"You have immunity for the next challenge." He pointed to Venus and Lily. "Venus and Lily, come to the center of the floor."

The two women approached him and didn't look at each other.

"Venus, were you asleep when we had this class?" Eagan put his hands to his hips.

"No, sir."

"So you just didn't care, is that it?"

Venus shook her head. "I thought what I did was fine."

"I don't want fine. I want perfection. I want you to put a little effort into it like Sunny and Begonia did." Then, he turned to Lily. "And you out of all of them surprised me. I thought for sure you would have shown me something special that you learned from Master Do. Because you weren't willing to try at all, Lily, I'm releasing you. Give me your collar."

Unlike Rose from the other day, Lily didn't put up a fight. She unclasped her necklace and placed it in Eagan's hand. Then she removed her mask. Underneath hid a pretty woman. Her almond-shaped brown eyes held a smoldering look. She had sharp bangs and fine eyebrows. Her skin color looked like fine Sahara sand.

"I'm sorry to have disappointed you, Master Eagan. Master Do taught me a lot of things. But he always stressed not to share his secrets. Even though I'm no longer his submissive, his request still rings true to me. I shouldn't have done the bindings I did on Poppy." She looked at Poppy. "I'm glad it helped you win. Since I still hold some loyalty to my former Master, I couldn't have been a good submissive to you."

"I understand. But why couldn't you just say that in the competition?"

She shook her head. "I was ready to go. When I realized that my devotion still belonged to Master Do, I knew I couldn't go on in this competition. I'm so sorry, Master Eagan. My name is Amy. I've enjoyed serving you for the short time I've been here." She bowed her head.

"I can only hope to have submissives like you, who, way after they have served me, are still as devoted as you are to your former Master. Good luck in your search in finding the Master for you. And have a great time on your trip."

Ananda had to get her rope off of herself. Afraid or not, she had to confront Eagan to find out why he didn't name her the winner and give her immunity. Once she got the rope off, she would string him up!

* * * * *

Eagan listened to the tenth message from Dris's agent. The woman was desperate. Having them both feel a bit vulnerable gave Eagan a rush through his body. This was the way he was supposed to feel. He had his control back again.

Eagan picked up his phone to intercom Aspen for his bath, when he heard a tapping on his window. Considering he was three floors up and didn't have a tree close enough to have its limbs tap his glass, he set the receiver down and looked outside the window.

He caught Begonia throwing his expensive rocks again, this time at his window. When she saw him in the window, she stopped. This time the woman had gone too far.

Eagan stomped down the back stairway that went to his backyard. He bypassed the camera crews and his security that way. In his backyard, he saw Begonia leaning against the tree where she had given him the best blowjob ever.

"I should send you home right now," Eagan said once he stood in front of her.

"After that last elimination, I wish you would." She put her fists to her hips. "You told me the last time we were out here for me to learn more about BDSM. I do, and you don't even reward me?"

Eagan glanced around then grabbed Begonia's arm. He pulled her toward his two-bedroom, one-and-a-half bath guesthouse behind his property. He knew the place hadn't been rigged with cameras.

"I told you to be prepared to meet the real Eagan Morton." He walked forward; Begonia didn't make a move. She stood her ground. "I don't reward whining and crying. You want my respect, you earn it like everybody else."

"God, just pick a personality and stick with it. If you want to be the jerk, be the jerk. That way I'll know who I'm serving. If you want to be the nice guy, the one who can lick my pussy and make me come so hard that I can't stand, and who apologizes so sincerely it breaks my heart, be that guy. But stop confusing me." She attempted to storm by him, but Eagan caught her around her waist.

"You want to know who I am?" He grabbed both of her wrists in one hand and held the union over her head as he had her pressed against the wall. "This is me." He crushed his mouth against hers.

Her pillowy lips welcomed him. And when he parted her lips and slipped his tongue in her mouth, she welcomed that, too, sucking it like she'd sucked his cock. He kicked her feet apart then reached under her dress and glared at her when he felt her panties. With one hard yank, he had them ripped off her body.

Begonia's pupils darkened. Her nipples stood rigid under her dress.

"Are you wet yet?" Not waiting for a verbal response, he slipped his fingers between her nether lips and found a pleasant surprise. "Ah, nice and wet." He circled her hardened nub with his thumb.

In response, Begonia rotated her hips. Eagan slipped his middle finger deep inside of her, making her arch her back and balancing herself on her toes. He thrust his finger inside of her in a slow and easy rhythm. She opened her legs more and ground her pussy down on his finger. Her slick inner walls closed around his digit. She was ready and this wasn't a tenth of the amount of pleasure he could give her.

"Oh, God! Oh, God! Master Eagan!"

He stared into her wild eyes through her mask.

"May I come?" she asked. Desperation and need filled her voice.

"You think I should let you come?" He teased.

She nodded in response.

"I want to hear you."

"Y-y-yes, please. I need to come."

"No. Not yet."

He slipped his finger out of her then pulled her dress over her head. Not trusting that her legs would be functional right now, Eagan hoisted her in his arms and carried her to one of the bedrooms. He tossed her on the bed, then removed his pants.

"Treat me like you would your submissive," Begonia said. "Please. I want to know."

Eagan opened the closet. He knew there were scarves in there for when his mother decided to stop over for a surprise visit. His mother never used the scarves the way he was about to use them on Begonia.

Before he got back into bed, he retrieved a condom from the night stand. Eagan had to protect them both, and it was apparent neither one had strong wills.

"Hands over your head."

She did as instructed. Eagan bound her wrists to the metal headboard. He got in bed with her and forced her legs open. The next time they were together he would have to shave her. The hair had to go.

He ducked his head between her legs and devoured her sweet cunt. Her juices flowed heavier now than in any of the times they had been together. Whether she wanted to admit it or not, this Lifestyle, this treatment suited her.

He licked her salty juices then dipped his tongue inside of her. She moaned. Her body writhed in this incredible fashion, like she was dancing but on her back. Eagan kissed his way up her body, over her flat, muscled stomach, to her round breasts then kissed her. While he kissed her, he plunged his cock deep inside of her. She screamed in his mouth while they kissed. Her long legs coiled around his body.

"This feels so good! Don't stop. Please, don't stop." She pumped her hips to match his thrusts.

Sweat poured from his body. He hooked one leg around his arm and pumped away inside of her. He felt her constricting around his shaft and knew she was close.

“Please!”

The desperation in her voice tore at his heart. She pulled on the scarf binding her wrists. Eagan’s sac tightened along with his gut. He couldn’t stop the tremors that riddled his body. He had to have her as much as she needed him.

“Now, Begonia, now!”

She arched her back and squeezed her legs around him so tightly, he didn’t think she would let him free. A low, gritty moan radiated from her mouth. He pushed himself deep inside and held himself there. He came deep inside of her and wanted more of her.

Eagan rolled off her body.

“Don’t tell me,” she began.

Eagan propped his head up on his hand to look down at her.

She gazed at him. “This doesn’t mean that I will continue on in the competition, right?”

This time he couldn’t help but laugh at her. “And here I thought you didn’t understand me.”

* * * * *

“At some point, are you going to untie me?” Ananda pulled on the scarves still binding her wrists to the bed.

Eagan cocked a smile and ran his fingertips from her lips, where she extended her tongue to taste him again, down between her breasts, over her stomach and stopped right at her pubic hairline. Damn the mask. She wanted to take it off. Show him the real her, the real Ananda.

“Nope. I like you like this. In case you’ve forgotten, I am the Dom here.” His fingers caressed her small bit of hair that covered her vagina. “This has got to go.”

Just when she had settled in to enjoy the feeling, he had to go ruin it. “Shave my hair off? You want it smooth?”

“Yep.”

“What if I don’t like it that way? What if I think it’s weird?” Why would a man want to see a woman without hair there? It was crazy. It was kind of creepy.

“Makes eating you much easier.”

“It’s gone by the end of the day.” Forget creepy. Anything to get this man to continue giving her exquisite pleasure with his mouth, she was all for it.

“Have you always had submissive tendencies?” He kissed the side of her breast.

“Depends on what you would call submissive tendencies.” Ananda inched her way closer to Eagan to get him to kiss any part of her body again.

“The overwhelming need to serve. Have a need to let someone else make decisions for you. A need to just be what someone else wants you to be.”

Yep, that didn’t describe her one bit, especially the part about letting someone else make decisions for her. When she gazed into Eagan’s eyes, she was willing to do that and then some. Where the hell did that feeling come from?

“Yes, I have those feelings,” Ananda finally answered.

From the way Eagan smiled, he must have believed her. She said it pretty convincingly. Maybe too convincingly.

“Then why did you wait until now to act on them?” He licked his tongue around her nipple.

Damn, this wasn’t fair.

“I don’t know. Just not a good time, I guess.” She sighed as he flicked her nipple with his tongue. “If you want to carry on a conversation with me, you’re going to have to stop doing that.”

“You’re going to have to learn to control yourself. I do what I want when I want and I expect people to adapt around me.” His hand busied itself massaging her other breast.

“Of course. What was I thinking?”

Ananda decided not to look at him. Maybe it would lessen how good it felt having him licking and touching her if she didn’t see him do it. Yeah, right.

“So tell me,” she began, “what happened to your last submissive?”

Eagan stopped. His hand slithered off of her body and his mouth detached from her nipple. Ananda turned her head to look at him.

“Ophelia was a young woman. Maybe about your age or a little younger.” He sat up in bed. “She decided that serving wasn’t her thing. She wanted to try acting, which meant going to Hollywood, which meant being away from me for long periods of time.”

“You are one of the biggest Hollywood producers. Why didn’t you move to Hollywood to be with her?” Ananda needed to know this, because she had planned on making a name for herself as a dancer through this show.

“My home is here. I didn’t want to move and she knew that. But there are things my submissive does that I don’t get from my slaves.”

“Sex?”

“That’s one thing. My submissive really is my partner in life. She’s supposed to share everything with me and I --” He gazed down at Ananda. “I share with them.”

“So she kept this part about wanting to be an actress from you?”

“Along with a lot of things.”

“Well you’re in the biz. You could have easily found a show for her that would have kept her close to you and made her happy.”

Eagan shook his head. “No. If there was something outside of our home life that she wanted, I wanted her to get it on her own and not through me. I felt like she was trying to use me for those connections. So I released her, and she wanted to be released. I let her pursue her acting career and I wished her well.”

“Seems kind of cold.” Ananda’s flesh had grown frigid thinking about Eagan putting this woman out of his house.

“It was very difficult. I had grown very, very attached to her. And I thought she felt that way about me.”

“Did your family help you cope through it?” Ananda chewed on her lower lip waiting for his answer.

She knew something was up with him and his family. Eagan got very tight-lipped during their very first dinner when she brought them up.

“No,” he said simply.

“You don’t deal much with your family, do you?” she asked.

Eagan let out a long sigh. His breath feathered over her body.

“Things changed within the last few months.”

“What kind of things? It can’t be that bad. You can always forgive your family anything.”

“Yes, but can they forgive me?”

Ananda blinked. “What happened? What did you do?”

“I let my father die.”

No, Eagan couldn’t be that cold and heartless. The way he made the statement, he came off as a bastard.

“At least, that’s what I think my mother thinks about me,” he concluded.

Ananda exhaled and relaxed her hands. She remained quiet. If he wanted to talk about it she would listen. She would have to. He still had her tied to the damn bed.

“He had been ill for some time, but he managed to hold on. I would go away on a trip. He would tell me before I go, ‘See you when you get back’ and that’s how it was between us. I would do my business, come home, and see him. He would greet me with a smile and said that he hung around just to see me again.”

Ananda smiled during his story. She felt his deep love for his father through every word he uttered and it made her heart flutter.

“A couple of months ago, I attended an awards show. I told my father that I was going. He did something different this time.” Eagan cleared his throat. “This time he said goodbye. I still remember feeling my mother’s hand squeezing mine when he said that. My mother

begged me to stay home, but I told her he would be fine. He always was and always will be.” He sniffed. “I won an award that night and my father passed away.”

“I’m so sorry.” Ananda wanted so much to hold him. She tugged on her bindings then relaxed her body. “Your mother can’t possibly think that his death was your fault.”

“*I think that. And if that’s how I’m feeling, then she has to feel the same way.*” He rested his hand on her stomach.

“She’s your mother. She wouldn’t blame you for your father’s death. Besides, she lost her husband. Don’t let her lose her son, too.”

“She has Christian, my younger brother. They don’t need me. They’ve always hated what I do.”

“Being a Dominant?”

“No, worse. Being a Hollywood producer.”

The room got quiet before Eagan cracked a smile.

“Ha, ha. Very funny.” When the laughter died down, she pushed another idea at him. “I think you should go see your mother right away.”

“What? And leave you tied up?”

“If that’s what it takes.” Ananda fully understood the importance of family. She hoped her family would understand why she did all of this and why for this man.

He put his hand on Ananda’s thigh. “In some ways, you remind me of my previous submissive.”

Ananda swallowed. Not a good thing to hear from him, especially since he’d kicked this woman to the curb for expressing her interest in something other than Eagan Morton. “I don’t want to be an actress.”

“No, not that. Just ... never mind.”

“No, no. Come on. Please tell me. Please?”

He spread her legs apart and positioned himself in between them. “The sex.” He grinned devilishly.

“Yes?”

“Amazing. But with you, there’s something a little different. Something just a bit special.”

She raised her hips off the bed and twirled her pelvis in the air. “Is it the way I move my hips?”

He laughed. “Something like that.”

“Do you know everything there is to know about sex?”

He blinked. “Odd question, but please explain.”

“I mean, you’re into BDSM, in which there are different little fetishes.”

“Such as?”

Ananda cleared her throat. “Anal sex.”

“Yes. You want to try it now?” He moved in between her legs, positioned his steadily rising cock between her ass cheeks, and held her thighs.

She shook her head. “No, no. That can wait.”

He laughed at her again. “What else you got?”

“Electrical play?”

He nodded. “I’ve done that. Not my fave, but I’ve trained on how to do it safely.”

“Medical exams?”

“Have my own gynecological exam table in my dungeon with sterile supplies. I can’t wait to get you into my dungeon.”

She swallowed again. This time, he caught her terrified expression.

“You shouldn’t be afraid. As long as you trust me, you should never be afraid of what I do to you. For example, do you trust me with a knife around you?”

“What?”

He sprang from the bed without further explanation and walked out of the room. While he was gone, Ananda worked as fast as her heart pumped to untie herself. What the hell did this man have in store for her? Why did she let him tie her up and so far from the main house? Why was she getting wet again and why were her nipples getting harder the longer he was away from the room? Could she really be into this scene?

Eagan stood at the doorway with his hands behind his back. “Close your eyes and don’t peek.”

“What are you doing?” Ananda had to know before turning her life over to this man.

“Do you trust me?”

Instead of verbally answering, she closed her eyes. She heard him walking toward her. Then the bed sank where he sat next to her.

“I have a knife in my hand,” he said in a low voice. “I’m going to run it over your body. I may make some small cuts but nothing life-threatening.”

Ananda’s bottom lip trembled. Without warning, she felt something cold and sharp touch the center of her chest. She gasped as he made his way down the center of her body.

“You really do have beautiful skin. Such a rich caramel color. Mixed with your blood, it’s almost like art.”

She felt something dripping down her stomach. Then she felt Eagan’s tongue licking at her navel. Her belly tightened and she recoiled.

“Your breasts are wonderful too. So firm and perfectly round.” He ran the cold blade over her breasts, around her nipples and underneath each breast. Again, he lapped his tongue

over both. “Your nipples are great too. I think I’ll take one as a souvenir.” He ran his hand in a swift motion under one nipple.

Ananda’s eyes opened and she looked down at what she thought would be a bloody mess. Instead, she only saw wet marks where he’s licked. Did he heal her as soon as he laved her? She examined both nipples. They were fine. One looked wet, but other than that, she was okay.

“What did you do? How did you do that?” she asked between panting breaths.

Eagan held up a circular disc-shaped ice cube. “A lot of BDSM is mind games.” He ran the ice cube over her body.

What she imagined as a cold steel blade was actually the ice. She flopped her head back on the pillows.

“And here I thought you were really a sadistic guy. I really thought you were cutting me up and licking my blood.”

“No, you didn’t. If you truly did, you would have screamed bloody murder as soon as I touched you. But you trusted me. And face it, you wanted to keep playing.”

“Don’t you hate being right all of the time?”

Eagan looked pensive for a while, then shook his head. “Strangely, no. I love it.” He popped the cube in his mouth and crushed it with his teeth.

“So what else did you want to ask me? Any more fetishes you want to know about?”

“Just one.” She pulled on the scarves to sit up a bit more. “Rape fantasy.”

He crossed his arms over his chest. “I know about it and I’ve been trained in it, but it’s not really my thing. Are you into that?”

She shook her head. “No, of course not.”

Eagan stood and scanned her body. “The way you are now, I could easily accommodate your fantasy.”

She waved her hands as much as she could. “That’s okay. Just wanted to know if it was your thing.”

He glanced at his watch. “It’s late. Time to get you back before your roomies start to get suspicious. And I do have work to do.” He untied her.

As soon as she was free, Ananda rubbed her wrists. They didn’t hurt from the bindings, just from the position. She watched him slipping on his pants. Watching him and admiring the perfection of his body caused her pussy to throb.

“Eagan. I mean, Master Eagan.” She got out of bed and looked around for her dress. Then she remembered it was in the front room where he had ripped it off of her.

“Yes, Begonia.”

She wanted so much to tell him her real name. Not yet. He would either know when he eliminated her or when she won. She hoped it would be the latter.

“I’m going to try very hard to win.”

“Kind of hard to take you seriously when you look like Batgirl.” He smiled. “But I appreciate the sentiment.” He took the scarves down from the posts. “Guess I had better have these cleaned and pressed for the next time my mom shows. She loves these damn scarves.”

“They are beautiful and they felt good against my skin.” She smoothed her hand over her inner wrist to recall that sensation.

She walked into the main room. It was then she noticed that everything in the house was decorated all in white, from the walls to the carpeting to the furniture. This place was definitely for a neat freak.

As soon as she got dressed, Eagan touched her arm.

“Thank you.” He cleared his throat again. “Thank you for letting me, well, allowing me to --”

She didn’t care to hear anything else from him. She smothered his mouth with kisses. “You’re welcome.”

After today, Ananda was convinced. She had to win this competition. Not because of her dance career or revenge. She wanted and needed this man.

Chapter Seventeen

“The hate mail is already pouring in.” Phil shook his head and, as usual, ran his fingers through his hair.

“Hate mail? You mean more than usual?” Eagan slipped on a pair of slides as he sat at his desk.

He was used to angry letters from women proclaiming that he was a misogynist and a sexist pig. What else could they hate him for now?

“The word is out that the four of the seven contestants you have left are African-American.”

Eagan stood. “So?”

“So, there are some rumblings about, well, you know.” Phil rubbed the back of his neck, another one of his annoying habits.

“No, I don’t. So spell it out to me.”

Phil took in a deep breath and said in the exhalation, “They’re comparing this competition to the slave days.”

Molten lava boiled through his body. “Are you kidding me?”

Phil shook his head.

“Aren’t two of those African-American contestants former submissives?” Eagan didn’t remember a lot from the applications, but he did remember that.

“Yes, but they were with African-American Masters. With you, there would be this whole white master-black slave thing.”

“For one thing, she wouldn’t be my slave. She would be my submissive. There’s a difference.” Eagan headed to the door.

“Not by much. At least, not to the viewing audience.” Phil held up his hands. “Look, I know you’re not a racist guy. But your name is becoming mud out there to the viewers. Figure out a way to cut out the four black contestants and you’ll be okay.”

Eagan shook his head. “I’m not going to stoop to societal pressures. I’ve jumped through that hoop before. I’m not doing it again. I’m eliminating people based on merit. The rest of the world can kiss my ass.”

Eagan trotted down the stairs with a panicked Phil trailing behind him. At the bottom of the stairs, Eagan turned to his friend.

“I’m shocked at you, Phil.” He shook his head. “You used to have a set of balls on you and you didn’t give a damn about anyone.”

“Yeah, then I got a family. You can afford to take risks. That’s your life.” Phil tried to keep his voice down.

“This show was your fucking idea. I warned you how it would go and now you’re getting prudish on me. I would have thought you would have defended me.” Eagan huffed and started to walk away from his friend. Then he stopped and turned around. “By the way, you know today’s show is about canings, right?”

“Oh Christ!” Phil held his stomach. Perhaps he had the beginnings of a nice ulcer.

As usual, Tony was on spot with the introductions. Lately, Tony had a great change in his demeanor. He no longer questioned himself. He walked around with his head held high. This was the Tony Eagan remembered from years ago. Eagan beamed to see this guy back, instead of the unsure man that questioned everything.

“Good afternoon, ladies.” Eagan stood in the center of the floor with Apple and Willow behind him.

“Good afternoon, Master Eagan.”

As the contestants dropped off one by one, Eagan caught some distinction in the voices. He heard Begonia’s voice over the rest. He glanced at her and smiled before returning his attention to the group.

“Today is another special day. You’ll be learning about one of my favorites.” He reached inside of a wooden chest and pulled out a long, black bag. In a dramatic fashion, he unzipped it and flapped it open. “Today, we’ll learn about canes.”

A few of the women peered into the bag at the contents. One or two took a couple of steps back. Begonia kept her gaze squarely on him.

“Caning is an ancient tradition. Basically administered for punishment, the BDSM community has adopted it for both punishment and pleasure.” He waved to the group of women. “Come closer to look at these.”

They stood around the bag, staring at the contents.

Eagan picked up a solid white one. “This one is Teflon.”

“You mean the non-stick stuff in frying pans?” Poppy wrinkled her nose as she held it.

“Exactly right, Poppy. That’s what it looks like before it’s made into the non-stick stuff. This one is bamboo, of course.” He passed that one around to the group. “This one is PVC.” That one made the tour around to the women. A couple of them smacked the cane on the palm of their hands. Others kept the items moving. “And this is rattan. You all might remember the case of the young American man who was going to be caned in Singapore. This is what they use. Any questions?”

Daisy raised her hand first. “Why do *you* use this? Punishment or pleasure?”

“Both.” Eagan picked up a thin cane. “They’re fairly easy to handle and you get a lot more bang for the buck, so to speak.”

“Do you hit people hard with this?” Venus sucked in her bottom lip, as she set one of the canes back in Eagan’s bag.

“It depends. I don’t start off in a full swing. I do light tapping to warm up the skin. Then, as the person gets used to it, I’ll apply more pressure.”

“Can a person achieve an orgasm this way?” Eagan cut his eyes over to Begonia. She was full of some curious questions. Each time he encountered her, he liked her more and more.

“They can. Some people go into what’s called subspace. That’s where the submissive is so into the scene that their mind sort of drifts and they’re on this whole other plane. I’ve been told subspace is powerful, exhilarating, and exhausting all at once. If any of you achieve it, let me know.”

Some of the women laughed. Others were entranced at the assortment Eagan just placed before them. Begonia kept staring at him.

“Ladies, Apple and Willow will stay here and answer any and all questions you may have about these items. I’ll be back in about an hour and we’ll do the reward challenge. The winner of this challenge will get an all-expense paid trip to Paris.”

The ladies all cooed. He knew they would like that. Begonia just offered a simple smile.

“Ask a lot of questions. I’ll be right back.” Eagan went back upstairs, but glanced down at the activity below.

All of the women picked up different canes, except for Begonia. She kept staring at him until he finally disappeared into his office. From there, he watched the women on camera. He hoped Begonia paid close attention to what was said. If she won the challenge, he would accompany her to Paris.

* * * * *

Every time Ananda thought about Eagan, her body tingled. She recalled their last meeting together and how intense their lovemaking had been. If the other women knew

what she'd done with Eagan over these last few weeks, they would have kicked her and called her a cheater.

Everything she thought she knew about herself went out the window the moment she encountered Eagan. Even though her body screamed to win this competition to have this man, her mind brought up a rational point.

If she pursued her dancing career, more than likely that would take her to New York or California, definitely not Virginia. Eagan mentioned not wanting his submissives to be on any of his produced movies or shows. He also wouldn't move. Now, what the hell was she supposed to do? How could she pick between her career and the man who changed the entire way she thought about herself and her relationships with men?

The hour flew by faster than Ananda thought. Before she knew it, Eagan was back downstairs and ready to start the challenge.

"Each contestant will get one question and one question only. Answer it right, you advance. Answer it wrong, you're out. Let's start with Daisy."

Daisy blinked, but stood up straighter now that she was up first.

"Which one of these is made of Teflon?"

Daisy scanned the table and picked up a black one.

"Nope. That actually is a dowel painted black. It's this one." He picked up the white one.

"Poppy, you're next. Which kind of cane is used in Singapore today?"

Poppy did the same thing Daisy did and scanned the table. Then she picked up a wooden one. "This one."

"No, that's bamboo. The correct answer was rattan."

"Oh, hell!"

"Language, Poppy."

She covered her mouth.

"Okay, Freesia. If you get spanked by one of these, what kind of mental place would you be in, if it felt really good to you?"

"That's easy! Why couldn't I have had that question?" Poppy asked and popped her gum at the end of her inquiry.

"Your time to speak is over, Poppy. Please be quiet." Eagan returned his attention back to Freesia.

"Um, sublevel?"

Eagan shook his head. "Close. Subspace. I'm surprised, that as a former submissive, you didn't know that answer."

"Sorry, Master Eagan."

"You ready, Sunny?"

She nodded.

“What’s the ideal place to spank a sub with this?”

She picked up a bamboo cane. “May I show you?”

Eagan nodded.

Sunny asked Meadow to turn around. “You want to do it either here across the back, but not too high or too low. Or on the fleshy part of the buttocks.”

“Very good. You were paying attention.” He stared at Meadow. “You’re up. Do I spank all of my submissives hard when I use the canes?”

She chewed her lower lip then answered, “Yes. I mean, no. I mean, maybe.”

“I’ll take your first answer. Yes is wrong. The answer is, it depends on the sub, however, I normally start soft to warm up the skin.”

Meadow nodded, as though the information had all come back to her now.

“Venus, you ready? So far, Sunny is the only one who has answered correctly.”

“I’m ready, Master Eagan.” She jumped and jiggled to punctuate her point.

“I listened to the conversations going on here back in my office, so I know what was said. Who was the first person who taught me how to use canes?”

Venus thought for a while, then smiled. “Master Ian Dolinsky.”

“Very, very good. You did pay attention as well. Looks like we have to go for a tie-breaker round.” He glanced at Ananda. “You ready, Begonia?”

The butterflies kicked up in her stomach again. “Yes, Master Eagan.”

“Which cane is my favorite to use?”

No way she could miss this question. Ananda had been paying attention. She picked up a thin stick. “This one.”

The smile melted from Eagan’s face. Shit!

“No, that’s not the right answer. That’s the one I use most often, but not my favorite.” He turned to the group. “Sunny and Venus, please step forward.”

The two ladies moved closer to the table.

“The first one to pick up the cane that is my favorite, will win and go to Paris. Ready?”

They nodded.

“Go!”

They both dove into the bag. Sunny picked up the Teflon cane and Venus grabbed the dowel.

“Venus, you’re the winner. That one is my favorite because it was the first one I made myself. Congratulations.” He turned to Sunny. “Sorry.” He wouldn’t even look at Ananda.

She really did fuck up. Had she been paying more attention to the lesson instead of Eagan she would have won.

“I’ll see you ladies for dinner, then tonight, we’ll do another challenge and eliminations.”

* * * * *

After dinner, Ananda and the other six women congregated in her room.

“What do you think we’ll do tonight?” Daisy asked.

“What do you think? Of course he’s going to cane us. No question.” Venus stretched out on her bed with her back to the headboard and her hands behind her head, looking confident. Just because she won a challenge didn’t mean she was the winner.

“Well, I’m not doing it.” Poppy folded her arms over her chest. “And since I have immunity, he can’t touch me.”

“How is it that you’ve lasted so long in this competition? You seem adverse to everything Master Eagan wants.” Sunny shook her head.

“Don’t worry about me, Ms. Thang. Worry about your damn self.”

Willow stepped into the room with her usual smile. “Good. You’re all here. Master Eagan will see you all in his dungeon now. Follow me.”

“Dungeon?” Freesia’s eyes widened.

Ananda started the line and had the other ladies following behind her. Eventually, Sunny walked side by side with her.

“I can’t wait to see his dungeon.” Sunny beamed and nearly skipped along the way.

Ananda had to admit, she was even curious about the place. They had walked by the door, but never went inside. Willow stood outside of a large black leather-covered door. Without fanfare, she opened it.

Ananda stepped into the room first. The cleanliness of the room amazed her first. She had half expected to see a dirt-covered floor, grime on the walls, and blood on the chains. Her imagination running wild again.

Although dark and sinister like she’d expected, the room looked more functional than fearsome. There were four raised platform beds at four corners of the room. Two large crosses stood tall at either ends of the room. In the center, a bar hung by chains hovered. Carpet covered the floor. And across the wall hung hundreds of different whips, canes, paddles, handcuffs, restraints and other items Ananda had never seen before.

“Welcome to my dungeon, ladies,” Eagan said from behind the group.

Ananda and a few of the other women jumped when he spoke. They all turned to him when he entered the room. Cameras also followed him inside.

“Tonight, I’ll be caning you all.”

The other women whispered among themselves, but Ananda paid close attention to him.

“I will decide the winner based on a number of factors.” He scanned the room. “Who would like to go first?”

Since Ananda had volunteered to go first on that very first show, she was going to do the same for this task. Only, she spoke up too late. Sunny raised her hand and moved forward.

“Great, Sunny. There are a few rules to being in my dungeon. If what I’m doing to you today gets too intense, I want you to use a safe word. The safe word will be orange, understand?”

Ananda and the other women nodded, although she promised herself to do everything in her power not to use that damn word.

“My submissives are always naked in here. You may disrobe right before your session, but understand that this is a regular rule. When you do disrobe in here, hang your clothes in that wardrobe back there. So, Sunny, get naked and we’ll get started.”

As Sunny took off her clothes, Apple laid down plastic sheets at the foot of a cross.

“What’s that for? Blood?” Poppy asked.

“No, juices, you know.” Venus poked her elbow into Poppy’s side.

“Word? It can get that intense?”

“Definitely.” Apple smiled and stood off to the side.

Sunny trotted back over to Eagan, eager and excited. Eagan cuffed her to the cross and explained the panic releases. He moved her feet apart and advised her not to make a lot of sudden movements to prevent injury.

“Which cane would you like for me to use?” he asked her.

“Whichever one you prefer, Master Eagan,” Sunny responded breathlessly.

He picked up the Teflon one; the one Sunny thought was his favorite. He started smacking it against her upper back lightly. It sounded like a stick hitting slabs of meat. Sunny coiled and squirmed. Eagan moved down to her ass. Right across the middle section, he spanked her again in the same steady motion, repeating it over and over again.

He worked on Sunny for over fifteen minutes, always with light taps and working on the same two areas. At the end, Sunny grabbed the chains holding the wrist restraints and moaned so loud it echoed off of the walls. She didn’t hit subspace, but she came close to coming.

“Very nice, Sunny.” He undid the wrist restraints. “You can go clean up if you need to and return to the dungeon. I’ll be doing eliminations right after these sessions.”

Sunny bowed her head. “Thank you, Master Eagan.”

The next up was Iona. She was more than happy to take off her clothes, the little bit she wore. When asked which cane she would like used, she pointed to Eagan’s favorite. After

hooking her into the cross, he worked her over like Sunny. Venus did offer some moans and movements, more than Sunny had done.

Eagan managed to get Iona up on her toes at one point, but at the end of her fifteen-minute session, she hadn't gone into subspace or anything.

"Meadow, why don't you come next?" Eagan motioned for her to the cross.

"Can some people leave the room first?" Meadow tugged at her shirt.

"Meadow, honey, let me give you a scenario of what being my submissive is like. You'll be in my home naked, unlike my slaves. When we go to play parties, you will be naked in front of everyone. If this is too much for you to handle, then I suggest you leave now."

She shook her head. "I can do it." She went over to the wardrobe and stripped slowly. She walked back over to Eagan with one arm covering her breasts and her other hand covering her vagina.

"Face the cross and spread your arms out."

After composing herself, she did so and allowed him to restrain her. "Here's how you work the panic clips. Understand?"

She nodded.

When he asked her which cane she wanted, she shrugged her shoulders. He picked up a black one and worked on her for about five minutes, tapping her upper back and her ass cheeks. However, it didn't take her long to activate the panic clips and scream the safe word, despite his light touches. She coiled into a ball at the base of the cross.

"I'm sorry, Master Eagan. Maybe if we were alone, I would be different."

"Maybe." He took the cuffs off of Meadow and allowed her to get dressed.

Ananda didn't see her staying for very long.

"Freesia?"

Freesia trembled as she took off her clothes and headed over to Eagan. She chose a silver cane and got into place. Either Freesia was ready for him or she was the best actress out there. As soon as he started working on her she got up on her toes and moaned. Eagan went to tap her and Freesia still moaned and squirmed. He probably thought the same thing Ananda did, that the woman was faking it.

Eagan got her down from the cross and asked her to get dressed. "Poppy?"

Poppy waved her hand. "That is not for me. And since I have immunity, I'm going to bow out of this."

"So you're not even going to try it, even though that's what I want?"

Ananda saw Eagan's face getting red as he waited for Poppy's answer.

"I don't care if you're a messenger from Jesus and this is what *He* wants. I'm not doing it."

“You’re right. You do have immunity. So you can’t be eliminated from this round. But you won’t stay in here, either. Go to your bedroom now.”

“Fine.” Poppy spun on her heel and stomped back to her room.

“Begonia, you’re up.” Eagan pointed to her.

Begonia nodded and got naked first. Then, she padded over to Eagan. She noticed how he checked out her body, looking her over from her head to her feet. He strapped her into the cross.

“I want you to use that skinny cane,” she said to him.

He picked it up and started working on her. He tapped her upper back first in quick repetitive motions. The stinging hits annoyed her at first. Then, she started to like them. Ananda squirmed in her spot. When he moved down to her ass, he did something with her that he hadn’t done with the other women, he switched the cane back and forth like a fan. The feeling both tickled and teased her so much that she felt her juices flowing from between her legs.

Her skin came alive with each contact. If she could have crawled out of her own flesh, she would have. It felt so good.

Before she could even stop herself, she heard herself say, “Harder.”

Eagan paused, like he didn’t hear her. “What?”

“Please.” She turned to look at him. “Harder.”

He shook his head. “That’s enough for you.” He got her down from the cross and had Willow help her get cleaned up and get her clothes on again.

“That just leaves you, Daisy. Come on.”

Daisy took a step forward, stopped, and moved back. “I can’t.”

“And why is that? Afraid to be naked on camera? Afraid of me? What is it?” Eagan approached her.

“I don’t want to be whipped.” She glared at Eagan. “By you.”

He stopped in his tracks.

“I promise you, and you can ask any of the ladies in here, I won’t hurt you. I’ve been doing this for years and I know what I’m doing.” Eagan spoke in a calm and soothing voice, but it still didn’t help.

“I don’t care. The whole connotation of you taking a cane to me, a black woman, is unfathomable.”

Eagan gritted his teeth so hard, his jaw flexed. “You saw Freesia and Begonia go through the same treatment. They didn’t have a problem with it.”

“Freesia did it so she wouldn’t get eliminated. I don’t know what’s up with Begonia. She shares a room with Sunny, so maybe she feels like she has to compete with her.”

Ananda felt flames engulfing her body. So Daisy thought of her as some sort of yes-woman looking to be just like Sunny? Fuck her. Ananda knew why she did it and she knew what she felt. If she had to do it again, she would.

Daisy pulled off her mask. She looked like Ananda's third grade teacher. She had short hair that was styled in wavy curls, a small, pug-like nose and full lips. Moles dotted around her eyes and cheeks.

"My name is Irene." She took off her collar and put it and her mask in Eagan's hand. "And you can say goodnight to me, because I'm out of here."

"That's not fair, Irene," Eagan called after her. "You're expecting me to apologize for something I didn't do, something I didn't start."

"Good luck to you." She kept on down the hall.

Eagan shook his head and gazed at Phil, who only shrugged his shoulders. There was a secret conversation between them that they weren't ready to share with the rest of the group.

"Apple and Willow, help the ladies get cleaned up and get them back to their rooms. The winner tonight is Sunny. She has immunity for the next show." Eagan walked out of the dungeon, looking defeated.

A tingle tickled Ananda's belly. Did Eagan plan on eliminating all of the black contestants to cut down on the controversy? He couldn't do that. And if Ananda had her way, she wouldn't let him do it either.

Chapter Eighteen

“I hate to say I told you so,” Phil said in a sing-song voice.

“Not now, Phil.” Eagan rubbed his eyes. “I don’t get it. Why the hell did she wait until she was the halfway through the competition to say something? Did she not notice the color of my skin or know the name of this show? I thought I made everything perfectly clear.”

“You did.”

“So why am I the bad guy? She’s been calling me Master Eagan for nearly six weeks. Why the hell did it occur to her now to make a big deal of the race issue?”

Phil hunched his shoulders.

“You’re not helping, man.” Eagan swung his chair around to look out of the window.

The motion sensor light in his backyard triggered. When it did he caught someone going into the guesthouse.

Begonia?

He turned back to his friend. He had to get Phil out of the room fast.

“So what are you going to do now?” Phil tossed one of Eagan’s awards in the air like a toy. It was the same award Eagan had won the night his father passed away.

“I don’t know.” Eagan stood. He caught his award in mid-air and set it on the desk. “I do know this. I’m not changing for anyone. If Poppy, Freesia or Begonia want to leave over that, they can.”

“Isn’t Meadow Puerto Rican?”

Eagan gritted his teeth. “Now I can’t even have a Puerto Rican submissive? What time are we living in?”

“Doesn’t matter the time.” Phil strolled to the door in front of Eagan. “People aren’t ready to give up the past. My parents still talk about Imelda Marcos and her shoes.”

“Yeah, I can see where slavery and an overabundant shoe collection are the same thing.”

“Whatever. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Eagan rushed to his window that faced the front of the house. He waited until Phil pulled out of his driveway before heading downstairs to his guesthouse. When he got to the front door, the motion sensor light kicked on.

“Shit!” He rushed into the house and hoped that no one saw him.

Whoever was in the house left it without any illumination. He felt around the wall to the bedroom where he and Begonia were a few days ago.

“Hello?” he said.

“So you did see me.”

Eagan’s heart was already pounding, hoping that whoever was in the house really was Begonia. Now, it jackhammered when he heard her voice.

“You took a hell of a chance coming over here tonight.” He felt for the bed and sat down, hoping not to sit on her.

“I wanted to talk to you and it couldn’t wait.”

Eagan felt a hand on his face. She guided him forward and planted the softest kiss on his lips.

“I didn’t thank you for tonight.” She kissed his cheek before pulling back.

“You mean when I single-handedly rolled back time to three hundred years ago? Phil had told me about public perception, but I didn’t expect that from Daisy, I mean, Irene. Poppy, maybe.” He put his hand on what he hoped was Begonia’s knee. “You maybe.”

“Is that why you didn’t name me the winner tonight? You’re trying to get rid of all of the African-American contestants?”

“No, of course not.”

“I can’t speak for Sunny. But I can tell you I loved every minute of that caning. The way you flicked it over my skin, it felt heavenly.”

Eagan’s cock throbbed listening to Begonia. He knew she’d enjoyed the caning. Begonia dripped more juices than any of the other contestants. Even now, he remembered how she smelled then.

“Why did you stop when I wanted more?”

That part Eagan found hard to explain. No matter what, he would be honest. “For a couple of reasons, one reason I’m not proud of. For one, I didn’t want to cane you longer than I did any of the other contestants. Everyone got the maximum of fifteen minutes. If I did you longer, they would think I was showing favoritism.”

“Okay, that excuse sounds tame. You have another reason?”

“Phil and I had talked about the racial backlash the show was getting. I was afraid to show myself caning a woman of color on camera for longer than I had caned the other women. I feel ashamed admitting that, but it is the truth.”

Eagan felt Begonia standing. She shoved his hand off of her leg.

“What’s wrong? Where are you going?” Eagan scrambled to catch her hand.

“Here I thought you were a man of integrity ... that you didn’t give a damn about what other people thought. And then you backed off on your true nature because of public perception? Don’t kick me off the show. I’m leaving.”

Eagan sprang to his feet. “Come here.” He caught her arm and managed to pull her to him. To stop her and halt her trembling, he pressed Begonia against the wall. “Don’t walk away from me.” He framed her face with his hands, thankful of the fact that the room was too dark for him to see the disappointment in her eyes. Then he kissed her cheek. “I didn’t want to even do this damn show.” He kissed her other cheek. “I just wanted my life back. I wanted that control again. I control everything around me, except I didn’t have my submissive. Now, I’m thankful to have this show. It brought you to me.” He kissed her lips and got lost in the darkness.

Begonia moaned, vibrating her lips against his. Then she pushed him back, something that made his heart drop to the floor.

“At every turn, you push me away,” she began. “From the very first day you wanted me off the show. Just tell me what you want from me and I’ll do it. Don’t you know that?”

No, he didn’t. Ophelia had said the same thing and she didn’t stay. Words were hollow to him, just as hollow as his insides.

Eagan gave Begonia a quick peck on her lips. “Be careful going back to the main house.” And he left her. He had to just walk away or staying there with her would drive him crazy. Maybe it was time for him to end the show ... and end it with Begonia.

* * * * *

Ananda sat on her bed gazing outside. Since the last night in the guesthouse, she hadn’t seen or talked to Eagan in several days. She wondered if the show was still going on or if they had canceled it after the Daisy/Irene controversy.

Since none of the contestants were allowed to use the phone, read the newspaper or watch TV, Ananda had no idea what was going on in the outside world. What did people say about her and the other women in the house? What did they think of Eagan?

“What do you think is happening?” Sunny asked from the bathroom door? She adjusted her mask on her face.

Funny how the mask became a part of Ananda now. She felt naked not wearing it.

“I don’t know. Everyone has been so quiet. With it down to the six of us, I really hope they don’t do something crazy like cancel the show.”

If nothing else, Ananda wanted to see this thing through. She wanted to prove to herself and to Eagan that she didn't quit. She wouldn't be like Ophelia.

Apple sauntered down the hallway with her usual smile and news to share. "Master Eagan would like you all to go to his dungeon for a reward and immunity challenge."

"He's doing the reward and immunity at the same time again?" Sunny shook her head. "I don't get it."

"Maybe it'll depend on what we're doing." Ananda thought of different activities they could be doing today.

"You have about thirty minutes to prepare." Apple went next door to share the news with the other two women.

Thirty minutes was nothing compared to the days Ananda had been waiting for Eagan to open up to her. She had to be ready for him. If this was what she really wanted, she had to show him that.

* * * * *

"Are you sure you want to combine the reward and immunity challenge today?" Phil paced around Eagan's bedroom while Eagan dressed.

"We're going to be doing wax play today. It's messy. It takes a long time to set up. It'll be better production-wise if we just go ahead and do the whole shooting match." Eagan slipped on a pair of white silk pajama bottoms. Hugh Hefner had the right idea. Pajamas should be worn every day.

"Good thinking. TV talk shows and the newspapers are calling Daisy 'Goodnight Irene' and labeling her as some sort of advocate on women's rights and civil rights."

"Are we ready to go to taping?" Eagan didn't need to hear this right now. He had to keep his mind clear on what it was he needed to do. And what he needed to do was find the right submissive for him, one who wouldn't walk away from him at the first sign of trouble.

"Yeah, I'll go set up. We're in the dungeon, right?"

"Yep."

"You seen your boy, Tony?"

"I'll find him. Let me just get some notes in my office and I'll be right down."

Phil nodded and headed downstairs. Eagan ambled up his stairs. He caught Aspen by his office door. When she saw him, she bowed her head and ducked into her room. Did she notice something?

Eagan quickly caught what had grabbed Aspen's attention. He heard moaning and panting sounds coming from his office. Feeling molten heat around his face, Eagan balled his hand into a fist and pounded open his office door.

“Damn it, Tony! Don’t watch porn in my --” Eagan stopped his rant when he caught Tony sitting behind Eagan’s desk with Nina on his lap, her top over her breasts and more than likely naked from the waist down.

“Oh, God!” Nina pulled her shirt down then stood before pulling her pants up. “I’m so sorry, Eagan. This has never happened before.”

“What? You two having sex, or having sex in my office?” He stood in front of his desk and wondered if he could burn that chair and send it floating over the bay like a Viking funeral.

Nina looked down sheepishly. “Um, your office.”

Eagan’s eyebrows shot up. “You two have been seeing each other?”

“Don’t act so surprised.” Tony leaned back in Eagan’s chair. “It’s your fault, really.”

“Will you please pull your pants up? Nina may like looking at your dick, but I don’t.”

Tony stood and hoisted up his jeans. “That day I was feeling down, you told me to go upstairs and see Nina. So I did.”

“I asked you to see her for your wardrobe because you were crying and got snot all over your sleeve. Grow up, Tony. Nina’s a great woman. She deserves --” Eagan stopped.

“She deserves what, Eagan? Someone better than me?” Tony tucked his shirt into his jeans.

“You just got out of rehab for the fourth time. The day I sent you up to see Nina for wardrobe, you talked about wanting to use again.”

“But I haven’t, and it’s all because of her. I don’t need a drug when I’m with her. Nina makes me feel whole.” Tony held Nina’s hand.

Aside from the few times Eagan had played with Nina, he valued their friendship more than anything else. She was special to him. When things didn’t work out for the two of them, Eagan had hoped she would find herself a nice man, or even woman, if that’s what really floated her boat, to settle down with and make a family. Her kind demeanor shouldn’t be rewarded by being with a former user.

“That’s all well and good, Tony. But what if Nina says something that will piss you off and trigger you to want to use again?”

“Um, we’ll talk about it, I suppose.”

“Yeah, like you talked to that tranny prostitute about scoring some blow for you right before you smashed her face in.”

“Damn it, Eagan! I was fucking nineteen and high. I’ve changed. I thought you knew that. I thought that’s why you hired me for the show.”

“I hired you because I like you. You --” Eagan was about to share that Tony reminded him of Eagan’s younger brother, but now was not the time or place to go into that story. “You just need to stay away from Nina.”

“Eagan, I’m a grown, unattached woman.” She pushed her glasses up her nose. “You can’t tell me who I can and can’t date.”

“As the boss of both of you, I can tell you this.” He pointed to Tony. “You need to get your ass downstairs now to do my introduction.” Then, he glared at Nina. “And you need to do what I pay you to do and co-produce this show. I hope for your sake that you had these women tested for allergies. If one woman gets a rash from using baby oil or wax today, it’ll be your ass.”

“You can’t talk to her that way.” Tony puffed his bird chest out at Eagan.

“Or what? You’re going to kick my ass? Are you going to walk? Go ahead. See who’ll hire you after this. Better yet, let me do this. You’re both fired. Pack your shit and go. See if Brian Grazer or Ron Howard lets you fuck in his office.”

“Eagan --”

Eagan didn’t wait to hear what Nina had to say. He couldn’t believe she would stoop so low as to allow that tired, B-movie actor fuck her. He wanted to shake them both. What were they thinking?

Phil caught Eagan at the bottom of the stairs. “Where’s Tony?”

“Gone. I’ll handle my own intros from now on.” Eagan headed toward his dungeon.

“Gone? Are you kidding me? Where’s Nina? Maybe we can get her to --”

“She’s gone, too.” Eagan glared at Phil. “I told you I have this under control. Just get the cameras rolling and we’ll go from there.”

Determined not to allow a bad event spill over into his show like the last time, Eagan smiled as he stood in the doorway. “Hello, ladies.”

“Good afternoon, Master Eagan.” The women all bowed.

Eagan skipped their kisses today. He wasn’t in the mood. “Today we’re going to be learning something that you all will consider as relaxing.”

Apple pushed a small cart into the room that had a large electric pot on top, ladles, brushes, spoons and candles of all types along with it.

“We’re going to be doing wax play today.”

Sunny clapped her hands.

“Why are you so excited?” Poppy asked.

“Wax play is so soothing. And if you get a good wax, your skin afterward will feel so soft.”

“Because there’s so much set up and clean up involved in wax play, I’ve decided to combine the immunity challenge and the reward challenge for this competition. So whoever wins will get a prize, and can’t be eliminated from the next show.”

“What’s the prize?” Freesia asked.

“A day of beauty at a spa.” Eagan noticed none of the women seemed excited about that. “What’s wrong?”

“Who wants to go to a spa day looking like Darth Vader?” Venus pointed to her mask.

Eagan nodded. “You will be taken there without cameras and can go without your mask. Better?”

Now, they all smiled.

“Good. Now let’s get started.”

Apple and Willow prepared the paraffin wax as Eagan explained what would be happening.

“As Sunny mentioned, waxing can be a great process. As the submissive, you are attended to by your Dom or Domme or another submissive or slave. You’re at their mercy until it’s time to take the wax off again. I want each of you to pair off into three teams and take a station.”

Sunny and Begonia hooked up. Freesia and Meadow were the second team, leaving Poppy and Venus together.

“Decide who’s going first. That person will have to get naked and get on the table first. Once everyone is naked and ready, we’ll begin.” And Eagan hoped today’s events went off without a hitch.

* * * * *

Ananda actually wanted to pair up with Meadow. After the last challenge, Meadow had shared how much she hated to get naked in front of other people, but that she trusted Ananda. However things changed, when, as soon as Eagan mentioned teams, Sunny grabbed Ananda.

“Can I go first? I love wax play.” Sunny, who was normally reserved, hopped around like a grasshopper over this challenge.

“Sure. Go ahead and get naked.”

Ananda listened carefully to Willow’s instructions. Baby oil on the body to lessen wax sticking to hairs. Got it. Use paraffin as sort of a cover. Got it. No gel candles. Got it.

Sunny came back to the table and climbed on top. Her sandy blonde hair cascaded from the back of her mask. Now, up close, Ananda got a good look at Sunny’s body. Standing up or lying back, the woman had great breasts in that teardrop shape that most women would kill to have. Her flat stomach and tapered in waist were also enviable. And Ananda wanted to keep Eagan from her table while Sunny was naked. Her pussy was cleanly shaven like he liked it.

“Can we start yet?” Sunny asked when Ananda returned her attention to the woman’s face.

“No, not yet. Not until a rep comes to stand with us.” *Just not Eagan. Please, not Eagan.*

Apple approached their area. “Are you ladies ready to start?”

“Yes!” Sunny was fit to be tied.

“Okay, cover her with baby oil first.”

Ananda nodded. She picked up the large bottle and poured some in her hand. She rubbed it over Sunny’s stomach and stopped.

“What are you doing?” Sunny lifted her head from the table. “Aren’t we doing total body?”

“You can. Since you have a willing subject, go ahead and cover her from shoulders on down.”

Ananda plastered a smile on her face, then squirted oil on Sunny’s chest and stomach. She rubbed the oil into Sunny’s soft skin while Apple observed. When Eagan called for his slave, Apple excused herself.

“You know why I picked you?” Sunny asked as soon as Apple walked away.

“Surprise me.” Ananda rubbed the oil over Sunny’s arms, then did her breasts.

“I like you.”

“I like you, too, Sunny.” Ananda liked for the woman to be five thousand miles away from Virginia and away from this contest. Sunny looked good as the winner of this thing. Ananda had to keep that from happening.

“I liked the way you licked my nipples during dinner that one time, and the way you’re touching me now.”

Ananda stopped moving her hands. Whoa! Didn’t see this coming, at all.

Sunny sat up. “We could be good together.” She took Ananda’s hand and slipped it between her legs, letting her touch her protruding clit.

Ananda jerked her hand back as soon as Apple returned to the table.

“All done?” Apple asked.

“Um, no. Just have to do her legs.” Ananda poured some oil into her hand.

“I’ll help.” Apple slathered oil on one leg, as Ananda did the other.

Was Sunny serious? Was she really hitting on Ananda or just playing mind games? Sunny was so hard to read at times. One thing that was loud and clear, the woman didn’t play fair. If Ananda was going to win this, she had to call Sunny’s bluff. She just hoped she wouldn’t have to go too far with it.

“Okay, now take your paraffin wax and scoop some out in a ladle,” Eagan said to the group. “Once you have a good amount, use a paint brush and brush it on her body. Be sure the wax is not too hot, or that you’re holding it too long and it’s hardening already.”

Ananda grabbed a small brush and painted a line of warm wax down Sunny’s body. Sunny writhed in pleasure.

“Feels so good. So warm.” Sunny closed her eyes.

“To make it even more special, add some scented oil to the paraffin. She might like lavender or rosemary.” Apple held up a couple of small vials of oil.

“Mmm, lavender. I love that scent.”

Hint taken. Ananda dropped a couple of drops into the wax and stirred. It was almost immediate that the room smelled of that relaxing aroma.

Ananda continued painting wax onto Sunny’s body. She circled her breasts with the brush until she could finally paint her hardened nipples. Then she went down her legs.

“It smells so good and it feels so warm. You’re going to love this.” Sunny touched Ananda’s hand.

To show that she wasn’t freaked out by the show of affection, Ananda smiled at the touch.

“Now that you have your submissive covered, do some fun stuff. Take a small pin and poke a hole in the wax. Then pour wax in the hole. It causes a really interesting sensation.” Eagan did a small tour of the tables, rotating him, Apple, and Willow around, so that he could observe all of them.

Ananda found a nail and poked that into the wax being careful not to touch the skin, which she had to use Sunny for a gauge. By the time Eagan came to her table, she was pouring the wax into the hole. Sunny gripped the platform and nearly arched her back off the table.

“Nice wax shell you have on her. Great job.” Eagan nodded and moved on to the next table.

“Yeah, great job.” Sunny winked.

“Okay, you each have trashcans by your station. Peel the wax from your submissive and put it in the receptacles. We don’t want you reusing wax. It’s not sanitary.” Eagan wagged his finger at them.

Ananda started from Sunny’s shoulders and peeled the wax down. Some small pieces remained, but overall she gotten it all off of her with little effort.

“Robes have been left for you if you would like to use them. Now, we want you to switch.” Eagan stared at Ananda as though waiting for her to get nude.

She took off her clothes, but noticed that Sunny didn’t put on a robe. “You’re not wearing a robe?”

Sunny shook her head. “Why mess up more clothes? Besides, you all have seen me naked. I have nothing to hide.”

Ananda got onto the table. Whereas Ananda’s oil treatment to Sunny was quick, Sunny languished over areas on Ananda’s body like at her breasts and her stomach. Sunny oiled her legs all the way up to Ananda’s pussy then stopped.

"I can help you get rid of this if you'd like." Sunny brushed her fingers over Ananda's pubic hair.

"No, I got it. Thanks." Ananda didn't flinch, although every ounce of being in her body begged her to slap Sunny's hand away.

As usual, Poppy argued about doing the wax treatment. She wanted to continue waxing Venus, who was more than willing to be pampered. She already had a thick paraffin shell that covered her breasts to her pubic area. Ananda had to chalk it up as a first for Poppy. Although she put up a fuss, at least she wanted to do something for someone else. Maybe the woman was changing.

Sunny painted the wax onto Ananda's body. As crazy as she thought Sunny sounded, the wax did feel amazing on her skin. She felt hot, then warm, then protected; a weird feeling. It didn't help that Sunny concentrated on certain areas of Ananda's anatomy.

Eagan decided at the moment Sunny was painting on a fourth coat of wax on Ananda's breast to visit the table.

"You're doing a great job, Sunny." He nodded. "How are you feeling, Begonia?"

"Mmm, relaxed. Warm. Happy." The treatment felt like a drug.

"Have you done the hole trick?" he asked Sunny.

"That's next."

Sunny poked a small hole between Ananda's breasts and at her stomach. When the wax came through Ananda understood why Sunny reacted the way she did. It was such a strange sensation to be warm, then get this hot wax introduced suddenly. Just as Ananda was enjoying her wax high, a shrill scream pierced the air.

Ananada looked over at the other side of the room where she heard it. Meadow rubbed her thigh and cried.

"It burns! It burns!" she kept repeating.

Eagan rushed to Meadow and Freesia. With her waxy shell, Ananda climbed down from the table and to Meadow's side.

"What happened?" Eagan asked as he looked at Meadow's leg.

"I don't know. I grabbed a candle, like you said to make designs and she screamed." Freesia pointed to her table.

"Which one?" Eagan scanned the table's contents.

Freesia held up a short, round, glass container with a dark burgundy wax floating in it.

"Get Sergio in here now!" he snapped to Willow. Eagan brought his attention back to Freesia. "Why did you use this one? It's a gel candle. It heats up slower than wax candles and, therefore, has a higher burn rate, which means --"

"It's way hotter than other candles," Freesia said. "I didn't know that it was a gel candle. I'm so sorry, Meadow."

“I’m afraid sorry doesn’t cut it. You hurt her. She needs medical attention. I’m sorry, Freesia. I’m going to have to release you. Give me your collar and leave.”

Ananda’s mouth dropped open when he released Freesia. Out of all of the contestants, she was the one who had a good reason for wanting a new Master. To see Freesia removing her collar ripped at Ananda’s gut.

Ananda jumped off the platform, trotted to Freesia and enveloped the woman in her arms. As Freesia cried, Ananda felt her pain transferring to her. Freesia’s tears soaked Ananda’s bare shoulder and back. It didn’t matter that Ananda stood in front of the world naked with a waxy shell covering her front.

Freesia pulled back from her and took off her mask. Not a raving beauty, like the rest of the women ejected from the house before her, Freesia had a comfortable look. Her brown eyes held such pain and sorrow, more than a woman of any age should carry. Her short hair stood up in spikes unintentionally. Her full lips had a bow shape that with the right lipstick would have made them incredible, instead of merely interesting. She reminded Ananda of an attractive aunt.

Freesia gazed at Eagan just as Sergio rushed into the room to tend to Meadow. “My name is Olivia.” She placed her mask and collar in his hands. “I truly wish things had worked out differently. Despite what Irene said, and a scare or two from you, you’re a good man.”

Eagan blinked, then looked away from her. “Good luck on your search to find a Master for you.”

Olivia bowed her head and walked out of the room.

“Venus, you win immunity and the day of pampering.”

Of course, Venus squealed like a teakettle. Ananda wanted to put a cork in her to shut her up.

“You ladies can continue waxing if you like.” With the mask and necklace clutched in his hand, Eagan stormed out of the room, leaving in his wake a heavy feeling in the air.

“And then there were five,” Poppy said.

Chapter Nineteen

Eagan stared at the list of names in his palm pilot. Master Snap was a good Dom, but fairly young and not very experienced. Master B. was into verbal humiliation. The hurt expression on Olivia's face from a few nights ago had Eagan crossing off that name.

What the hell was he doing? He wasn't a Dom-submissive matchmaker. Why the hell did he care if Olivia found a new Master?

Because she'd touched his heart. And when Begonia hugged her before she left, Begonia snagged another piece of Eagan's heart.

He had to stop doing this. He had to stop trying to be everyone's personal savior. When he'd fired Tony and Nina, that was the message he wanted put out there. Gone was the old Eagan who tried to run other people's lives to the best of his ability. He had to bring his focus back to number one, him.

And why did that feel so wrong to him now? He didn't feel like that same man from a couple of months ago.

A gentle knock sounded on his office door.

"Enter." Eagan shut down his palm and leaned back in his chair.

Phil entered with a big grin and a spring in his step. This could not be good.

"How are you doing, buddy?" Phil sat on the corner of Eagan's desk.

"Chair or floor. Don't sit on my desk." Unless I'm fucking you, Eagan wanted to say.

Phil stood. "It's going to be a great day for taping the show. I can feel it." He hopped around like an antsy child. "The network is relieved."

"Why?" Far be it for Eagan to make any establishment happy.

"You got rid of another black contestant and you gave immunity to a white one, which means she's going to be in the final four."

Eagan shook his head. “Not that shit again. Look, from now on, no race talk around me and especially about this show. The last elimination was hard. I didn’t want to get rid of Freesia.” He turned to the window to look out at the water. “If I had my choice, I would have dumped Meadow. But Freesia did harm someone, so I had no choice.”

“Whatever the reason, it’s done. Have you talked to Nina?”

Eagan glared at Phil. That was another subject he did not want to talk about.

“Have you called her?” Phil pressed.

“If you need another associate producer, we can find one willing to be a part of the show now.”

“Yeah, right. Like you can actually get along with someone long enough. In case you haven’t noticed, you’re a pain in the ass to work with and for.”

Eagan jumped from his chair. “I’m not here to make friends. I’m here to do business.”

“Yeah, but the one good thing about you, Eagan. You treat friends like family. Well, you used to.”

No, he still did. He’d cut off communication with his mother and brother just like he’d done with Tony and Nina.

“But enough about me. I’m going to do a reward challenge for this next show and that’s it. No more immunities, once we get to the final four.”

“And what’s this show about?”

Eagan opened the door, then turned to his friend. “Do we have enough KY Jelly on set?”

Phil started raking his fingers through his hair.

“Don’t worry, Phil. I won’t hurt any of them. But they might be walking funny afterward.”

Phil mumbled as he walked down the stairs behind Eagan.

“You’re going to get an ulcer before you turn forty-five. Relax.” Eagan hit the ground floor and padded over to the camera crews.

“And here I thought I was the only one with surprises.” Phil shook his head.

“What are you talking about?” Eagan stopped about ten feet away from the remaining five contestants.

“Never mind. Let’s just get started before we lose valuable sunlight.”

Eagan and the ladies did their normal greeting. He noticed this time that with the smaller group, the conviction in their voices when they greeted him came out stronger. That brought the hairs up on the back of his neck and over his arms.

“Today, I’m going to be doing a combination reward challenge and immunity challenge in one because today, it’s going to be a little involved and a little intense.” From a cabinet, Eagan pulled out a glass butt plug and set it on a table in the center of the room.

“Is that an ice sculpture?” Poppy asked.

“It’s a butt plug.” Eagan bit the inside of his cheek to keep from laughing. “Although I won’t be using that particular device, I will be training you all how to accept an anal plug.”

Sunny grinned hard.

“Is there anything that this man does that *does* turn you off?” Poppy shook her head.

“Come on. You’ve never had anal sex before?” Sunny rubbed her backside in anticipation of the day’s events.

“No comment.” Poppy sucked her teeth.

“You’ll each be inserted with an anal plug. Whoever holds it in the longest, the max being two hours, will win.” Eagan asked Apple to bring him a tray of fresh, new plugs. “Since Sunny seems the most thrilled about it, I’ll start with her.”

Sunny started to strip off her clothes right there and then before Eagan put his hand up to stop her.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa! Not here. I’ll take you to the dungeon one at a time.” He glanced at Meadow, who blew her breath out in relief.

She had to learn to get over the way she looked and what she assumed Eagan thought of her. He liked Meadow’s personality. When she was assertive and herself, she shined. Over the last couple of weeks, he noticed her shrinking back a bit.

Eagan took Sunny’s hand and, with Apple trailing behind him, went up to his dungeon. “You may take off your clothes. Or since you’re in a dress, you may simply lift it.”

Being the exhibitionist that she was, Sunny took off her dress and stood by a platform. Eagan studied her body. With her toned legs and arms, she carried an athletic look like a volleyball player or a skier.

“I want you comfortable,” he began. “Would you prefer lying down or bent over the platform.”

“Bent over is fine.” She rested her torso on the raised platform and hoisted her firm ass in the air.

Eagan slipped on a pair of surgical gloves then had Apple apply lubricant to his finger. “So, besides a little anal play here and there, what does Sunny like to do for fun?” He tapped her leg to signal to her to move her feet apart.

“I rock climb.” Her breathing started to increase as she waited for him.

“Easy. Don’t get too overly excited. Reach your hands back and hold your cheeks open for me.” Maybe having her do something would calm her down.

Sunny spread her cheeks and waited. Her tiny pink hole throbbed as though ready and waiting for his entry. In her position, Eagan noticed how her pussy glistened from her juices. Her body’s response didn’t betray her words. Sunny enjoyed anal sex and ass play. She was winning points with Eagan each week.

“I thought you looked a little athletic.” He spread lubricant over her hole, causing her to squirm and mewl in pleasure. “How long have you been doing that?”

“Eight years.” She tapped her foot in anticipation.

Cameras zoomed in on her face and hovered over Eagan’s shoulder.

“Guys, you can’t show this, even on premium cable. Just do a profile shot.” Eagan directed the cameraman to stand off to the side.

Phil stood next to Eagan, stunned that this whole scene was occurring before him.

“Close your mouth, Phil. You’re catching flies.”

Eagan teased her hole with his finger. With ease, he slipped the tip of it inside of her. She sucked in her breath and held it there.

“Easy. Breathe. Come on. Breathe.” With his free hand, he rubbed the small of her back.

“Please, Master Eagan. Put it in.”

He worked her hole with his finger first, sliding it in and out, until he felt it was time to introduce the smallest of his plugs into her hole. When he pulled his index finger out of her, he slid the plug inside of her, then snapped off his gloves.

“Done. How do you feel?” Eagan helped her stand erect.

“Fine.” She stared at him with a twinkle in her eyes. “I’m just fine.”

“You can go to the living room or your bedroom until you feel ready for it to come out. But at the two-hour mark, I will come find you and take it out myself. I don’t want you hurting yourself.”

She nodded. “I understand.”

“Let Meadow know she’s next.”

Eagan snapped off his gloves and tossed them in a trash bag Willow held. By the time he slipped on a second pair, Meadow crept into the room.

“Come to the table, Meadow.” Eagan signaled for her to move forward.

She scanned the room as she took each precise step.

Although he didn’t want to scare her, Eagan needed her to break out of her shell. “Get over here now. I don’t understand why you’re taking your time.”

She stood in front of him and kept her gaze down. “I’m afraid.” Her mouth twitched in to an awkward smile.

The hairs on the back of Eagan’s neck stood at attention at her admission. “After all of these weeks, everything you all have been through with me, why would you still be afraid?”

Meadow hunched her shoulders.

“I don’t understand you. You came into this competition like a lioness. Why are you getting so skittish now? Has someone said something to you?”

She shook her head.

“Is there something I have done?”

She gazed at him for a moment before finally answering. “No, sir.”

“Do you really want to be in this competition and be my submissive?”

It was the only question that made Meadow look him in the eyes. “Yes, of course. It’s just that I don’t look like the other girls.”

“And you don’t have to. I’ve told you that before. My interest is in your desire not your appearance.”

She let out a long breath and nodded.

“Do you still want to do the anal plug?”

Meadow waited a beat before nodding again.

“Bend over on the table, lift up your dress and hold your cheeks apart.” Not very romantic, but romance had very little to do with this lesson. It was all about training the right woman.

Meadow did as she was told. Her small star-shaped hole squeezed in tight.

“I need you to relax, Meadow.” Eagan rubbed his finger over her hole to help ease her tense body. “If you stay wound up like this, it’s going to hurt and you won’t enjoy it.”

“Yes, sir.” She took a couple of deep breaths.

Her puckered hole opened a sliver, but it was better than before. Like with Sunny, Eagan had Apple apply lubricant on his fingers. Then he massaged her hole, sliding in the tip of his finger.

Meadow jerked off of the table.

“Easy. Settle back down. That’s it.” With his free hand, he rubbed her back.

Her body melted onto the table, just enough for Eagan to slide the tip of the anal plug into her hole until he got the entire short apparatus inside of her.

“Stand. Tell me how you feel.” He helped her stand up straight and smoothed her dress down.

“It feels weird.” She twisted her backside from left to right. “I guess it’s okay. I can get used to it.”

“Go sit down or go to bed. Come to me when you’re ready to have it taken out, or at the two hour mark.” He patted her hand. “Send in Venus.”

When Meadow walked out of the room, Phil whispered, “I’m surprised she let you do it. She has been kind of squirrely lately.”

“It’s coming down to the wire. Of course she’s going to do it.”

Venus nearly skipped into the room. She would be easy to do, Eagan thought.

Without prompting, Venus stripped off her clothes. “Where do you want me?”

“Bend over here.” Eagan barely had a chance to change gloves by the time she’d bounded into the room.

“I hope I make you proud, Master.” She faced the camera when she made her proclamation. She jiggled her backside then bent over and spread her cheeks apart without him asking her.

“I guess you’ve done anal training before, or did you listen to the other contestants?” Eagan asked as he lubed up her hole.

“Uh, no. I just thought I would help you out. I want to be accommodating for my Master.”

Eagan rolled his eyes and shoved in the plug. He always knew there was something different about Venus. Her statement sounded too forced, too phony.

“Good girl.” Eagan snapped off his gloves.

Venus stood and held her clothes in her hand, but was in no rush to wear them. “I can take a bigger plug, Master Eagan.”

He stared at her manufactured smile. “No, we’ll just start you on this one for now. If I feel you can do a larger one, I’ll change it.”

She bowed her head.

“Tell Poppy to come in here.”

“Yes, Master Eagan.”

Once she walked out of the room, Phil whispered, “I don’t care what you think about her, the camera loves her.”

The camera may love her, but Eagan still had his doubts. Perhaps this time his intuition failed him. Maybe she was the real deal.

After waiting five minutes, Eagan wondered if Venus told Poppy to come in or if Poppy changed her mind and decided not to say anything to anyone.

“Where is she? I don’t have all day.” He turned to Willow. “Go bring her in here now.”

As soon as Willow hit the doorway, Poppy pushed her way through.

“I’m here.” She bounded over to Eagan, smacking gum, and not looking him in the eyes.

“Why did you keep me waiting? My time is extremely valuable.” Sweat rolled down between his shoulder blades.

Poppy put her hand to her stomach. “I’m not feeling well at all. As a matter of fact, I had to go several times, if you know what I mean.” She patted her backside. “I don’t think I can do this challenge. I’m sorry, Master Eagan.”

He stared at her, trying to read between the lines. “Are you unable or unwilling to do the challenge?”

“Take your choice. Either way, I’m not doing it.” She crossed her thin arms over her chest.

“Ask Begonia to come in here. You can wait out in the living room.” Eagan ground his teeth together as he watched Poppy walk out of his dungeon.

He didn’t know which was worse: acting afraid of him or lack of respect. Not trying the plug at all showed a huge lack of respect, one thing that he didn’t take lightly.

Eagan changed his gloves and prepared the table. Without turning around, he knew Begonia stood at the doorway. Her scent gave her away first. He smelled her intoxicating light flowery aroma from across the room. Her sexual energy took over the whole room, bowling over everyone in her path.

Eagan turned around and came face-to-face with her. Her eyes were full of trust and wonder, not fear like Meadow’s or fake like Venus’s.

“Hi.”

That one word from her erected every hair on his body. He couldn’t show her that, not in front of the cameras.

“Bend over and spread your cheeks.”

Begonia didn’t falter. She did as she was told, turning her face to the side and spreading her cheeks wide for him. Her dark brown ring invited him to touch it, play with it, invade it. Eagan applied lubricant to his fingers without his slave’s assistance. Then he slathered the clear gel between her cheeks. For Begonia, he circled her hole with his middle finger. He licked his lips before easing the tip of it inside of her.

Begonia arched her back. The deeper he got with his finger, the more she writhed in pleasure. She curved one foot around his leg. By the time he got his finger down to the hilt inside of her, Eagan forgot the cameras were around him. He pulled his finger out to the tip.

He should have substituted his digit for the plug, but he couldn’t resist delving deep into her again. This time, she let out a whispered cooing cry. Her foot pulled him in more. Her reaction sent goose bumps all over his body.

The camera light snapped him out of his alternate reality. Eagan had almost forgotten he was doing a show right now. This time when he pulled his finger back, he substituted it with the plug, sliding it in slow enough to tease the viewing audience ... and Phil.

After the insertion, Eagan removed his gloves. “Go lie down or sit until you can’t take any more. But you cannot have it in you longer than two hours.”

Begonia did something she’d never done before. She took his hand and kissed the back of it. “Thank you, Master Eagan.”

Her words were sincere and heartfelt. She wanted to submit and serve him.

“Begonia,” he called when she reached the door.

She turned to him. “Yes?”

“Good luck today.”

She smiled as sweetly as Willow and disappeared.

“What the hell was that?” Phil shook his head. “That last one was a killer. Did you get the vibe coming off of her? She wants you, man.”

If only Phil knew.

“And what’s up with that Poppy chick? She doesn’t want to do jack. And whenever you try to get her naked, she refuses, well, except for her tits. Those she’ll show you all day long.”

Eagan thought about Poppy’s previous actions. Phil was right. She had hidden a part of herself for the entire show. Made him wonder if she was hiding a scar or maybe an artificial leg that she hated. As he’d told Meadow time and time again, the look didn’t matter. What mattered was the heart, the will, the spirit.

* * * * *

At the thirty-minute mark, Meadow gave up and asked for her plug to be removed. The rest of the women, including Begonia, did two hours without complaints. Venus continued to ask for a bigger plug to be inserted. There was no need to go on any further with the contest. Eagan knew who he wanted to kick out of the house and who should win.

Apple gathered the contestants into the foyer area. Eagan, now dressed in slacks and a button-up shirt, stepped in front of the small group of women.

“So how did the plugs feel today?” he asked.

Both Sunny and Venus responded enthusiastically. Meadow shook her head and Begonia kept her sultry stare on him. Her gaze told of how she felt. Poppy just made a disgusted sound through her nose.

“Thank you all of the ladies who participated. However, I do have to send someone home tonight.” He turned to the two ladies at the end. “Poppy and Meadow, please step forward.”

Poppy had no problem storming up to him. Meadow hesitated, but eventually made her place next to Poppy.

Eagan addressed Meadow first. “You couldn’t last a full hour with your anal plug in place. You have to understand that I do expect anal play in my submissive relationship. If you’re unable to be trained, then I have no use for you.”

Meadow bowed her head.

Then he addressed Poppy. “And you, you wouldn’t even try it. I’m not sure what’s going on with you, Poppy. You volunteered for this contest. I didn’t drag you here. If you find certain aspects of the BDSM lifestyle degrading, demeaning, or boring, then you

shouldn't have signed up for the show. Because you actually refused to try the anal plug, I'm sorry, Poppy, I'm releasing you." Eagan held out his hand.

"Whatever. I was ready to get off this show anyway." Poppy put her collar in his hand. When she removed her mask, Eagan took a step back.

Poppy had braids in her hair and wild blue eye shadow covering her eyelids. Her full lips had been painted red. There was still something about her that Eagan found troubling. She was different. Her striking cheekbones stood sharp on her hard face.

"Here." She slapped the mask into his hand also.

Eagan held her hand, then stared at her. He intertwined his fingers with her long ones. Within a blink, she broke from his hold.

He suspected something about Poppy, something that, if he wasn't right, would get him a slap across his face. Who was he kidding? Even if he was right, she would slap him. He had to know.

"Hug and kiss goodbye?" Eagan held out his arms.

Poppy sauntered to him and kissed him on his lips. Then she gave Eagan a hug. During the embrace, Eagan slipped his hand down and in between Poppy's legs and brushed against a large bulge ... or two.

Poppy jumped back at his intimate, if not intrusive, touch. Eagan stared at her, awaiting her reaction. His heart pounded and it shook his upper body. Thank goodness his feet kept his lower half grounded.

Poppy tried to look angry and indignant. She gave up on that ruse and put her hands to her hips.

"How did you know?" Poppy asked, her voice an octave lower than what it had been in the contest.

"How did I know you were really a man?"

The secret must not have been apparent to the other women. They all covered their mouths in shock and huddled among themselves. Then they shook their heads in disbelief.

Eagan said, "It wasn't until Phil pointed out that you had done all of the contests where you could take your top off and nothing else. Then I started putting it all together. So what's your real name?"

In a dramatic fashion with her fingers splayed in the air, Poppy announced, "Saffron!" Then she snickered and brought her hands down. "But my friends call me T.J."

Eagan moved closer to T.J. and kept his voice low. "Why didn't you tell me? Why did you try to pass as a woman? I must admit, you had me and, apparently, my producers fooled." If Nina was still there, he would have to have a talk with her on her selections.

“I was hoping to win this thing so that I could get my surgery. I’m on the hormones. I’ve had the ol’ Adam’s apple removed. Then I had ‘the girls’ done.” She lifted her shirt to show off her impressive breasts. “I just love them.”

“They are nice. But don’t you think if you had won this that I would have found out?”

“I fooled your producers. I went seven weeks without anyone finding out. I thought that if you chose me that you would learn to love me and would help me get the surgery.” Her voice broke on the last word. She ran her hand under her nose. “Who am I kidding? Eagan Morton would not have a tranny as a submissive.”

“You don’t know that. Being a pre-operative transsexual doesn’t bother me. Lying to me does. Had you said from day one, I’m going through gender reassignment, I would have thought so highly of you to tell me that up front. Although you were annoying at times, I did enjoy you in this competition.”

T.J. smiled and laughed through her tears.

Eagan wiped a tear away from her cheek with his thumb. He hooked his hand behind her head and pulled her forward.

In her ear, he whispered, “You’ll leave here with dignity and grace.”

T.J. cried harder and attempted to wipe her tears, but they kept flowing. Eagan had Willow get tissues and makeup so that T.J. could adjust herself.

“You trash that film in between when she gives me back her necklace and then walks out the door. T.J. will not be outted this way.”

Phil’s bottom jaw unhinged. “This is a goldmine. Are you kidding me? Eagan Morton has a tranny in his contest and you want me to just turn my back on that?”

“Absolutely.”

Eagan wasn’t down for humiliation of any kind. T.J. would walk out of this competition with her head held high. When the camera started rolling again, Eagan said to her, “Good luck finding the right Master for you.”

T.J. put her hand on Eagan’s shoulder and kissed his cheek. “Thank you so much. For a whip-wielding Dom, you’re pretty cool.”

With that, she sauntered out of the house.

“That was an interesting surprise.” Eagan turned to the contestants and the crew.

“No, this is.”

The familiar voice behind Eagan petrified the hairs on his neck. He kept thinking and hoping that what he heard was only his imagination. No way could she be here in his house. From the expression from the crew and, especially from Phil, Eagan knew he hadn’t imagined the voice.

With a slow and deliberate pivot, he blinked at who he saw standing in his doorway.

“I’m home, Master Eagan,” Ophelia said.

“Surprise, buddy.” Phil patted Eagan on his back.
Some fucking surprise.

Chapter Twenty

Ananda didn't know exactly who the woman standing in the door was, but her tingling suspicions told her that it had to be Ophelia. From the confused look on Eagan's face, she could tell he was shocked to see her, too.

The woman took a few steps into the house. "Aren't you going to kiss me? Should I get naked for you?"

Eagan held up his hand to her. "Don't move."

She stopped in her tracks, but continued smiling, as though Eagan was happy to see her. He turned his back on her and faced Ananda and the other three remaining women.

"There is no immunity for this challenge. From here on out, you'll have to win on merit. And I have another surprise for you. From now on, you all will sleep in the dungeon. That will be your new home for the remainder of the show. As long as you're escorted by either Willow or Apple, you can go to the bathroom. You will eat in the dungeon. You will get acquainted with all of the toys. And I can come down at any moment to play with any of you." He strolled past the women. "Follow me."

Ananda glanced behind her at the woman he left standing in the middle of his foyer. She should have looked hurt. Instead, the woman carried a confident expression. Had to have been Ophelia. She was one hell of an actress.

Eagan went into the dungeon with Ananda and the other ladies behind him. He pointed to a platform across the room. "Meadow, you'll be there." He directed his attention the platform across the room from the one Meadow had been assigned. "Venus, you'll be there."

"Thank you, Master Eagan." Venus bowed her head.

"In this corner will be Sunny."

She, too, bowed and smiled.

“By the door will be Begonia, however, tonight, Begonia, you will come with me.”

Ananda felt her eyebrows furrow under her mask.

“Since I have to get to know you all, I’m going to be spending some quality time with each of you. Tonight will be Begonia. The rest of you ladies, get acquainted with your space. I’ll see you all tomorrow.” He turned to the door then stopped again. “By the way, aside from having to sleep in the dungeon from now on, you’ll also have to do one other thing.” He held up his long index finger. “Take off all of your clothes and give them to my slaves. From now on, you will be in your masks and collars and that’s it. You will be naked twenty-four-seven, as I expect of all of my submissives.”

“Oh, God,” Meadow said, but loud enough for everyone to hear.

“Can you handle that, Meadow or do you need to go home right now?”

Meadow wrung her hands then braced herself against her new bed. She took a deep breath and stripped off her dress and shoes.

“Very good. I’ll see you all in the morning. Remember, six a.m. in position.” He glared at Ananda. “Follow me.”

As instructed, Ananda followed behind Eagan. He waltzed through the foyer area again where the mysterious woman stood waiting for her first order.

To Ananda’s surprise, Eagan strolled to the woman and stood a foot away from her with the camera crews all looming around him.

“Did you ask the cab driver to wait for you, Ophelia?” he asked.

Mystery solved. She was Eagan’s former submissive. Just as Ananda had suspected, Ophelia had a look that most women would kill to have. She had radiant golden brown skin, long chocolate brown hair that behaved and a curvy body.

The beaming smile that Ophelia had carried when she walked in the house melted. “No, I didn’t ask the driver to wait. I want to resume my spot at the foot of your bed again. Is my ankle cuff still there?”

Eagan crossed his arms over his chest. “I released you. That meant I no longer needed your services.”

“Eagan --”

He held up his hand to halt her speech. “I’m taping a show. Although I’m sure this makes for great television, my former submissive coming back in my house as I look for a new one, I find your behavior rude, presumptuous, and inappropriate.” Eagan glanced behind his shoulder.

Standing shoulder-to-shoulder were Willow and Apple. Their stunned expressions said it all.

“Willow, open the door for Ophelia.” Eagan snapped his fingers to his slave. “Rick will take you to any hotel you would like. If you would still like to talk, call me after ten a.m. once I’ve had my breakfast.” Without another word, he turned and headed up the stairs.

“So, that whole whipping thing, you okay with that now, or is your hand a bit off like last time?” Ophelia asked as he took each step hard and militant-like.

With her cutting words though, he stopped his march. Ananda stayed about two steps behind him and didn’t move a muscle. Eagan glared back down to the front door area.

Ophelia grabbed her left shoulder and pushed over her camisole top strap. “The mark you left is almost gone. See?” She glanced at Ananda and smiled. “It didn’t hurt that much anyway.”

“Leave your contact information with Richard. I’ll call you when I’m ready to see you.” Eagan marched up the stairs.

Ananda could barely keep up with his long-legged strides to the third floor. He pushed the door open and waited for Ananda to come through. The camera crews followed them and were about to step into the room with them, when Eagan slammed the door in their faces.

One brave or foolish soul dared to knock on his door. They couldn’t have wanted the shot that badly. Eagan swung his door open. He barely had time to get one word out when Phil flew through the door.

“Are you shitting me with this?” Phil paced. His marching stopped when he eyed Ananda. “Oh, I forgot she was here. You want to have this conversation in the office?”

Eagan shook his head. “No, we can talk here in front of Begonia.” He stared at her. “I have no secrets.”

“Obviously, you do. Here I thought after Ophelia contacted me that you would be thrilled to see her. I saw this great angle where you would allow her to be one of the contestants and make her fight for her spot to be your submissive again. The ratings will go through the roof.”

“For once, I don’t want to talk about ratings.”

From the way Phil looked, Ananda would have thought Eagan had just said that he wanted to kill puppies and kittens.

“Dude, ratings are our lives. It’s our bread-and-butter.” In an attempt to appeal to Eagan, Phil put his hand on Eagan’s shoulder.

Eagan brushed it off. “Box office sales are my bread-and-butter. Everything else is just gravy.”

“Whatever. Can you at least invite Ophelia back into your house so that you two can hash out your issues?”

“We don’t have issues any more. We talked before I released her. If she has something to say, she should have said it the last day when I asked her if she wanted to tell me anything.”

“Maybe she wasn’t ready then. She’s ready now. Why not have her move into the guesthouse for a couple of days so my crews can get some good shots?”

At the suggestion of the guesthouse, Ananda and Eagan’s special place, she tensed. Her heart thudded until Eagan spoke.

“No,” he said.

She let out a long breath, one that must have been audible, since both Eagan and Phil glanced at her. Ananda sucked in her bottom lip and remained seen, but not heard.

“Eagan, come on, man. Think of the show.”

Eagan must have thought about his sanity more. He nudged his friend out of his room. “I’ll talk to you tomorrow. Right now, I have a contestant to meet. You just use whatever you can pick up on the cameras in the room.” He pointed overhead to illustrate where the cameras were.

“Don’t take off your mics.”

“I’ll see what I can do.” Eagan continued pushing the little man to the door.

“What about that whip thing? Anything to that?”

Yeah, was there something about Eagan’s abilities with the whip that Ananda should be concerned with now that she was in the top four?

Eagan slammed the door in Phil’s face and locked it. Ananda swallowed. Now that she was alone with him, she didn’t know how to handle herself. Her body still wanted to have him touch her, stroke her in the way that he could only do to make her feel alive. With the cameras overhead, she understood why she couldn’t just jump his bones.

Eagan sat in a large, throne-like chair. “Bring that chair over here.” He pointed to a small chair on the other side of the room.

Dutifully, Ananda carried the lightweight chair to him.

“Sit. Let’s talk.”

Ananda sat down and balled her toes into the plush carpet. “I’ll answer anything you ask me.”

“And I’ll do the same for you.”

She nodded. “Can I start?”

“Ladies first.”

“Did you really have Ophelia chained up to the foot of your bed?” Ananda chewed her lower lip. To chain a woman to the floor brought Ananda back to her original idea of Eagan treating all of the women like pets, like animals, like dogs.

“Yes and no.” He brushed lint from his pant leg. “I prefer my submissives sleep in the same bed as me. Ophelia felt like she could show more of her devotion by sleeping on the floor to prove her ultimate subservience, and chaining herself. I have no problem with her doing that because it displayed her level of commitment. Anything that exemplifies respect to me, I’m for it.”

“Do you think she was being respected as a result?” The question came out faster than Ananda had thought about it. But she wanted to know.

“This occurred inside of my home. What I do here is my business. I didn’t brag to other Doms what I did to Ophelia. Safe, sane, and consensual. I live by that.”

Ananda wrung her hands together. “What would you expect from your new submissive?”

A fraction of a smile peeked out from behind Eagan’s stern countenance. “Let’s start with one thing I expect right now.” He stood. “A bath.”

Eagan stood and motioned for Ananda to follow him. He led her to his bathroom. Without much fanfare, he directed Ananda on how to run his bath water, what temperature he liked and the scented oils to add. Since she had a feeling she would be doing this again soon, and perhaps often, if she won, she paid very close attention to every detail.

With the bathtub full of lavender-scented water, Ananda took her time in undressing him. “You don’t mind being nude on camera?” she asked after stripping off his shirt while standing in his bedroom.

“Once you get to my pants, we’ll go back into the bathroom. No cameras in there.” He gave her a subtle wink.

Now down to his slacks, Ananda followed him back into the bathroom. She unfastened his pants and slid them down his legs. Ananda made short work of his boxers, which had been hiding his steadily increasing erection.

“Put my pants where I showed you and come back to the bathroom.”

Ananda nodded and carefully folded his garment. By the time she returned to the bathroom, Eagan was already in the bathtub waiting for her. She took a deep breath and sauntered to him.

Kneeling by the side of the tub, she lathered soft soap into a white washcloth. Before she could touch him, Eagan held her wrist and shook his head.

“Get undressed and get in here with me.” He stared at her until she made a move.

Ananda rose from the floor, pulled her dress over her head and stepped into the huge whirlpool bathtub. Eagan spread his legs and allowed her, in a kneeling position, to move in close to him to bath him.

“You expect your submissive to do this?” Ananda scrubbed his shoulders and moved the cloth down each arm.

“And then some.”

The muscles in his arms twitched under her touch. She wanted so much for them to be around her body right now, holding her.

“Like what?”

Eagan cocked his head. “Do you want me to tell you or do you want to experience it?”

Ananda thought about the prospects for a while. Did she want to be surprised? Or did she want to know like when he told her about anal play?

“Just a couple of things would be nice to hear.” She wrung out the washcloth and soaped it up again. This time she scrubbed his chest.

“Well, you already know about the sex.”

She glanced at him.

“Just that I want it often.” Eagan must have suspected that they were still being recorded somehow and hedged his answer. “I expect her to play when I want. I expect her to satisfy my every desire, including visual.”

Her hand stopped. “Meaning?”

“A dance.”

Ananda swallowed.

“Or masturbating in front of me.”

Her hand made slow, small circles over the planes of his chest.

“Or masturbate in front of my other Dom friends.”

She stopped again.

“Play with another Dom or Domme’s submissive. Masturbate her or him.”

Ananda moved her hand down his abs. “Would you want me to have sex with another submissive?”

“If you make it as my submissive, yes, I would expect you do to whatever makes me happy. If seeing you give another submissive oral sex satisfies me, then I would expect you to do it. However, I normally have my slaves do tasks like that.”

Ananda nodded.

“I was trained as a Dominant over twenty years ago. The man who trained me has expectations of the lessons which he passed on to me have been properly carried through. If he wants to experience you, see if you’ve learned everything I’ve taught you, including satisfying him, then you’ll do it.”

Ananda shook her head. “The name of your show shouldn’t be called *Love My Way*. You should name it *Get Your Freak On*. I don’t understand how you can sit back and let another man touch the woman you love.”

“Love to me means I make you happy. Your love should mean the same thing. If you want to make me happy, you’ll do what pleases me. That’s all I expect.”

“And how would you make me happy?” Her hand dipped down low, touching his hard cock.

“By giving you wonderful new sensations.” He brought his leg up then slipped it down in the water in between her knees.

Ananda parted her legs to give him better access.

She wasn't sure if his reaction had to do with her, the bath, her touch or the conversation. Maybe it was everything. To feel him getting aroused made her clit throb. She had to get out of the bathtub before she boiled the water.

“I would give you a lifestyle you'd only dreamed about but never thought possible.” Eagan raised his leg, touching her aching pussy. “I would make you forget about your old ways. Tell me. How did you feel about the anal plug today? Did you enjoy it? Had you ever done anything like that before?”

She had enjoyed it and she hadn't done anything like it before. Ananda suspected that Eagan knew that. He knew how to read her body in the short time they'd been together.

“It felt, um, okay.” She didn't want to make him too happy by saying that sparks shot off in her head as soon as he slipped it inside of her.

As soon as his shin touched her labia, Ananda's body jerked. She closed her eyes and sank into the wonderful sensations of his leg brushing back and forth against her clit.

Ananda let the washcloth float in the water and slipped her hand around his shaft. She eased her hand up and down the length of him. At the tip, she circled her thumb over the mushroom head.

“You think they can see us?” she asked in a whisper.

Eagan shook his head.

“May I come?”

He smiled then shook his head.

Bastard. She shouldn't have asked. She should have just came and claimed she forgot. However, Eagan had this hold over her now that was inexplicable. The more she wanted to run from this situation, the more her body ached for her to stay.

Eagan pushed his leg harder into her sex prompting her to pump her fist faster and harder. He gripped the sides of the claw foot tub and reclined his head back. Ananda undulated her hips so that her cunt slid faster along Eagan's leg.

As soon as she cupped his balls with her other hand, she felt his body tense. He lowered his leg, then pumped his hips in concert with her hand.

Eagan released a long growl before his milky cum squirted from his cock and over his stomach. He panted, struggling to regain his normal breathing pattern for a few seconds. After a while, his body settled down into the tub.

As she obediently washed the jism from his stomach she said, “Hardly seems fair. You just said making me happy makes you happy.” She peered up at him. “So, why couldn’t I come, too?”

Eagan sat up in the tub and dipped his hand underwater. His fingers sought and found her pussy. While using his other hand to hold her wrist down on the tub’s rim, he slid his middle finger inside of her and pistoned it back and forth.

Ananda closed her eyes and let the orgasmic heat build in her vagina, ready and waiting for it to explode. She, too, leaned her head back, then slid her legs further apart to get Eagan deeper inside of her.

“Oh, Eagan,” she said in a hoarse whisper.

She felt her inner walls tighten around his finger. With her free hand, she cupped her breast, allowing her thumb and index finger to roll her hardened nipple in between them and occasionally squeezing them.

Damn, she was close. As much as her trapped hand would allow, she curled her fingers and clawed the bathtub. Her body trembled. Ananda was ready to call him Master, Daddy, and whatever else he wanted.

Just as she was on the cusp of the most electrifying and needed orgasm she’d ever had, Eagan pulled his finger out of her. Ananda brought her head forward and wanted to scream.

“My submissive’s happiness is always very important to me.” His smug smile couldn’t be blasted off his face. “Finish the bath and go back down to your room. I’ll have a special surprise for you ladies tomorrow.”

Begrudgingly, Ananda washed the rest of his body, dried him, and dressed him. Eagan kissed her cheek before sending her back downstairs, escorted by Apple.

“You gave Master Eagan a bath?” Apple asked along the way.

“Yeah. It was loads of fun.”

Apple got to the dungeon door. “Consider yourself lucky. He only has us doing his baths for him. He must really like you.”

Ananda let that statement sink in a bit. After all of his mind games, did he really like her? Love her? No, she was getting too ahead of herself. No man who would allow his woman to be fucked by different people could be capable of love. Great sex? Of course. But she needed more.

Ananda slinked into the dungeon only illuminated by a red overhead light. She felt around the room until she found her platform. After tossing her dress to the floor, she climbed on top of the raised bed and positioned herself on her side.

She closed her eyes and was barraged with images of Eagan naked in her head. A smile slithered over her face until she felt the platform move behind her. Was someone in her bed?

Chapter Twenty-One

“Shhh.” The whispered hiss whizzed by Ananda’s ear. “It’s me. Sunny.”

Ananda flipped over to her other side. “What are you doing on my bed? You’re supposed to be over there.” Ananda remembered that Eagan assigned her the platform by the door because she kept thinking he wanted her there for a reason.

“Did you do it? Did you have sex with Master Eagan?” she asked.

“No.” And technically that wasn’t a lie. Tonight, in his tub, they didn’t have sex. She jerked him off. He made her frustrated.

“Did you want to?”

Ananda felt Sunny move closer to her. “Yes, of course. He’s very attractive.” And the fact that she’d fucked him before would remain a secret.

“I want to. All of the time.” Sunny’s hand coasted from Ananda’s shoulder, down her arm and rested on her hip. “I can’t wait to serve him.”

“You’re so sure you’re going to win this?” Heat filled Ananda’s face. She’d gotten so close to Eagan. No way was all of her hard work, effort, and heart going to waste.

“Yes,” Sunny answered simply. “Out of the four of us remaining, I’m the only true submissive.”

“Shouldn’t that say something to you that Eagan got rid of all of the submissives first? You’re not a shoe-in. Any of us can win this.”

“If you’re serious about winning, then you won’t mind this.” Sunny’s fingers tickled over Ananda’s body and brushed her breast.

“What the hell are you doing?” Ananda pushed Sunny’s hand away.

“You know Master Eagan will want you to be with other women, please them while he watches. Or he’ll invite another submissive or slave to the bedroom. Remember the dinner where he had you lick my nipple? Don’t think it would stop there.”

And Ananda hadn’t thought that, especially after the conversation she had with Eagan tonight.

“I just need some relief.” Sunny’s fingers danced down Ananda’s body to her pussy, which from all of the sensations was slowly starting to awaken.

No matter how good Sunny’s touching felt, Ananda had to stop this. “No,” she said between gritted teeth. “Go back to bed.”

“Why?” Desperation laced Sunny’s voice.

Ananda had to feel for the woman. That she knew of, Ananda was the only one of the contestants having sex. And since Eagan had put so many restrictions on them, something Ananda had to explain to Sunny now, seven weeks without sex had to be wearing on them.

“Master Eagan specifically said no masturbating.” Ananda grabbed Sunny’s hand and pulled it from her.

“So. How is he going to know? I won’t say a word.” Sunny pressed her lips against Ananda’s, prompting Ananda to get out of bed.

“He also said no orgasm. I don’t know about you, but I’m going to follow his orders. I suggest if you truly want to be his submissive, you go back to bed before I alert Apple.” Ananda would never do that, but she needed something to get this woman out of her bed so that she could get some sleep.

Sunny slipped down from the platform. “You’re going to need me. Believe that. And I’ll be here waiting for you.”

“Good to know.” Ananda crawled back on her cold platform that felt amazing against her heated flesh.

This was too much sex for one woman to handle. What else could possibly be thrown at her after this?

* * * * *

“So?” Phil asked as he hopped from foot to foot.

Eagan didn’t answer him right away. As he and Phil stood in his observation room watching the contestants getting ready, he wanted to concentrate on them instead of anything Phil had on his mind.

“You’re really going to leave me hanging, aren’t you?” Phil paced in the darkened room.

Eagan kept his stare on Begonia. Even with the light on inside of the room, Meadow would not awaken. Eagan clicked on the room audio and listened to what was said.

“Meadow, get up. It’s --” Begonia looked at the digital clock hanging on the wall over the door. “-- five minutes to six. We have to go!” She shook the woman for all that she was worth, but Meadow wouldn’t budge.

“Just tell me. Did you fuck Begonia in your bathroom or not?” Phil stood between Eagan and the two-way mirror he used to observe the women.

“Why do you want to know so badly?” Eagan took a step to the side and continued watching the display.

“Because I live vicariously through you. There. I admitted it.”

Eagan turned to his friend. “Admitting it is half the battle.”

“Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!” Begonia screamed in Meadow’s ear.

“Leave that girl.” Venus rubbed lotion over her stomach and legs. “If she doesn’t want to take this competition seriously, then you shouldn’t waste your time trying.”

“She wants this. I know she does. If I win this, I want to because it was a fair fight and not because I got over on someone.” Begonia pitched a small patch of skin on Meadow’s fleshy ass causing the woman to yelp in pain.

“What did you do that for?” Meadow finally sat up, but only on one cheek. She rubbed her other cheek with her hand.

“Let’s go. We only have a minute now before Master Eagan comes down.” Begonia pulled the zaftig woman from the platform and out the door.

“You know he won’t be down here at six. He hasn’t been so far. You should have let me sleep.” Meadow thudded out of the room as she was dragged by Begonia.

Eagan turned off the audio when all of the women were gone then faced Phil. “I didn’t have sex with Begonia.”

He hadn’t lied. Sure he had fingered her and almost got her to come. This time, however, he did not fuck her. Not that he didn’t want to. Feeling her pussy walls surround his finger nearly made him take her right there in the bathroom.

“Wow. You have a naked woman in your room and for once this time you don’t have sex with her. Unbelievable. I guess there’s a first time for everything.” Phil scratched his head.

“Yep. Some of these ladies are going to experience a first today. You ready?” Eagan walked out of his observation room and to the foyer where he found the remaining four women in their position.

Now that there were only four left, it was easier to notice their positions. Venus curved her back in too much, making her ass stick up in the air. Probably intentional, but wrong nonetheless.

“Straighten your back, Venus.” He patted her back to signal her to raise it up.

“Yes, Master Eagan.” She brought her spine up so that now she looked perfect.

Meadow was the opposite. Her back curved upward, making her ass look tucked in like a scared dog.

“You too, Meadow. Straighten out your back.” Again, he touched her.

What he wanted to say was, “Straighten out your attitude.” He couldn’t believe she took so long to get out of bed this morning. If Meadow was serious about this competition, she needed to thank her lucky stars for Begonia looking out for her.

“I’m trying. I can’t.” Meadow dropped her back down, but inevitably rolled it up again.

“Maybe if you relax it’ll work. Relax.” Then Eagan stroked her back.

As though his touch was magic, Meadow eased her body down into the correct position.

“Good girl.” He patted her as a reward.

And as usual, Sunny and Begonia matched proper position to proper position. For someone who started off poorly, Begonia was starting to show she really wanted to be there. Problem was, did Eagan really want her, or would she be a reminder of Ophelia?

“Up.”

All at once, the women sat up, then stood. Naked, Eagan loved them even more. They showed off their bodies proudly, shoulders back, chin up, some with smiles ... except for Meadow who fought against herself to cover her breasts and pussy.

“You ladies are in for a treat this week.” Eagan walked up and down the line of them. Short walk. “First of all, I’d like to introduce a friend of mine.”

From a side room, Apple escorted Genevieve, a woman he’d known for almost twenty years.

“You ladies will call her Miss Dupre. And today, she’s going to wax off all of your pubic and anal hair, if you have any.”

The contestants, as though feeling the sting of the rip right now, crossed their feet and covered their mounds with their hands.

“I suppose you’re all wondering why I’m having this done. For one, I prefer all of my women to be smooth.” To illustrate his point, he strolled over to the only woman who was the closest to being hairless and that was Sunny. He slid his fingers in between her pussy lips, a feeling that made her immediately wet with desire.

“Oh, Master Eagan! Don’t stop.” Sunny attempted to hold his hand down there, but he pulled away.

“No, no. Remember, no one has an orgasm unless I say so.” He picked up a towel and wiped off his fingers. “The second reason for the grooming today is because I have a special trip planned. You all will accompany me to a play party. How many of you have been to a play party before?”

Sunny raised her hand and nearly squealed with delight.

“Figures. Anyone else?” Eagan scanned the group. “The party will have different Doms and Dommes from all over, with their submissives and slaves. Open play is done at the party. So you could see wax play, needle play, electric play, spanking, whipping, humiliation, mummification, and sex. I expect you all to represent me and represent yourselves in the highest regard. Do nothing, unless I specifically tell you it’s okay. Is that understood?”

They all nodded.

“You will wear clothes leaving the house, however, once we get to the party, you will be naked the entire time.” He stared at Meadow. “If this is a problem for you, then you need to leave the competition now.”

Meadow bowed her head.

“For the sake of the other people attending the party, cameras will not be allowed.” Eagan turned to Phil this time, who looked fit to be tied. “However, I expect you all to give a comprehensive report about what occurred at the party when we get back home. That will be used during the show. Any questions?”

Meadow raised her hand.

“Yes, Meadow?”

“How long will we stay at the party?”

“Depends on how I feel. Sometimes, I’m there an hour, sometimes four. Just depends on what’s going on. I suggest you look at what’s going on and decide if this is the lifestyle for you. I attend many parties like this.”

She nodded. Then, Sunny raised her hand.

“Yes?”

“Will you be playing with us at all at the party?” Sunny’s body still shook from his earlier touch.

“I haven’t decided yet.” He glanced at Begonia. “I might. Just be prepared for anything.” He peered at Genevieve. “Are you ready?”

“Of course, Eagan.” Her French accent rolled on her tongue.

“Who would like to go first?”

Although Sunny raised her hand, Begonia was the one who walked to Genevieve.

“I’m ready,” Begonia said.

Genevieve nodded and walked with her back to the dungeon.

“You ladies go with her to see what’s going on.” Mind games. Eagan knew as soon as Begonia started screaming at least one or two of them would be in tears.

Eagan didn’t watch, but he heard all of the action. He caught Begonia’s little yelps with each strip removal. Sounded as though she handled it like a champ.

Begonia walked out of dungeon on Willow’s arm. Eager to see the finished product, Eagan peered down.

“It’s done, sir.” Begonia stood straight, her hands on her hips and showed off the work. Beautiful. So smooth, so fresh.

“Show me your ass,” he said.

She turned, bent over and spread her cheeks. Though a bit red, it was also smooth, pink and beautiful. It took every ounce of strength not to reach out and touch her. A second set of yells and screams broke his concentration on Begonia.

“Who’s on the table now?” he asked.

“Sunny.” Willow shook her head. “She may not have had much hair on her vagina but between her cheeks was another story.”

Richard, Eagan’s driver, came up behind him and tapped him on the shoulder.

“You’re in the shot, Richard,” Eagan said between gritted teeth.

“Sorry, sir. Mr. Techenbaum is at your door.”

“Who?” Eagan hadn’t called anyone else so he certainly wasn’t expecting any visitors.

“Mr. Techenbaum, one of your neighbors. He would like to speak to you.”

Great. Eagan didn’t need his nosey neighbors getting in his business right now. He stormed to the front door and held it open.

“What?” Eagan peered down at the thin man with glasses perched at the end of his pointed nose.

“Mr. Morton, the other neighbors and I are concerned about what’s going on in your home.” Even in the early morning, sweat beaded off his head and made the few hairs Techenbaum had on there stick to his scalp.

“And what do you think is occurring in my home that is bothersome to you all?” Eagan crossed his arms over his chest.

“Um, well, you know.” Techenbaum pulled up his white socks that he wore with sandals. He smoothed his hair over his head again.

“No, I don’t. Please tell me.”

His neighbor, who he had never seen before today, took a deep breath. “S-E-X.”

The man actually spelled the word “sex.” Unbelievable.

“So you’re saying I can’t have sex in my home? Where am I allowed to have it then? Your house? Is that where all of the action is?”

Crimson colored Techenbaum’s face. “Please be respectful of my intentions.”

“And you and everyone else around here be respectful of my home and business.” Eagan pointed to stickers that lined his front door. “I run a business out of my home that’s approved by the city. I have the proper permits to film here. I keep my crews in my home, so there has been nothing going on outside. What you and the other neighbors are reacting to are the TV shows that you must be watching.”

“No, not just that. Not really. News cameras have come over to all of us asking questions about you, wanting to know if you’re racist or some sort of serial killer torturing women.”

“That’s ridiculous.”

At the worst moment, one of the women being waxed screamed as though Genevieve had pulled the woman’s heart out of her body and held it up to her to view.

“What was that?” Techenbaum put his age spot-covered hand on his chest.

“Not what you think,” Eagan answered.

“Christ, you’re killing me, lady! Dios mio!” Meadow stumbled out of the dungeon and put her hand over her pussy. When she finally decided to look up, she gasped when she saw Eagan in the door talking to another man. “Oh, my God!” She ran back into the dungeon and closed the door.

“Was that woman in trouble?” Techenbaum pointed into Eagan’s house.

“Not yet.” Eagan definitely needed to discipline her on using her indoor voice.

“And she was naked.”

Eagan nodded. “Yes, she was. Again, nothing illegal, unless the good mayor has passed a law on being naked in your own home.”

“I’m glad you brought up the mayor, Mr. Morton. I have close ties and, rest assured, I will have someone over here to investigate what’s going on.”

“Stop spending time over here and start worrying about what’s going on in your own home. You’ll be happier that way.” Eagan slammed the door in his face. “Richard, make sure no one else gets up to the front door. I’m not in the mood to deal with stupid people right now.”

Richard cleared his throat and glanced at something behind Eagan. Eagan turned around and watched Ophelia walking into the foyer from the living room.

“I see the neighbors are still jealous of you.”

“In my office. Now!”

Chapter Twenty-Two

Eagan didn't wait for Ophelia to settle into his office before ripping into her. If she were still his submissive, he would have punished her by strapping her down to one of the platforms and leaving her for hours. Ophelia loved an audience, so leaving her alone with her thoughts would have tortured her.

"What are you doing here?" Eagan kept his voice low and even. "I specifically told you last night that when I wanted to talk to you I would call you."

Ophelia stood, still smiling. "I knew you would never call me."

"Do you blame me? Why should I? I released you. You have a whole career to pursue. You should do that."

Ophelia started unbuttoning her top. "I've made a mistake. I want to come back home, come back to you."

"Don't do that. Leave your clothes on. You're not staying." And yet, Eagan's stare wouldn't budge from her chest.

"Please let me come back home, Master Eagan."

To hear her call him that should have sent a tingle up his spine like it used to. It didn't. Instead, he felt a punch in his gut.

"No. Button your shirt back up."

She ignored his request. Ophelia opened her shirt, showing off her lace bra that had a front clasp.

"This is why you could never be my submissive again. You don't listen. If I have to tell you again to stop undressing, I'll have you forcibly removed from my home." Not that he would have anyone touch her. He wanted her to think that though.

"I thought you loved me." Her full brown eyes seemed sincere.

Eagan fell for her trap before. He couldn't do it again. "I loved you when your devotion to me was unquestionable. So tell me how much you need. A million dollars? Two? Three? I guess Hollywood was tougher than you thought and you came back home." He stood in front of his desk and leaned back against it. "Ophelia, it's too late. I'm looking for another submissive now."

"You can't replace me." Ophelia shook her head.

"Oh, no? There are four women out there who will tell you differently. They want to be here. They have no hidden agenda."

Ophelia looked away. "I tend to forget your long memory." She brought her gaze back up. "I'm so sorry you thought I could be happier with a career outside of the home."

Eagan crossed his legs at the ankles. "That wasn't it, Ophelia, and you know it. The problem was that you wanted to use me to launch your career. That's what I found unacceptable."

"You have a right to be angry with me, Master Eagan."

"No. Call me Eagan or Mr. Morton. You are not collared by me any more, so don't call me something I'm not to you."

"Understood." She buttoned up her blouse.

Eagan's heartbeat returned to normal with each button she closed.

"I'm not giving up on you, Mast -- uh, Eagan. I know there's a play party tonight. I plan on being there."

Great. The one place Eagan wanted to go to get away from all stresses and Ophelia, his stress du jour, planned on ruining that night for him, too. Only he wouldn't let her know that.

"Good. Maybe you'll find your next Dom."

She smiled again, like she knew something he didn't. "Maybe."

He allowed her to kiss his cheek. Watching her walk away this time wasn't as painful as the first time. Something about her return bothered him. She hid something just like before. Eagan would have to expose her like he did before.

* * * * *

"You ladies look great tonight." Apple stood in the center of the room gazing at Ananda and the other three women.

"I'm not sure why we're spending so much time on our looks. It's not like we're going to be dressed for very long." Venus turned herself away from the mirror.

"Very true. I envy you all." Apple headed to the door. "I love going to the play parties and meeting new people. You all are going to have a great time."

She led them out to the limo where Richard waited with the door open. Ananda, wearing five-inch black patent leather stiletto heels, was the last one to enter the back of the car, but knew she wasn't the first one to gasp, when she saw Eagan sitting back there with them along with the camera crew.

"I want to make sure you ladies are prepared for what's about to happen. Some of you may see some things you're not used to. Don't be afraid. As I've always stated, everything that happens in a structured BDSM environment follows the guidelines of being safe, sane, and consensual."

Ananda and the other ladies nodded. This would be one night that Ananda wouldn't mind wearing her mask. And she hoped she wouldn't see anyone she knew at the party.

"I will walk inside first. You all come in behind me. I will introduce you to some people, but I want you all to walk around and get familiar with the scene. Any questions, ask me."

The car pulled up in front of a house that was just as large as Eagan's. Lights flooded the front as expensive cars lined the circular driveway.

"Remember, do nothing unless I give you permission."

"Yes, Master Eagan," Ananda answered.

Ananda's hands were slick from sweat. She hoped she wouldn't have to hold a drink or anything. Her heart pounded so loudly it sounded in her head. What the hell was she doing? Play parties? What had she gotten herself into?

An older gentleman wearing stilettos that resembled Ananda's and a schoolgirl plaid skirt answered the front door.

"Welcome back, Master Eagan," the man said. "And who are your friends?"

As each woman walked in, Eagan introduced them. "These are my submissives. This is Begonia, Venus, Sunny, and Meadow."

"Very nice to meet you ladies. I'm Seeker. My Lady is Mistress Steady and she is in the dungeon."

"That was going to be my next question." Eagan waved to some people he must have known. "Will you give the ladies a tour of Mistress Steady's home? I'll be down in the dungeon when you're done."

"Certainly, sir." The way Seeker bowed, Ananda wondered if Eagan ever whipped or caned him like he'd done with them.

Seeker's heels clicked along the hardwood floors as he led them down a long hallway. Ananda scanned the room filled with people. She felt all stares were on her. Other men and women wore masks that were either similar to theirs or a whole hood with zippers for covering the eyes and mouth.

Ananda could tell the Dommies from the female submissives. The Dommies all wore black leather skirts or pants. The submissives were either wearing an outfit like a schoolgirl

ensemble or they were completely naked except for the collar. The collar. Another big tip off.

“This is my lady’s room.” Seeker opened the door to a room that housed a huge bed with posts that were bigger around than Ananda.

Ananda dropped her gaze to the floor. At the foot of the bed rested a large dog bed with a chain that was attached to the leg of the bed. She gazed at Seeker and wondered if that was his place.

He continued down the hall. “This is my lady’s quilting room.” Behind another door, he showed off a small white room with pale pink carpet, a rocking chair next to a window, and quilts lying over a chair. The wholesome room seemed out of place in this sex den.

Seeker showed off other rooms in the house. The one that caught her attention was the room that held a wooden bench that sloped down to one side with cuffs on each leg. She could only imagine the positions Seeker had to be in on that thing.

The last room Seeker took them to was a spare bedroom. One bed with a homemade quilt covering it, sat in the center of the room.

“Does your Master require you to be naked?” Seeker asked.

Ananda nodded, whereas Sunny said, “Yes.”

“Undress here and hang your clothing in the closet.” He opened the door to the closet and waited for them to undress. “Keep your shoes on if that’s what your Master wants.”

Honestly, Ananda had no idea if he wanted her shoes on or off, so she left them on. She didn’t want to step in anything that would require a Penicillin shot. After pulling off her dress, she handed the garb to Seeker.

“Miss Meadow, are you okay?” he asked.

Ananda looked over her shoulder and saw Meadow still dressed and with tears streaming down her cheeks from under her mask.

“They’re going to laugh at me.” Meadow crossed her arms over her ample chest.

Ananda held Meadow’s shoulders and stared the woman in her eyes. “No one is going to laugh at you. We’re all here and we’re all naked.”

“All of your bodies are perfect.” She wiped her nose with the back of her hand.

“Oh, really?” Seeker rubbed his protruding stomach. “Miss Meadow, no one here looks at your appearance. You’re judged more so on your actions. I promise you. No one will laugh or ridicule you. Well, unless you’re into verbal humiliation. Are you?”

She shook her head.

“Didn’t think so.” Seeker adjusted his collar, touching his padlock that kept it closed to make sure the lock stayed down like it should. “Are you ready to disrobe now?”

Meadow scanned the other women, took a deep breath and started to undress. She stopped. “I can’t do it. I’ll wait in the car.”

Before Ananda could stop her, Meadow darted from the room and burst through the front door. Damn. This would for sure be her one-way ticket home.

“Sorry about your friend. Are you ladies ready?” Seeker stood by the door and waited for them.

“No time like the present.” Sunny walked through first, with Ananda right behind her and Venus trailing them.

Seeker showed off the rest of the house. As they walked by people, Ananda noticed a few of them, especially the men, making comments about them.

“They’re all Eagan’s,” she overheard one person saying.

“Good batch he has.”

Batch? What were they, cookies?

As previously instructed, Seeker took them down to the dungeon. The dark lighting set an eerie mood to the room. Ananda heard something that sounded like meat hitting a cutting board. She passed people who lined the walls as she and the other women went to the heart of the room.

Eagan sat in a large chair that even he couldn’t dwarf at his height and stature next to a woman whose persona was way bigger than the room, let alone the chair. Her hair was perfectly styled in a chignon. Pearls dripped off her long neck. Her pale skin appeared fragile, like one sneeze from her would crack it. She was the only woman, who wasn’t a submissive, who didn’t wear leather. Instead, she was in a white satin robe. She crossed her legs and showed off that she took excellent care of herself.

Seeker went to the woman, kissed the back of her hand, and knelt next to her chair.

“Welcome to my home. I’m Mistress Steady.” She nodded to Ananda and the other two women. “You have lovely submissives, Eagan.”

Eagan peered around them. “Where’s Meadow?”

“She couldn’t make it,” Ananda said.

“What do you mean, couldn’t make it?” Eagan nearly rose out of his chair.

“She got scared and sat in the car,” Sunny quickly supplied. “She didn’t trust that the room would be safe for her.”

Damn it, Sunny. The bitch made it seem like Meadow didn’t trust Eagan.

Eagan shook his head. “I don’t have the energy to think about her right now.” He stood. “I’m going to take each one of you to a play station. I want you to watch and learn.”

Ananda and the other two followed him to another part of the dungeon. They saw a naked man huddled on the floor. Attached to his sac and the underside of his penis were pads with electrodes connecting them. A woman who looked about four foot nothing held a remote in her hand. She occasionally turned a dial making the man twitch with both pain and, judging from the drippings coming from the end of his dick, pleasure.

“Venus, I want you here watching this.” Eagan pointed to an empty spot for her to see the action. “Mistress Veronique, when you’re done playing with Fido, I want you to play with Venus for a bit.”

Venus snapped her head to his direction. “You want her to attach those things to me?”

“Yes.” Eagan returned his attention to Mistress Veronique. “She’s not to have an orgasm. See that she sticks to that.”

“You got it, Eagan.” Veronique nodded and turned the dial again.

“I’ll be back in about thirty minutes.” Eagan continued on in the room, stopping at a whipping station. Attached to a large wooden cross shaped in an ‘X’ was a naked woman with her back facing them. Her arms were cuffed at the top and her ankles cuffed at the bottom. A man with a whip snapped at her back, but barely touched her or left any marks.

“Nice snap, Wendell.” Eagan nodded.

“You want to have at it?” Wendell held the handle to Eagan.

Ananda watched Eagan stare at the whip and back away. “No, you go ahead. I’ll do it later.”

“Suit yourself, Eagan. This one has great markings. Look at that skin.” Wendell shook his head, then stopped when his line of vision fell on Ananda. His eyes got wide as he stared at her. “Beautiful skin.” He reached out to touch her. “You must mark up easily.”

Before he could touch her, Eagan stood between them. “I haven’t had that distinct pleasure yet. Maybe if she’s still with me, I’ll bring her back for you to play with.”

Wendell nodded. “Sounds good to me.” He continued whipping the woman when Ananda, Eagan and Sunny walked to another part of the room.

Ananda kept her hands clasped together to keep from covering her mouth in horror when she saw three people in plastic casings hanging from the ceiling.

Eagan leaned down and whispered, “Mummification.”

She nodded.

“There’s a freedom in being bound like that.” He smirked. “So I’ve been told. It’s the same feeling babies have when they’re swaddled. The constriction makes one feel protected.”

In a brightly lit corner of the room sat a woman with her bare back exposed while a man wearing rubber gloves and a mask poked syringe needles through her skin. When he punctured her pale flesh and tapped the skin over the needle, Ananda had to look away. She couldn’t look at her own self get injections. There was no way she could watch other people do it.

“Needle play,” Eagan whispered in her ear.

“Do you do that?” Ananda stared at him instead of looking at the two people.

“Sometimes. Depends on the mood I’m in.”

He took them to another corner where they were doing infusions. A woman inserted a needle into a man's balls and turned on an I.V. to let them fill with the fluid. Eagan tried explaining the reason behind this procedure and what this can do for a person, but Ananda blanked him out.

"Sunny, I want you to watch this and the needle play."

Sunny bowed her head. "Yes, Master Eagan."

"Come with me." Eagan led Ananda to a back room area. "A lot of action happens back here."

Ananda heard moans and heavy breathing the closer she got to the room. Once in the room, she was surprised at a number of things. For one, a woman wearing an apparatus that only covered her mouth but had a ring at her mouth to keep it open was in the center of the room with two men. Both men wore hoods and leather straps over their naked bodies. One man fisted her hair and pumped his cock in and out of her mouth through the hole. The second man held her hips and thrust back and forth behind her.

Ananda turned to Eagan. "And she wants this? This is consensual?"

Eagan nodded. "Yes. All three are owned by the same master." He pointed to an older man sitting in the corner of the room. As he watched the display, he coughed violently, then covered his face with a clear oxygen mask. Guess dominance was more a state of mind than body.

Ananda glanced to the side, she found a naked woman kneeling on the floor with her head between a man's legs, sucking his cock. In another corner, she watched a male submissive jerking a Dom off as the Dom sat in a chair. When the Dom got close, he put his hand to the back of his submissive's head and brought it down to his lap.

That sight, the vision of raw passion and need, stirred a need in Ananda. Her pussy pulsed as she watched the raw, animalistic sex occurring in the room. She tried controlling her breathing, but it was futile. Her heavy breathing matched her pounding heart.

"I see you like this room," Eagan said in her ear.

"How can you tell?" She was sure her breathing gave her away, but she wanted to know if there were other signs readily apparent.

"Your nipples are harder than I've ever seen them." He brushed his fingers over them, igniting the fire that was only smoldering inside of her.

"Please, don't." She tried to say it quiet enough so that no one else heard her. "It's not fair that you won't let us come. If you touch me, I'll want you. And I can't. Not here."

"Actually, if we're going to do anything, this would be the perfect spot." He moved in closer to her. "I want to play with you so badly."

Ananda's knees buckled. If Eagan kept talking that way, he would have to hang her up to keep her vertical. Eagan leaned down, as though wanting to kiss her.

"Master Eagan, there you are," a female voice said, cutting off Ananda's action.

Ananda turned to the location of the voice.

Ophelia. Always there to ruin a good time.

Completely naked, Ananda now saw why Eagan said Ophelia was a lot like Ananda. Their bodies were very similar, although Ananda felt her body was tighter than Ophelia's.

"Have you found your new master?" Eagan asked.

Ananda could tell from the way Eagan flexed his jaw that he wasn't happy.

"No. But an old friend of yours is helping me through this difficult time." Ophelia turned and looked toward a man approaching them.

He looked to be in his mid-to-late fifties, but that was in part due to his physique. The man kept in shape, so he could have been older. He had on slacks and a loose-fitting pullover shirt. He sauntered to the three of them.

"Eagan, how are you?" He held out his hand.

"Very good." Eagan accepted it and nodded. "Begonia, I want you to meet the man who taught me everything there is to know about this lifestyle, Master Dolinsky."

Ananda bowed. "Nice to meet you."

"Very nice, Eagan. Almost as good as Ophelia."

Ananda clenched her jaws at the comment.

"They're both equally good." Eagan defended Ananda.

"If that were the case, why not take Ophelia back? You know you can have more than one submissive."

"Ophelia was disloyal."

Dolinsky put his arm around Eagan's shoulders. "Yes, but she's trained. You know how hard it is to train someone. This one here looks way too green." He nodded his head toward Ananda.

"Begonia improves daily with her submitting skills." Eagan nodded.

If only Ananda believed that about herself.

"Really? Let's put the ladies to a test. Let's get them up on crosses and see who breaks first."

Eagan stared at Ananda. Though he spoke so cocksure before, his eyes held a different story.

"Okay. Let's go." Eagan took Ananda's hand and led her back upstairs to the main house.

In a family room where most of the people were, sat two huge crosses. Not wasting any time, Ophelia got up on one and allowed Dolinsky to cuff her hands and feet. Ananda crept up to her cross and let Eagan strap her in the contraption.

"You can do this. I believe in you," Eagan whispered to her.

As the crowd moved around her, Ananda had to remember his words and his look while up on the cross.

“Which one is not collared?” a woman asked. “I want to play with one of them when they come down.”

Knowing that someone wanted to play with her body kept Ananda in her spot. The feeling of remaining secured in her spot had to deal with her growing love. Though she initially felt awkward with people gawking at her and making comments, she eventually settled into her position, into her role.

The stares from the onlookers became one big blur. Instead of judgment, she felt love, support, admiration. Ananda thought about what it took Eagan to trust her enough to show her off to the man who'd trained him. He trusted her. Eagan could have gone with the shoe-in Sunny and used her for this, but he didn't.

As Ananda thought about Eagan, she felt an overwhelming sense of happiness. Instead of her heart racing like before, when she stood in the back room area, it slowed to a steady beat. Her shoulders relaxed. The weight of her arms pulled her wrists down against the cuffs, but she didn't care. Her mind went to a place Ananda had never gone before, not even during her happiest moments dancing.

She didn't know about Ophelia, but Ananda's body settled and her mind became calm. Ananda closed her eyes and let the euphoric feeling overtake her. Without warning, she felt hands undoing her from the restraints. She opened her eyes in time to catch Eagan sweeping her up into his arms.

“What happened? I didn't make it? Did I disappoint you?” Ananda blinked to regain her vision.

“You went into subspace.” Eagan sat on the couch and pulled her down with him. “I'm so very proud of you.”

Ananda smiled and nodded. Not wanting to have that competitive spirit, but she couldn't help it, Ananda glanced over at the second cross. Ophelia no longer occupied it. Scanning the room, she finally found her by the front door, dressed and ready to leave. Ananda blinked. Just how long had she been up on the cross if Ophelia was already down, dressed and ready to go?

“Wait here. I'll gather the other two and we'll head home. We're still taping a show. I have one person to eliminate.”

After tonight, Ananda knew it wouldn't be her. She watched Eagan talking to Dolinsky across the room. Eagan glanced at her a couple of times then nodded. He disappeared into a room and Master Dolinsky made his way over to Ananda.

“You did do a great job up there,” he said.

“And Ophelia? How is she doing?” Ananda may have not liked what Ophelia did to Eagan, but she would always be respectful of Ophelia as a person.

“She’s fine. Upset that she didn’t go to subspace like you did, but she’ll survive.” Dolinsky put his hand on Ananda’s bare leg.

The touch sent a frigid chill up her spine.

“I talked to Eagan and he gave me the okay to take you to the back room.”

Ananda blinked. “He did?”

Dolinsky peered at Eagan and gave him a thumbs-up sign. Eagan returned the gesture. Ananda blinked again. She knew from what she and Eagan had talked about before that the training master sometimes asked for other Doms’ submissives. Was that what Eagan wanted? He nodded so maybe so.

“Please help me to my feet.”

Dolinsky stood and pulled Ananda up. He slung her arm around his shoulders and he put his arm around her waist. A foot away from the back room entrance, Eagan stopped them.

Glaring at Ananda, he asked, “Where are you going?”

Ananda opened her mouth to explain, but he cut her off.

“Trip is over. Let’s go back home.” He grabbed her arm and pulled her out to the car, naked and all.

Inside of the car was the crew, Meadow and Sunny. While Eagan paced outside of the car, Richard went back inside to look for Venus.

“So what did you see? What did you do?” Ananda and Venus remained tightlipped until Ananda spoke up.

“I don’t think you’ll have to worry about eliminations tonight. Looks like my head will be on the chopping block.” Sucks because she actually thought she did very well tonight.

* * * * *

At home, Eagan paced up and down the length of the four women remaining in the contest.

“Sunny.”

She bit her lower lip.

“You’re staying.”

She let out a long breath.

“Venus, you’re still in the house.”

She bowed. “Thank you.”

“Begonia and Meadow, please step forward.”

Both ladies took tentative steps toward him. They held hands, a touching gesture. Someone still had to go home.

“Meadow, when you failed to get undressed and participate in the party, you failed this challenge. I’ve said this to you before. If you have a problem with this part of the Lifestyle, you will not make it as my submissive.” He turned to Begonia. “Begonia, you blatantly disregarded a direct order to only do as I say. By going off with Master Dolinsky, you disrespected me in front of my peers. That’s more unforgivable than what Meadow did. Therefore, I’m going to have to --”

Begonia’s tears tore at his heart.

She shook her head. “It’s not fair. He told me to go with him. He said you said it was okay.” Begonia caught her breath. “You gave him the thumbs-up sign. I thought that meant it was okay. I didn’t mean to be disrespectful.”

“Master Dolinsky said that I wanted you to go play with him?”

She nodded.

Every muscle in Eagan’s body tightened. He knew his old mentor could be sneaky. Trying to take one of his submissives from behind his back was completely unacceptable and against the protocol for Doms.

“I didn’t approve of you going to the back room with Master Dolinsky. I’m sorry he put you in that position.” Eagan touched her cheek, which calmed her. “And I’m sorry I didn’t trust you.”

Begonia nodded and wiped the tears from her face.

“I’m releasing you, Meadow.” He held up his hand to her.

Meadow unhooked her necklace and put it in his hand. Then she took off her mask. What she unveiled epitomized innocence. Her small features and cherubic facial cheeks gave her a doll-like quality.

“My name is Dorothy. I had a great time and learned a lot about myself and this Lifestyle. I thank you for the opportunity to serve you even if it was for a short period of time.” She kissed his cheek and walked to the front door.

There to greet her was the one man Eagan didn’t want to see right now.

“Hey, boss,” Dris said and set his bags down. “Time to play a game to get everything I wanted and then some.”

Chapter Twenty-Three

Ananda had to blink a few times. Was Dris Markham, the international superstar who was bigger than Tom Cruise in any language, standing in the middle of Eagan's living room? This couldn't be happening.

"What are you doing here in Virginia and in my home?"

The calmness of Eagan's voice surprised her. Ananda knew after Ophelia's surprise visit that Eagan would be ready to snap.

"My agent said you won't return her calls." Dris flashed his trademark megawatt smile.

Whether she wanted to or not, Ananda's heart pounded at the sight. The man was meant to be a superstar.

Eagan lifted his hands to show off the cameras and Ananda and the other two contestants. "I've been a little busy lately. Let's take this conversation to my office. Then you're going to a hotel."

"I don't think so, pal."

Ananda watched Eagan bristle at the nickname. His shoulders hunched around his neck and he stuttered when he walked.

Eagan turned back to the women. "Venus, I'll spend some time with you this evening. I'll have Willow retrieve you in a few minutes."

"Um, Master Eagan, may I be last for my special time with you?" Iona asked.

Ananda stared at her. Was the woman crazy to give up her time with Eagan Morton especially since she was one of the remaining three in the house?

"Why is that, Venus?" he asked from midway up the stairs.

"I want to leave a lasting impression. I'd like to be the last one you see. Please, sir? I know it's not my place to make requests like that." She bowed her head.

“You did get one thing right. However, I’ll oblige this time. Sunny, be ready in about ten minutes.” Eagan continued up the stairs with Dris yapping behind him like a lapdog.

“I can’t believe you gave up private time with Master Eagan,” Sunny whispered as they were led back to the dungeon. “You only get one chance with him. What if you’re the next one eliminated?”

“I know. It’s a chance I’ll have to take.” Iona got on her platform and positioned herself on her side with her back to Ananda and Sunny.

“So what did you do with him the other night?” Sunny asked as she looked herself over in the mirror.

“I gave him a bath.”

That proclamation got Iona and Sunny’s attention. They stared at her in awe.

“So did you have sex with him?” Iona asked.

Ananda shook her head. “No.”

“Yeah, I’m sure he won’t do that until he names a winner, which could be any of the three of us, ladies. Can you believe it?” Sunny hopped around.

“It’s incredible.” Ananda sat on her platform.

“Yeah, especially for you. You practically were in the bottom two almost every week. But you somehow made it. You must have the best damn luck or just left a great impression on the man.”

“Yeah or something.” This time it was Ananda’s turn to lie down on her platform and tune out the other women.

When she started this contest, Ananda never thought she would make it to the final three. Carter had told her from the beginning that she could make it to the end if she wanted. Now that she was there, what was it that she wanted?

When she started the competition her mission was clear. She wanted to get her dancing skills noticed. In her quest to do that though, something changed in her. Eagan changed her. She had to decide. Was this the life she wanted?

* * * * *

Eagan sat behind his desk while Dris stood in front of it. After two polite requests, Dris refused to take a seat. Eagan grew tired of reprimanding a spoiled brat and that’s all Dris Markham was.

“The shooting schedule for *Infinity* is tight, Dris,” Eagan began. “I need you back on set tomorrow.”

“No can do, boss.” Dris shook his head. “I’m spending the night here, maybe longer, to get you to give me what I want.”

“Dris, I need you to be a professional right now and do your job.” Heat bubbled inside Eagan’s stomach and threatened to make its way to the top of his head.

“I’m trying, Eagan. Without those daily massages, I can’t quite remember my lines. Sometimes I need them two and three times a day. And I asked for a simple gemstone facial every day because the California sun is murdering my skin.”

Eagan rose from behind his desk. “You’re acting like a fucking diva instead of an actor. I’m not approving of you getting jerked off, even by a professional, two and three times a day. And you are for damn sure not having diamonds, rubies and sapphires rubbed all over your face to get you into a scene. You’re playing a commander of a spaceship headed to Mars. It’s not Oscar-worthy, but it could be box office gold if you get off your ass and go back to that shoot.”

This time Dris sat down. “No. I’m telling you right now, Morton, if I leave this house, I’m not going back to California, at least not for several weeks. So you can either give into my demands now or lose me. Your choice.”

Eagan seriously thought about grabbing his whip and going to town on this piece of shit. Dris ran his fingers through his dark brown hair that had grown way too long for a spaceship captain.

Eagan called up both Willow and Apple. “Willow, will you go get Sunny and bring her to my bedroom?”

Willow bowed and walked out of the room.

“Apple, escort Mr. Markham to the guesthouse tonight.” Eagan glared at the man. “We’ll finish this discussion in the morning. Right now I have plans.”

Dris launched himself out of the chair and followed the nearly naked woman out of Eagan’s office. Eagan marched in his office to wind down a bit. After only a few minutes with Dris, Eagan wanted to spit nails across the room.

He looked out of his window and watched Apple leading Dris into the guesthouse. Bastard. If Eagan wasn’t so desperate for a hit, he would have bounced the overpaid star on his ass.

No time to think about him now. *Love My Way* was down to the final three contestants. One waited for him now. Eagan went down to his bedroom. Sunny stood in the middle of the room.

It was then he noticed just how alluring she was, even in her mask. Her body he’d noticed before when he’d done the anal plugs. Her blond hair had a silky appearance to it, one that begged him to run his fingers through it or, better yet, have her brush it over his body.

One cameraman filmed their interaction.

“No, no. Just like with Begonia, you all will get footage of this from the cameras overhead.” He nudged the man out of his room and closed the door.

“What would you like for me to do tonight, Master Eagan?” Sunny clasped her hands together in front of her.

Tension wracked his shoulders and neck. As much as he wanted to ease that tension with good old-fashioned sex, he, instead, opted to go for the Dris route.

“I’m a little tense,” he began.

Sunny nodded. “Would you like a handjob, blowjob or your anus licked?”

As much as he didn’t want it to, Eagan’s cock engorged itself with every provocative suggestion she made.

“Or perhaps just sex.” She turned, braced her hands on top of a table and spread her legs apart.

Eagan approached her. With a hand on her hip, he pulled her up and turned her around. “How about just an all over body massage?”

“Oh.”

“Don’t think I don’t want to. For this competition, I can’t.” He thought about his words and rephrased them. “I shouldn’t.”

“Yes, sir. I understand.” She bowed her head.

“Help me get undressed. There’s a massage table already set up in the bathroom.”

Sunny took great care in removing all articles of clothing from Eagan’s body. Eagan watched her folding and hanging up his clothes. With Sunny being an already well-trained submissive, there was a comfort in having all of his needs met with little to no instructions.

Eagan walked into the bathroom with Sunny trailing behind him. As she spread out a white sheet on the raised platform, Eagan noticed his backyard motion light shining. He looked into his backyard, hoping Begonia wasn’t the one who tripped it.

Eagan had to rub his eyes when he saw Venus at the guesthouse door. After waiting a few seconds, she was let inside by Dris. What the hell was going on?

“The oils should be in that cabinet. I have to make one quick phone call.” Eagan closed the bathroom door behind him and called down to Phil. “You have the list of all of the contestants’ real names, right?”

“Nina had it, but I’m sure I can find it. Why?”

“I want you to check up on one of the contestants. Venus. Find out about her past.”

“Ah, interested in that one, huh?”

Eagan could almost see his friend nodding enthusiastically. “Yes, definitely interested in her.”

“I’ll get my people on it and get back with you soon.”

Eagan disconnected the call and went back into the bathroom. Sunny helped him off with his robe and hung it, while he positioned himself face down on the massage table. The

first dollop of cold oil made him jump as soon as it touched his skin. Sunny apologized even though it wasn't necessary, then rubbed the oil into his tense flesh.

"Thank you for putting me in the top three," Sunny said. "I feel really honored."

"You've done an outstanding job since you've been here. I'm very proud of you." And he meant that.

Out of all of the contestants, Sunny was the most consistent and the one who stayed within the rules. Sometimes breaking the rules with Begonia was fun. Just thinking about her and what he wanted to do with her plumped up his penis.

"Turn over, sir. I want to get your legs and chest."

Eagan thought about his current state and hesitated before finally flipping over onto his back. As though she didn't notice his erection, Sunny rubbed oil on his feet and moved her skilled hands up his shins to his thighs. Once she got to his genitals, she aimed to make him truly relaxed.

First, she cupped his balls and massaged them. Eagan turned his head to the side, his eyes closed as he savored the feeling. She coiled her fingers around his shaft and his stomach tensed for a moment before settling back down once her hand started pumping. She kept her fingers tight around him while continuing to massage his sac.

As Sunny pumped faster and faster, Eagan gripped the table and arched his back off the platform. She must have suspected he was close. Sunny covered the bulbous tip with her mouth as she continued stroking him.

Between her warm mouth and firm hand, the sensations proved too much for him. Eagan came hard, squirting his cum in her mouth. Sunny eagerly swallowed every drop. As she pulled back, she licked his tip then kissed it.

"Thank you, Master Eagan. I'm glad I could make you happy."

God, in more ways than one. Eagan didn't think picking the right submissive for him would have been hard. After tonight, Sunny definitely raised the stakes.

What did Eagan want? Did he want someone already trained who could just use a little fine-tuning? Or did he want the woman he would have to train fully but made him feel alive each time they were together?

Damn Phil for coming up with this contest.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Ananda stretched her leg on top of the platform. Even though she wasn't dancing right now she wanted to remain limber. She might be back home, dancing again in auditions if this didn't go her way.

"You think Dris Markham is still here?" Ananda asked the other two women.

"I don't know. I'd like to see him again." Sunny sat up. "He's a lot cuter in person than in the movies."

"You think so?" Iona leaned against her platform.

"Definitely. But shorter than I thought."

The smile melted from Iona's face. "They all can't be Eagan Morton, you know."

"I know that. What's up with you?" Sunny shook her head.

"Nothing. Just tense about this next elimination. It could be any one of us. I don't have a good feeling about my chances. I don't feel like I've made a good enough impression on him."

At that moment, Apple burst through the dungeon door. "Master Eagan would like to see all of you ladies out front. Now!"

The urgency in her voice scared Ananda so much that her heart pounded out of control. They trotted out of the room and took their places in the foyer where the majority of the show was taped. To Ananda's surprise, Dris walked into the room.

"What's going on here?" Dris asked. "Willow said I should come here for some special announcement."

Ananda and the other women remained quiet, waiting to hear if either Willow or Apple had any news. Nothing. The next sounds Ananda heard were heavy stomps coming down the stairs.

Eagan, with a determined, yet angry, expression on his face, stormed his way over to the group.

“What the hell is going on here?” Dris asked again.

“I’ll tell you what’s going on. I’m running a filmed contest here to find my next submissive. You know I’m into the BDSM lifestyle, right?”

Dris hesitated before nodding.

“The only thing I asked from day one is that the woman not be collared already.” Eagan approached Sunny. “Are you currently collared by anyone other than me?”

She emphatically shook her head. “Of course not, Master Eagan. I was released six months ago. I can give you my former Master’s name and number if you like.”

“That’s what I like about you, Sunny. You’re honest. I know with you, I’ll always get the truth.” Eagan went over to Ananda. “I don’t know if I’ll get that from other people.”

Ananda took a step back. Did he think she was collared? Or worse yet, had he found out about her real reason for coming onto the show?

“Begonia, tell me the truth.”

Ananda swallowed hard. She was willing to tell him about the dancing, but not until later, much later.

“Are you now or have you ever been collared by someone other than me?”

She exhaled. “No, sir. I’m new to all of this. Remember, from day one of the show I had trouble answering your question about being collared.”

Eagan snapped his fingers in a dramatic way. “That’s right. You had problems answering that question. Thanks for the reminder.” He stepped over to Iona. “That leaves you. So tell me, Venus, have you ever been collared by anyone?”

Venus scanned the room. More than once her gaze settled on Dris Markham. The guy was just an actor. What would he care about this show or this Lifestyle anyway?

“Um --”

“Answer the question, Venus.” Eagan put his hands to his hips. His jaw flexed while waiting for her answer.

“Yes,” she finally said in a whisper.

“Did you say yes?” Eagan pressed.

Iona nodded.

“As a matter of fact, you’ve done a lot of shows like this. *Hunky Bachelor*, *The Dating Life*, *Three for the Road* and now my show. I watched your old tapes. You won each of them. Of course, in every one of them you professed true love. Is that the way you would be with me, Venus? Tell me you love me and are devoted to me and leave me?”

She shook her head. “N-n-no, Master Eagan.”

“No, don’t call me Master Eagan. Especially not when you’re collared by someone else now.” He grabbed her shoulders and spun her around. Eagan removed her necklace and told her to hold her hair up to show off the back of her neck, exposing her green tattoo that looked like a Chinese symbol. “I thought that tattoo looked odd, yet familiar.” He thudded over to Dris who, remarkably, stood his ground. Eagan grabbed the man’s arm and raised it.

“What the hell are you doing? Get the fuck off of me!” Dris tried pulling his arm back, but to no avail.

Eagan shoved Dris’s shirtsleeve up and showed off a similar tattoo on his wrist. “I found out what that symbol means. ‘D Owned’ as in ‘Dris owned,’ right?”

Dris yanked his arm back. He glanced over at Iona, then back at Eagan. He chuckled. “It only took you, what, nine or ten weeks to figure this all out.” Dris adjusted his collar, then turned to Iona. “Put your hair down and come to me.”

Iona lowered her hair and walked toward Dris without looking back at the other women or even at Eagan.

“And take off that silly mask. It’s a crime to cover that beautiful face.”

Iona removed her mask and let it fall to the floor as she made her way to her true master. “I’ve missed you, Master D.”

“Nothing I like more than to see men and women admiring my property.” He glared at Eagan. “I entered her in every one of those reality shows. I want the world to want her, but know they can’t have her. Look at her. She’s gorgeous.” Dris palmed her breast and kissed her roughly, ending it by biting her lip. He faced Eagan. “My plan was to top you at every angle. I had you jumping through hoops at the set. Then here, Iona was supposed to keep you on your toes. We had you.”

“Operative word being ‘had.’” Eagan crushed Iona’s necklace in his hand. He turned to her. “You’re released. Get the hell out of my house.” Then he focused on Dris. “And Dris.”

“What?”

In a blink, Eagan punched the smug actor in the face, sending him careening to the floor. “You’re fired. Your shit is already packed in a box and waiting outside the studio. Hope you get back to California in time to pick it up outside the studio gates before someone else gets to it like a rabid fan. I’m sure they’ll be excited to see your address book and palm pilot.”

“You son-of-a-bitch.” Dris lifted himself off the floor with Iona’s help. “You can’t hit me. I’ll fucking sue your ass. If you cracked any of my teeth, I’ll --”

“Good. With the money you’ll lose from not doing this movie, I’m sure you’ll want to have a full-on knock down, drag out court case that will tap you dry. No one tops me. No one. Get out of my house.”

Dris clutched Iona as they stumbled out of Eagan’s house. Richard tossed their bags out behind them then slammed the door.

“That was show gold, Eagan.” Phil hopped around like a toy poodle. “Care to watch the punch that will soon be seen around the world?”

“No.” Eagan stormed out of the room.

“What do we do now?” Sunny asked.

Phil and the crew glanced around at each other. Ananda felt the pull from Eagan to comfort him. She walked to where she suspected he would be, in his dance studio. A hard grab around her arm stopped her.

“It’s best if you leave Master Eagan alone,” Willow said as she held onto Ananda’s forearm.

“Thanks for the advice.” But Ananda felt she knew what he needed.

She scurried back to the dungeon. It would be odd to have just the two of them in this huge, daunting room. Ananda would have to get used to the idea. She could be the one person left in this contest and be in this room several times.

Walking around the room, Ananda scanned the whips, canes, and paddles that lined the wall. “Come on. Where is it?” She touched each whip trying to remember the one that Eagan had showed them from the first day. She knew that it held some special significance for him.

“There!” She found the whip hanging in a darkened corner. With one hard tug, she yanked it down and ran down the hallway.

“Hey! Where are you going with that?” Willow called after her. “You can’t go in there.”

Ananda ignored her. If she was going to leave this contest, it would be because she bucked the system. Standing outside of the studio door, Ananda put her ear to it to hear music. She heard nothing, not even him walking around.

Ananda cracked the door open and peered inside. She found Eagan looking out of the window at the bay behind his house.

Taking small steps toward him, she said, “I know these last couple of days have really tested you.”

Eagan turned to her. His gaze dropped down to the whip in her hand then back up to her face.

“I’m sensing you need some type of relief.” Ananda held up the whip.

Eagan didn’t move toward it. He stared at the object and swallowed.

“Master Eagan?”

“I doubted her,” he finally said.

“Sir?”

“I doubted her and it made me doubt myself.” He carefully took the whip from her hand. “The moment I suspected her feelings weren’t genuine, I fell off my game.” He

bounced the whip in his hand. "That's how I made the mistake and struck her where I shouldn't have."

Ananda put her hand over his that held the whip. His gaze connected to hers.

"I trust you." She smiled as a way to reassure him of her statement. "I trust you, Master Eagan."

Ananda placed her hands against Eagan's piano and waited. He walked next to her and stopped. His fingers cascaded down her back, leaving a trail of sensitized nerves in their wake. She curved her back, enjoying his touch. When he kissed her shoulder, she gasped at the connection. He left the spot heated and raw.

A creak sounded in the room. In the reflection in the window, Ananda saw Phil and Apple enter the room.

"Willow said she tried stopping her, Master Eagan," Apple proclaimed.

"If you're going to whip her, I need to get the cameras in here now," Phil said.

"Get out." Eagan's voice rumbled.

When neither one said anything or made a move to leave, Eagan spoke again.

"Get out, now."

Both left closing the door behind themselves. Ananda closed her eyes and braced her body for the contact. She said she trusted Eagan. She had to believe it, feel it. He wouldn't hurt her. He would never hurt her.

Ananda heard the whip hit the floor then she heard Eagan snapping it beside her as though testing his technique.

Remember, you trust him. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid.

After a few seconds, the sound of the crack of the whip matched the slight sting she felt on her shoulder blade. Ananda jumped, but got composed very quickly. He'd done it. He'd touched her and not hurt her.

"How did that feel?" he asked.

"Good. Oh so good." Ananda glanced over her shoulder and found him nodding. She turned back around and waited.

The next slight sting came and another and another. He hit different areas of her back, never the same spot, and never a full on hit. When Eagan said he only touched people with the tip of the whip, he meant that.

With each contact, Ananda's body reacted in a foreign way. Her nipples hardened when the tail of it nipped her shoulders and upper back. Her stomach tightened in a ball when he connected to her lower back. Making slight pops on her ass caused a slow drip between her legs.

She got up on her toes for a couple of hits that made her pussy pulsate. At the last hit, Ananda nearly collapsed in pleasure. She slumped over on the piano and panted.

“Oh, my God,” she began. “I never thought I would feel this way after something like that.”

Ananda felt a presence next to her. She turned her head and found Eagan. A wild expression filled his eyes as he stared at her.

“I knew you could do it.” Ananda reached up to hug him.

Eagan backed away. When he did, her heart dropped to the floor. How could he have turned her away after giving her the most exquisite pleasure that she’d ever felt?

“Thank you for bringing me my whip.” He gripped the coiled whip. “You can go back to the dungeon now.”

What? That was it? Ananda had just opened herself up to this man and he was going to send her back out to the dungeon like they just didn’t share something special, something great?

“I feel ... different.” Ananda didn’t know how to explain it. Her skin tingled all over. If anyone touched her, she would melt.

Although she didn’t feel close to an orgasm, it wouldn’t have been hard to get her there at this point. She needed human connection, but Eagan refused to give it to her.

“Are you in pain?” he asked, the only time he showed any form of comfort.

She shook her head.

“You’ll be fine.”

Not wanting to stand there with him for much longer, Ananda darted from the dance studio as quickly as her wobbly legs would carry her. She stumbled into the dungeon and crashed onto her platform. Although Ananda hugged her body tightly, she felt empty.

“You okay?” Sunny asked.

Ananda shook her head.

“What did he do to you?” Sunny stroked Ananda’s hair as she stood next to the platform.

“He whipped me.” Just saying the word brought back memories of being whipped again. She trembled.

“Oh, God! Did he hurt you?” Sunny crawl onto the platform and examined her back. “I only see a few red marks, no broken skin.”

“It felt g-g-good.” Ananda drew her knees up to her chest.

“Didn’t he hold you afterward?”

Ananda shook her head.

“Oh, no.” Sunny wrapped her arm around Ananda’s waist and pressed her naked body against Ananda’s. “Aftercare is just as important as the play itself. I can’t believe he didn’t touch your skin like this to soothe you.” Sunny trailed her fingertips over Ananda’s sensitive back. “Feel better?”

Not willing to trust her vocal chords to respond coherently, Ananda nodded.

Ananda felt Sunny press her lips against Ananda's shoulder in the same spot Eagan had kissed only she didn't stop. Sunny kissed between Ananda's shoulder blades, down her back and to her ass.

"No," Ananda said weakly.

"Just relax. Enjoy the feeling." Sunny massaged one of Ananda's ass cheeks as she kissed and licked the other.

With a nudge, Sunny rolled Ananda onto her stomach. Then Sunny spread Ananda's legs wide open. Ananda was powerless to do anything. She needed to feel. She wanted to feel. Sunny was only too happy to oblige.

Sunny planted small kisses over Ananda's body, down her legs, to the sensitive areas behind Ananda's knees to her calves and feet. The seductive trek back up her body was just as tantalizing. When Sunny positioned her head between Ananda's legs, Ananda fought to close them.

"Don't move. I want to do this and I know you want this, too." Sunny parted Ananda's pussy lips with her fingers. "Wow! You're really wet?"

Sunny took a long swipe with her tongue over Ananda's pussy that nearly sprang her off the platform. To feel a woman's tongue in her pussy felt odd to Ananda. The petite size of it made it perfect for licking each of Ananda's labia lips. Then she used it to dart in and out of Ananda's pussy.

As much as Ananda had fought this treatment, she loved it. Her body craved Sunny's touch. Ananda's stomach compressed into a ball.

"You have to stop. I'm going to come and we're not allowed." Ananda squirmed up but Sunny pulled her back and held onto her thighs.

"I won't tell if you don't." Sunny kept licking and probing her tongue inside of Ananda until she broke.

"Oh, God! Yes!" Ananda gripped the platform to ground herself while her body soared. She felt Sunny moving over her body.

Sunny turned Ananda onto her side to face her. "Whatever happens in the last show, I will miss you." She planted a sweet kiss onto Ananda's lips.

Ananda tasted her salty juices on Sunny's lips and pressed hers harder against the woman's mouth. As odd as it seemed, Ananda would miss Sunny, too.

Ananda wrapped her arms around her opponent, feeling the comfort there that she wished she would have gotten from Eagan. Maybe he didn't want her as much as she thought. Suspecting that, she let the tears flow down her cheek. Bastard.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Eagan replayed the scene he saw between Begonia and Sunny in his mind again as he sat in his office. He'd gone to the dungeon to return the whip he'd used on Begonia when he heard them. Instead of barging in and stopping them, he watched from the two-way mirror.

How beautiful the two looked with their bodies intertwined, Sunny with her pale, smooth skin and Begonia with her radiant golden tone. The only thing that could have made it better would be if he were in the room to orchestrate, watch, join in.

He should have barged in and stopped them. The rules clearly stated that no contestant could have an orgasm without his expressed permission. He couldn't blame Begonia. He'd given her a short, but great, session with the whip. Eagan should have held her and given her the proper aftercare that she needed. Instead, he sent her away, afraid to get too close.

Aspen appeared in his office doorway. "Ready for the taping, Master Eagan?"

He stood. Aspen immediately rushed to him and straightened out his shirt and jacket. She brushed him down as though the man had just rolled in a pile of hair.

"I'll be down in a minute. I have a couple of calls to make."

Aspen nodded. "I'll let Willow and Apple know." She stepped out of the room.

Phil had been bugging Eagan for weeks to do something about the *High Stepper* show. Cast it or can it. Eagan glanced through eight-by-ten glossy headshots of some of the dancers. He found the picture for Ananda Zelder, the one he'd turned away. He stared at her, the way she smiled the loveliness of her long neck, her graceful demeanor.

Not hesitating, Eagan picked up his phone and dialed the number on the resumé. If she didn't hang up in his ear, she hoped she would hear him out and give him, and the show, a second chance.

"Hello."

The male voice made Eagan pause. Brother? Boyfriend? Husband?

“Y’all better talk or I’m going to hang up.”

Gay best friend. Of course.

“I’m looking for Ananda Zelder,” Eagan said.

“She’s not here. She’s doing a show.” The person on the other end popped gum and it sounded through the phone.

Eagan bristled at each snap. “Will she be in the show for very long?” If it was Broadway, she could be dancing there forever and a day.

“Depends on if she wins.”

Eagan furrowed his eyebrows at the statement.

“I can take a message. If I hear from her I’ll tell her to call you.”

“Fine. Let her know this is Eagan Morton. She auditioned for one of my shows called *High Stepper*. I’m interested in getting her onto the show.”

The other end of the line went silent.

“Hello?” Eagan hoped he hadn’t said all of that for no reason.

“Oh, uh, yeah. I’ll tell her. Eagan. Stepper. Oh, boy.”

“Great. Here’s my assistant’s phone number. Have her call him for further instructions.” Eagan disconnected the call. Without waiting a beat, he called Ophelia at her hotel.

“Eagan?” she said without even hearing his voice or saying hello.

“We need to talk. I have something to do for the next few days. I’ll get up with you when I’m available.”

“Yes. Yes, sir. I can’t wait to see you again.”

He disconnected that call. Gripping the receiver, his finger hovered over the speed dial button to reach his mother. He shook his head. No, he wasn’t ready yet. This call would have to wait. He had something important to do right now.

Eagan headed down the stairs and watched Phil running up them to greet him.

“Are you sure you want to do this? It may blow up in your face.” Phil scratched his head.

“This is their last test. They have to do this.” It would be the only way Eagan would know if they wanted to be with him.

He stood in his same spot and stared at the naked women.

“Hi, Master Eagan.” Begonia and Sunny’s voices blended in perfect harmony.

“Good morning. Congratulations for making it as the final two. You two have worked very hard to get to this spot. I’m sure you’re anxious to find out who I plan on picking to be my next submissive. Before I do that, I have one more test.”

Begonia and Sunny glanced at each other then brought their attention back to Eagan.

“Pack your bags. You’re going home.”

Sunny’s mouth hung open so wide she could trap water buffalo. Begonia’s smile oozed down her face.

“You’re not picking either one of us?” Sunny asked.

“That’s not what I said. I want you two to go home for a few days. I want you to be around your family and friends with your collar and mask. I need to see that you want this Lifestyle with me outside of this house. It’s easy to want to do it in the confines of these walls. But how you are on the outside will tell me a lot.” He turned to Sunny. “I know you’re a part of this Lifestyle already, so this will be no problem for you.” He turned to Begonia. “I’m concerned about you. The next few days are going to be hard. You think you can handle it?”

Begonia chewed her lower lip, then nodded.

“Good because I’ll be going with you two. Sunny, I’ll go home with you first and be with you for a couple of days.” Then he turned to Begonia. “Then, I’ll meet up with you at your home. Get dressed and ready to leave in about an hour. I have transportation arrangements already made.”

The ladies scampered off to get ready. Eagan turned to go back upstairs.

“Good going, Sherlock. What if this blows up in your face?” Phil asked as he followed Eagan.

“Whoever pops the loudest loses,” he answered simply.

“What if it blows up for both of them?”

“Then I’ll go back to the old fashioned way to find my submissive. I just need to know that they want this as much as they say. Nothing can break a person faster than family.”

“You got that right.” Phil rubbed the back of his neck.

Eagan understood that all as well, too. With this test, he hoped he was doing the right thing. Especially with Begonia.

* * * * *

Thankfully, Sunny was a part of the Washington D.C. crowd, so a three-and-a-half hour road trip in the limo was all that was needed to get her home. After a couple of days with her, Eagan would head back down to North Carolina to be with Begonia. It would be interesting to see how both situations played themselves out.

Holding his cell phone to his ear, Eagan listened to a radio station producer rattling off information he thought Eagan would need to do a quick radio interview.

“Gilbert Glump will talk to you about your show and your final two contestants,” the producer said.

"I gathered that." Eagan finished off a bottle of cool water and set it in a cup holder.

Although the trip had just started, he was already feeling tense. Sunny sat in the seat opposite him and a cameraman sat away from them, filming the action. In her short baby doll dress and sandals, she was dressed comfortably, but looked like she was in pain.

After covering the mouthpiece on his phone, Eagan said, "Are you okay?"

Sunny shook her head. Tugging at her dress collar, she said, "Too many clothes."

The sleek twenty-passenger limousine cruised onto the interstate. Eagan made sure to close the partition between the driver and the back area.

"Take off your clothes."

Sunny beamed and wasted no time in stripping off her dress and kicking off her shoes. Of course, she wore nothing underneath.

"You'll be on in about one minute," the producer said.

Eagan kept his attention squarely on the naked woman sitting with him. The comfort she had with her nudity and with serving him calmed him. He knew the type of DJ Gilbert Glump was. He raised the bar on the shockjock level. Sitting with Sunny, he had no worries.

"May I make you comfortable, sir?" Without waiting for his answer, she crawled across the floor. The car took a hard turn causing Sunny to wobble a bit, but she made it to Eagan.

Eagan stared at her while she took off his shoes and socks. She placed one foot on her lap and massaged it.

"Today, we have a very popular and controversial figure in the news," Gilbert proclaimed in his annoying whiny voice. "Give it up, folks, for Eagan Morton." Canned applause followed the introduction. "Great of you to join us this morning, Eagan."

Eagan smiled as Sunny ground her thumbs along the underside of his foot, turning his bones into mush. "Likewise."

"So tell our listeners what's up. You've got the hit show, *Love My Way* going on right now. By the way, I'm loving the show."

"Thanks, Gilbert. I wasn't sure about the response, but now that I'm down to the final two, I'm happy with the whole outcome."

Sunny picked up Eagan's other foot and gave him the same deep massage. He needed to do all interviews this way.

"By the way, are the rumors true? Did you really punch out Dris Markham? Tell me you knocked some of those big, fake teeth out of his head."

Eagan chuckled. Although the episode hadn't aired yet, one of the crewmembers taped the incident on his cell phone and posted it on You Tube. No use denying it. The proof was on the Tube.

"There was a heated moment and tempers flared. I can tell you that to my knowledge, no dental work was needed. But I guess I'll see what the court papers will say."

The DJ laughed and so did Sunny. She set his other foot down and crawled between his legs. As soon as she touched his cock through his pants, he grabbed her hand and shook his head. As much as he wanted her to give him a wonderful “happy ending,” he had a job to do right now.

“When you started the show a couple of months ago, did you think that the two women you have now would be the two to be in the final? I mean, who do you have? Sunny and Begonia? Is that right?”

“Yes, the final two are Sunny and Begonia. As a matter of fact, in the next episode you’ll see me with them and their families. I’m in the limo right now heading to Sunny’s home.”

Sunny rested her chin on his knee and gazed at him lovingly. He couldn’t help but to stroke the side of her face.

“Really? Can’t wait to see that. Do you want to talk about the controversy around you picking between a white contestant and a black one? What do you think about that? Does it bother you or do you ignore it all?”

“It bothers me that in this day and age, I’m asked to pick someone to make the world comfortable. That’s not my thing. If I end up choosing Begonia, it’ll be because she’s earned the spot, we feel a connection, and it’s what we both want.”

Sunny sulked back from Eagan at that statement, making him pat the space next to him for her to sit by him. She crawled on the seat and faced him.

“I’ll choose Sunny for that same reason. I don’t see color when I look at these women. I look at their desire and heart.”

“But come on. Be honest. You’re going to pick Sunny, aren’t you? I mean, she’s never been in your bottom two. I think she’s won the most challenges. And she’s got a killer body. I can’t wait to see what’s under her mask.”

Truth be told, neither could Eagan. A part of him wanted her to take the mask off right now.

“I can’t say that Sunny is going to win.” He glanced at her. “To be very honest, it’s a tight race. Begonia started off rough, but she’s really shown a lot of promise. You all will know who I pick when the live show airs in a couple of weeks.”

“Oh! Look at who we have on the phone with us now. It’s feminist attorney, Judith McCLOWAN. What would you like to say to Eagan Morton?”

Eagan rolled his eyes. He hoped beyond hope that this was a radio bit. But he had a feeling that the real Judith McCLOWAN was on the phone ready to tear him a new one. Seemed like she made him her personal whipping boy in the press since he started his show.

“Thank you, Gilbert.”

Nope. Not a bit. It was the real deal.

“Mr. Morton, I just want to say how your lifestyle and behavior have turned the feminist movement back over one hundred years.”

“Gilbert, will you call Guinness for me? Within the last two months, I’ve managed to turn back time in regards to slavery and women’s rights.”

A laugh track played after his retort.

“Judith, I’ve done nothing to demean these women or myself. This is a chosen lifestyle. None of these women were coerced into coming on the show or even paid to do it. It’s a contest like any other. So instead of paying attention to my life, why don’t you go out and get one of your own?”

Hoots and whistles followed his statement.

“You’re promoting violence against women.”

“Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! How are you figuring that? I haven’t caned or whipped anyone who said they didn’t want it. Go back to the infamous caning episode. Both Poppy and Daisy refused to do the caning and I didn’t force them. Safe, sane, and consensual. I live by that, Judith. If anything, I’m bringing to the forefront a lifestyle that, quite frankly, is misunderstood and misrepresented in the media. Spend your time and energy going after pedophiles. Help stop hate crimes and gay bashing. Be an advocate for young girls wanting to get into science or the arts. But, for God’s sake, stop coming after me like I’m the Antichrist. I’m with reasonable thinking adults and I’m trained very well in what I do. If you don’t like my show, watch something else.”

“It’s not that simple, Mr. Morton.”

“It isn’t? Why is that, Judith? Is that because deep down you enjoy what you’re seeing?”

Eagan heard her sputtering. “W-w-why, no. That’s ridiculous.”

“Tell me how your body reacted when you watched the caning show? Did your nipples get hard?”

“Mr. Morton, please.” Indignation may have been the undercurrent of Judith’s statement, but Eagan could hear curiosity in her voice as well.

“Yeah, man,” Glump began. “This is a morning show. Little kiddies may be listening. Now talk about Judith’s nipples again.”

“I know exactly what you need, Judith.” Eagan stroked Sunny’s smooth thigh.

“Oh yes? And what would that be?”

“Your uptight, uh, self needs a little anal play. I have various shaped anal plugs that I could use on you. Open you right up.”

A click sounded. Eagan smiled at his small victory.

“Uh, Ms. McClowan? Hello?” Glump played a laugh track. “Guess we got disconnected. You know how unreliable those attorney’s phone lines are.”

“Thanks for the interview, Gilbert. Watch my show every Saturday night at eleven on Cine-tastic.” Eagan disconnected the call.

“Bad interview?” Sunny asked.

Eagan shook his head. “Good interview. Bad woman.” Eagan reached down by his feet and picked up a black bag. “Tell me, Sunny, do you feel like I’m holding you here against your will?” He unzipped the bag and pulled out a battery-operated neck massager that he certainly didn’t use in that manner.

Sunny licked her lips before answering. “No. I’m here of my own free will. I want to be with you.”

Eagan covered the round head with a latex covering. “Lay across my lap on your back.”

Sunny crawled over his lap, her ass in the air. Then she rolled onto her back, her head resting on his thigh and the small of her back on his other thigh. As soon as he clicked on the device, Sunny’s nipples got so hard, they looked freakishly large. Eagan should have put a towel under her, but the moment hit him to play with her now.

“Don’t forget. You can’t come.”

Sunny nodded. The feat seemed easier agreed upon than done. As soon as Eagan pressed the vibrating head to her clit, Sunny’s body arched off of his lap. To hold her steady and arouse her more, Eagan massaged her breast as he continued his assault on her pussy.

“You want me to stop?” he asked.

Sunny’s eyes were closed. She gritted her teeth and balled her hands into fists, which she occasionally used to hit his shoulder and arm.

“N-n-no, sir.”

Sunny braced one foot on the floor of the limo. The other draped across the back of the seat. Eagan twirled his wrist around to maximize her pleasure. Hearing her moan and cry accelerated his pulse. Judith McCowan had his lifestyle all wrong. If she could watch this, then she wouldn’t criticize him. BDSM was more about sensations than pain.

“Please! Please! No more! I want to come. Master Eagan, please let me come.”

As quickly as the fun started, Eagan stopped. He set the device down and stroked his hand down her body, between her breasts and to her pussy.

“I’m going to do that to you every thirty minutes. Each time you can’t come, understand?”

“Oh God! I won’t make it to D.C. You’re going to kill me by then.”

Eagan laughed. He had a feeling this would be a fun trip. He hoped going home with Begonia would be this way also. Something inside of him told him it wouldn’t.

* * * * *

Ananda stared deep into Eagan's eyes as he held onto her shoulders. It felt odd standing in her childhood bedroom with the biggest producer in Hollywood today. Right now, he wasn't that man. Today, he was the man she truly wanted to build a future with. Staring into his eyes, though, didn't help to calm her raging heartbeat.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

Ananda broke her gaze for a moment to glance outside the door where her family and friends were. Then she returned her attention to Eagan.

"Honestly? I don't know." She fidgeted in her spot. "I'm scared."

Eagan nodded. "It's a scary thing what you're doing. You're coming out to your family and friends that you want to be a part of this Lifestyle. You want to be my submissive." He moved in closer to her. "Is that what you truly want, Begonia?"

"At a time like this, I wish you would call me by my real name." She wrung her hands.

Eagan stroked her cheek and chin. His touch soothed her, if only for a moment. "I want that, too, but --" He peered up at the looming cameras. "-- it would be against the rules."

"Where's that gal at?" Ananda heard her mother exclaim.

Ananda struggled to catch her breath as sweat poured from her face. The mask never felt as hot as it did today.

"I have to go and help make dinner." She took his hand and led him out of the bedroom, but quickly broke the grasp as soon as they hit the dining room. The majority of her family members gathered in the living room and they hadn't seen her in the mask yet. "Make yourself at home," she said to Eagan. "I'll be in the kitchen."

Without waiting for a response from Eagan, Ananda disappeared into the kitchen. She felt as though she were being watched. Turning to the side, she caught Darnell leaning on the counter.

"I still can't get used to you looking all freaky." Darnell shook his head.

"It's just a mask." Ananda lowered the heat to the boiling pasta. "And don't talk too loud. Eagan Morton is right in the other room. I'm sure he can hear you."

"I don't care about him." Darnell sashayed to Ananda. "And that phat ass necklace. Don't forget that." Darnell attempted to touch it, but Ananda swatted his hand away.

"I've worn this for so long it's become a part of me." Plus, at this point, the collar started to have a new meaning for her. It was no longer an act for her. Being submissive to Eagan felt good.

"Touchy." Darnell screwed up his lips, then turned to the camera. "She wasn't this sensitive about jewelry before she left. Then again, there were a lot of things she wasn't into before she left."

"Such as?" the female cameraperson asked.

Ananda hoped Darnell caught her giving him the “look of death.” She squinted her eyes at him needing him to keep his mouth closed for a change about what she wanted to do in this competition before she got to the show. Things changed. People changed.

“I’ve been watching the show.” Darnell picked at his manicured fingernails. “I can’t believe she licked that girl’s titty. Girl, I didn’t know you swung that way.” He playfully slapped her arm.

“Shh!” Ananda caught her mother walking into the kitchen.

“Don’t hush up because I’m here.” Her mother stared at her in the mask and shook her head. “It’s like Halloween in this house.” She reached for the mask. “Take this off.”

Ananda jerked back. “No. I need to wear it for the show I’m on.” She nodded toward the camera. “She’s filming me. And that’s why Eagan Morton is here.”

Ananda turned off the stove and drained the spaghetti noodles.

“You are not wearing this to the dinner table. I have Reverend Bailey coming to dinner tonight.”

Ananda swallowed. This was a man who had seen her since she was a baby. He’d watched her grow up and knew she had dreams of becoming a dancer. What would happen if he and her mother knew what she was doing now? Her hands shook as she poured the noodles into a bowl.

“Reverend Bailey will be here? Can’t wait to see him again,” she lied. “And Mama, don’t forget that you can’t call me by my name here.”

Her mother screwed up her face.

“Another part of the show I’m on.”

“I definitely don’t like that. I chose your name and I’m going to call you that.” Her mother put her fist to her hip. Not a good sign.

Ananda bounded into the empty dining room, catching Eagan talking with Ananda’s cousins. He gave her a knowing wink before resuming his conversation. Somehow that little acknowledgement took away some of her fears about confronting her mother. She set the bowl on the table, then went back in to get the bowl of sauce and warmed crusty bread.

“You’re not meeting the reverend in that thing. And where did you get this necklace? Looks expensive.” Just like Darnell, she attempted to touch it, causing Ananda to recoil.

“Mast --” She stopped herself from calling him Master Eagan in front of her mother. “He gave it to me. I’m sure it is expensive. It’s a part of the show, too.” Ananda returned to the kitchen to get drinks. Where was that big bottle of red wine that her mother kept for special occasions?

“Yeah, sometimes that mask and collar are all Begonia needs for the show.” Darnell snickered.

“Who’s Begonia? What does he mean by that?”

Ananda felt her mother's curiosity and anger building. "You know Darnell. He's just being funny."

"I'm not laughing."

Ananda heard her aunts, uncles, and cousins filtering into the dining room. Out of all of the tests Eagan put them through, this, by far, had to be the toughest. Why did he have to send her home and with him? It was bad enough she had to face her family with this new lifestyle. Did Eagan have to watch?

"We're about to eat dinner. Take off that mask. And if that necklace is stolen or a part of something I won't approve, I want that off also. Be respectful in my home." Her mother wagged her finger in Ananda's face. "Your grandmother would turn over in her grave if she knew you were doing something morally corrupt. We raised you better than that. Now we let you go off and do your little dancing stuff."

Ananda really wanted her mother to shut up now. Her face burned from embarrassment.

"Yes, and I thank you, Mother. Can we just go eat now and we can talk about what I'm doing later?" Ananda walked out to the dining room table again.

All conversation stopped as soon as they saw her.

"It's for a show I'm doing," she said, pointing to the mask and necklace then nodding toward Eagan. "Does everyone know Eagan Morton?" Ananda, as though she wasn't wearing a mask, introduced her family to him.

A couple of them nodded, but the rest, just like her mother, stared at her with quizzical expressions. She sat next to Eagan and released a ragged breath. The night had to be over soon.

"Shall we pray?" Ananda reached for Darnell and Eagan's hands.

Ananda's mother had other plans. She grabbed Ananda's hand. "What did I tell you about that thing? Not at my table. Take it off now and come sit back down here like the respectable lady that I raised you to be. I'm not going to tell you again."

Ananda glanced around the table, purposely avoiding looking at Eagan. He wouldn't understand. With her strict upbringing and the hold her mother had over her, Ananda felt powerless. Her gaze settled on her best friend. She hoped now that he caught her "help me" expression. He must have. Darnell shrugged his shoulders.

"Sorry, bunny. You're on your own." Darnell kept his voice down.

"Excuse me." Ananda stood.

"Are you sure this is what you want to do?" Eagan asked.

Ananda couldn't avoid him now. Under the harsh stares from her family and friends, she felt she had no other choice.

"I'm sorry." She headed to her old bedroom with the camera crew right behind her.

“Are you taking off the mask and collar?” the camerawoman asked.

“If I plan on being in this house, I have to.”

“It’s about time you came to your senses.” Ananda’s mother nodded, as though she’d won this battle.

Once in her bedroom, Ananda reached for the mask and stopped. Her hands felt cold and clammy just touching the thing, which had become a significant part of her. Her stomach heaved at the idea of removing it.

She decided that maybe she should start with the necklace first. And if she only thought of it as a necklace, then her body wouldn’t react in the way that it was. As soon as she touched the clasp behind her neck, Ananda’s stomach froze then reversed all systems.

Ananda pushed her way passed the crew, nearly knocking the woman to the floor to get to the bathroom. She purged her guts into the commode. What was happening to her? She couldn’t remove these items.

Ananda wiped her mouth and washed her hands. Raising her head, she stared at her reflection in the mirror. She’d been in the mask and collar so long they felt natural. What felt odd to her was taking them off, when Eagan didn’t tell her she could.

It hit her then that her overwhelming need to please Eagan and to respect the Lifestyle overruled her need to please her mother and fall back into what society thought was normal. This was her life. She had one shot at being happy. Although she tried denying it before, there was no way she could say that she didn’t want this, want Eagan, want to be his submissive.

“Gal, get in here. We’re all waiting for you,” her mother called from the dining room.

Ananda returned to her bedroom. For what she was about to do, about to admit, her mother would surely send her packing. Ananda packed her belongings back into her suitcases and grabbed them and her purse. She returned to the dining room area and set her bags down.

“You’re still wearing that thing,” her mother said.

“I’m not taking it off or my collar.” Ananda touched the pearl necklace.

“Did she just say collar?” her Aunt Bernice asked.

Again, all activity at the table stopped. Ananda stared at Eagan whose expression was hard to read. Was he proud of her? Upset? Confused?

“And call me Begonia.” She took a deep breath. “For the last few weeks, Mother, I’ve been a part of a show called *Love My Way*.”

“Is that like one of them dating shows?” her cousin Verna asked. She looked pointedly at Eagan.

Darnell made it obvious that what Ananda was about to admit was very heavy. He covered his mouth and his eyes were as big as the bowls on the table.

“Kind of.” Ananda cleared her throat. “Eagan Morton is a bachelor.” That was the truth. “And I’m one of the top two contestants. I could win this and be with this man.” She pointed to him.

He let a smile peek through.

A few of them at the table nodded. Ananda needed to tell them the full truth.

“And I would serve him in the manner he would like.”

The heads stopped moving. All stares were on her.

“Serve? Is he a man of the cloth?” Ananda’s mother glanced at the reverend first, before returning her gaze to Ananda.

“No, Mother. He’s into a lifestyle I’m sure you never heard of: BDSM.”

Verna gasped. Darnell fanned his face. The hell that was about to break loose was cracking right now.

“And what does all of that mean?” her mother asked.

“He spans you?” Ananda’s younger cousin Troy asked.

“Sometimes,” Eagan finally said. “It depends.”

“What are you into right now?” Her mother stood from the table.

“Bondage Discipline Sadomasochism. Eagan,” she stopped and cleared her throat, “Master Eagan is a Dominant. I’m looking to be his submissive. The other contestants and I have been wearing these masks so that our looks don’t affect his decision. The collars represent our devotion to him because he owns us while we’re on the show.” The more she admitted, the freer she felt, although the more Ananda said, the more horrified her family and friends looked.

Her mother covered her mouth in shock.

Ananda kept going. “We bow to him in the mornings. We kneel by our chairs before eating.” To punctuate the fact, Ananda knelt by her chair next to Eagan. She glanced at him and found him smiling back. His pride swelled her heart.

Ananda’s mother stood and strolled to her.

“It’s the kind of life I want, Mother, and he’s the man to give---”

The first smack Ananda’s mother gave Ananda across her face stung and surprised her. Growing up, her mother never raised her voice or her hand to her. Ananda touched her cheek and stared at her mother through tear-filled eyes.

The second hit sent her careening against her chair. Ananda braced her hand on the chair. Eagan sprang from his seat, toppling his own chair.

“Don’t you touch her again.” He stood between Ananda and her mother.

“I don’t know who you think you are, but you don’t mean anything to me.” She peered around Eagan to look at her daughter. “I always taught you to be a lady, to respect me, and your family.” Her mother shook her head. “I don’t know who you are anymore. You come

into my house and talk this filthy talk about serving some stranger you're not married to, not in love with."

Ananda nodded. Although she did love Eagan, she didn't need to release too many bombs in one day. "I care for him a great deal." She loved Eagan Morton and everything about him, including the fact that he was a Dominant.

"You have gotten mixed up in some crazy life because of dancing. I knew I should have stopped that, but your father wanted to encourage you. Now, you're disrespecting me and your family."

"No, you're disrespecting me and the feelings I have for this man. I'm an adult, Mother. I don't need permission from you or Reverend Bailey on who I should fall in love with. I'm willing to do anything for Eagan."

"Really? Then you had better be prepared to leave this house. You have to choose. You either respect me and the values I've taught you, or you go off and be with this man."

Ananda glanced around the table at the closest people in her life. Darnell nodded his head and gave her a thumbs-up sign. Eagan held her hand and helped her to her feet. She knew what she had to do.

Ananda picked up her bags. "I love you, Mother. It's because of you and your strict teachings that I have the overwhelming need to please. My focus has shifted. It's now my time to please someone besides you. You and Granny taught me to serve four people: you two, God and my husband. He may not be my husband, but he could be my man. Right now, I want to do what I can to make him happy."

Her mother shook her head. "Get out."

Without a word, Ananda headed to the door with camera crew behind them. She knew Darnell loved her like a sister, but he was down for the free meal so he stayed put. When the door slammed behind her, Eagan, and the crew once they got on the porch, Ananda let out a long sigh.

Eagan put his hands on Ananda's shoulders and turned her around to face him. "I don't know how much this means to you, but I'm so very proud of you right now."

She forced a smile on her dour face. "Please tell me there was this much drama when you visited Sunny's home."

Eagan smiled.

"That's what I thought."

Eagan kissed her forehead. "That doesn't mean anything. What you did in there showed me beyond a shadow of a doubt that you want to be a part of this Lifestyle, whether I'm in it or not."

Then Eagan didn't get her actions at all. She wanted to show him that she wanted to be with him and only him. No one else would do for her.

Ananda glanced at the front door, the one with pencil marks from where her mother measured her height through the years. Paint peeled from wood around the doorframe. She reached out and brushed her fingers down the curled, dried paint. Touching it brought back memories of her childhood.

It hit her then. If she stayed with Eagan, she would never see her mother again. Ananda's gut twisted.

"Take me to the car, please." She buckled and covered her mouth as Eagan helped her to the limo.

The crew tried joining them and Eagan ejected them.

"No! You all pile into the production van." He ordered Richard to take off as he held Ananda in his arms.

As soon as the car started moving, Ananda let loose a current of tears. She wailed so hard that her throat felt raw.

"Oh, God! What have I done?" She clutched Eagan's lapels as he rocked her in his arms. "If I don't win this contest, I'll have nothing; I'll have no one."

"Shh ... shh." Eagan continued rocking her. "It's okay. It'll be okay."

Ananda wiped her face with the back of her hand. "No, it won't. Without my family, I'll be alone. If I don't win, where will I go? What will happen to me? Who will love me?"

She wept even harder. Ananda wasn't looking for sympathy. She was a big girl and could take her lumps like the next woman. But fear overrode her senses. Right now, she was in panic mode.

Gazing up into Eagan's eyes, all she wanted to hear was him admit that no matter what he would take care of her. She wanted to hear him say that he wouldn't put her out on the street. She wanted to hear him admit that he loved her just as much as she loved him.

Eagan said, "I bet you're hungry. Let's stop somewhere and get something to eat."

Ananda tightened her grip on his jacket, wanting so badly to just shake him. Except that when she first got to the house, for the first time ever she wanted to rip the mask off of her face and reveal her true self to him.

She couldn't, not while she still had a chance at a life with him. Plus, if she had taken off the mask, he would have known who she was and questioned her motives for entering the contest in the first place. She'd already dropped one big bomb today. She didn't need to lose her mother and Eagan on the same day though her heart ached for some sort of comfort.

Ananda nodded in agreement to his suggestion. She just hoped that Eagan understood what turning her back on her family truly meant. She couldn't have just severed ties with them for nothing.

* * * * *

Eagan let Ophelia wait for him for over forty-five minutes before coming out to greet her. Ophelia sat in the his living room squarely in the middle of his couch, her back straight, her shoulders back and that same damn smile.

“Hi, Ophelia.” He walked into room and sat in a chair next to the couch. No use leading her on.

“Master Eagan, uh, I mean, Eagan, how are you?” She lowered her gaze. “Am I able to call you Master again?”

Eagan sat up straighter. “You could.”

Ophelia beamed.

“But before you do that, a producer with a TV show called me. He wanted to know if I could give you a recommendation. Then he asked me which episode I wanted to direct.”

Fat tears crested in Ophelia’s eyes.

“Oh, no, honey, put away the fake tears. I should have known that your e-mails and calls and the return trip were all a part of your act. And I nearly fell for it again.” He shook his head. “You and I want two different things. I want you happy, though. I have arranged for you to meet another Dom. He and I have the same playing style. I’m sure you’ll like him.” He held up his hand with the contact information for the Dom.

“But it’s you I love.” Ophelia wiped her eyes.

“You don’t love me. You love what I’m able to do for you, but you don’t love me. You can’t. Take the number and go. I do wish you well.”

Ophelia stood. “Keep it. I’ll have something to come back for later on.”

“You won’t be allowed back on my property. I’ll e-mail the information to you.” Eagan crumpled the paper in his fist. He stood and approached Ophelia. “Take care.” He kissed her forehead.

“Eagan!”

He turned back to her.

“You’re going to miss me.” Ophelia nodded.

“I did.”

Saying goodbye to Ophelia hurt, but it was necessary if he was going to start another chapter in his life. Now, he just had to figure out with whom he would start that next phase. Sunny or Begonia?

Sunny was already well-trained. She understood what it meant to be a submissive. And he wouldn’t mind making love to her. Begonia, though, after what he saw her do at her mother’s house, he knew she’d sacrificed so much for him. Did that mean she really loved him? Was it all an act to stay in the contest?

No, her tears were real. Her pounding heart, when he’d held her, illustrated her deep fear. All he’d wanted to do was assure her that she would be okay. He wanted to tell her that

no matter what, he would take care of her. He wanted to say, "I love you." She was already scared and freaking out. He didn't need to put that on her, too.

What the hell would he do? Who would he choose?

Chapter Twenty-Six

Eagan had let Ananda go back to the house alone so that he could take care of some business. Ananda suspected that he would be meeting Ophelia only because he had made some calls to other Doms he knew, asking if they were in the market for a new submissive.

Hearing parts of his conversation relieved her. At least it meant that Eagan had no interest in bringing Ophelia back into his life. Ananda's true competition remained Sunny. Since Ananda knew Sunny's home visit went way better than Ananda's, Ananda had a lot of work to do to sway Eagan to pick her.

After a security check from hell and getting through the mob that sat at the entrance into Eagan's posh neighborhood, Ananda finally reached the house.

She dropped her bags on the floor. It felt strange being in the house and not seeing camera crews around. Ananda took the stairs by two to get to Eagan's office. She wanted to wait there for him when he got home.

When she opened the door, she froze in her spot when she saw the back of a nearly naked woman standing there. She knew this woman was one of Eagan's slaves because she wore the see-through dress and the chastity belt. This slave was taller and leaner than Apple or Willow. Plus, she had short hair.

"Aspen?" Ananda said, hoping she was that mysterious woman.

The woman turned around and Ananda blinked and stepped back. "Hi, Ananda Zelder."

"Dameron?" Ananda hadn't seen her former dance instructor in years. "You've been here this whole time?"

Dameron nodded. "When I left the dance school a few years ago, I started serving Master Eagan. When my youngest finally moved out, I sold the house and moved here with him."

Ananda nodded. Then, a thought hit her. She was still in her mask.

“How did you know it was me under here?” Ananda asked.

“I was looking through pictures of people who auditioned for Master Eagan’s dancing show and saw your picture. I could tell it was you from the little scar by your chin. Does Master Eagan know you auditioned for his show?”

“He knew Ananda Zelder did. He doesn’t know that that woman and I are the same.” She pointed to the picture.

“You have to tell him.”

“I will. I just need to get through this last elimination and then I’ll tell him. Either I win and I tell him, or I get kicked out and I tell him.”

Dameron shook her head. “Tell him now. After what he went through with Ophelia, he needs to know the truth.”

“The truth is that I started off this competition wanting to be here for the wrong reasons. I got some really bad advice. But now I want to be here. I just turned my back on my family to come back home. I don’t want to give up Eagan, not when I’ve gotten so close, not when I just fell in love with him.”

Dameron smiled. “Then you’ll understand when I tell him the truth about you. I serve him and his interests. I can’t not tell him I know who you are and why you are here.”

Ananda grabbed Dameron’s hands and held them as she made her plea. “Please don’t say a word. Not yet. I promise, I will tell him. He should hear this from me and not you. Just promise me that you won’t tell him before I get a chance.”

Dameron gazed down. Something strange struck Ananda as she held her former friend’s hands. Bones poked through her wrists and hands over her thin skin. Dameron had always been svelte, but never this emaciated.

“Dameron, what’s going on with you? Why are you so thin? Are you sick?”

Before the woman could answer, she collapsed to the floor in a heap.

“Dameron!” Ananda caught her. “I have to get you to a hospital now.”

“No!” With all of the strength her thin instructor could muster, she held onto Ananda’s hands. “Please don’t. I haven’t been eating properly because I’ve been, well, concerned.”

“About what?” Ananda stroked her hand through Dameron’s hair after helping her to her feet.

“You’ve seen Willow and Apple. Both young, both beautiful. Some days I feel I don’t measure up to them. So I stopped eating.”

“You can’t do that. You’re killing yourself. Don’t you see that?”

Dameron wiped tears away. “I can’t tell Master Eagan I need help. He’ll replace me.”

“I can help you, Dameron. If you’ll keep my secret safe, I’ll do the same for you.”

Before Dameron could respond, just as she brought up her gaze, she gasped, and looked beyond Ananda. Ananda turned around and saw Eagan standing at the door.

Ananda swallowed, wondering just how much of their conversation did he hear.

Eagan looked at Aspen. "Give us some privacy."

"Yes, Master Eagan." Dameron gave Ananda a pleading look before leaving and closing the door behind herself.

Eagan planted the softest kiss on her lips. What started off as light and sweet quickly turned into something passionate. He slid his tongue into her mouth and she sucked it hungrily. Her hand fisted his thick hair.

Right here and now, Ananda should have come clean about everything. To have him with her, she wanted nothing but him.

"I actually missed you," he said when he broke from the kiss. "I couldn't wait to come home."

"I'm here to serve you." She stripped off her shirt and kicked off her shoes.

Eagan helped her remove her long skirt.

"Do you have any lubricant or oil?" she asked.

Eagan stared at her for a moment then smiled. "Wait here." He left the room and came back moments later with a small bottle of clear liquid and a condom. "Hands on the desk."

Ananda did as instructed and spread her feet apart. She heard him unwrap the rubber then a rustling sound as he sheathed himself. She jumped when she felt his hand full of cold oil sliding up and down between her cheeks. Then he held her hip.

Using the tip of his middle finger, he circled her puckered hole. Ananda writhed under his touch. He leaned down and kissed the middle of her back. The touch electrified her skin. If this man didn't know that they were good together then he just wasn't paying attention.

Eagan slipped his finger inside of her ass. With each inch, she arched her back until he got up to the knuckle. When he moved his finger in and out of her, her body trembled.

"Oh, God, yes! More! More!" The words coming from Ananda's mouth sounded foreign to her. She liked anal sex? With Eagan? Absolutely!

His finger slipped out of her. Ananda felt him teasing her anus with the tip of his cock.

She didn't know what made her want to try anal sex. She wanted him and wanted to please him right now.

He slid the tip inside of her and stopped. Ananda gripped his desk and stood still as he held her hips with both hands and eased himself in deeper until he was all the way to the hilt. The introduction of his thick shaft stretched her to an almost painful extent. Almost. Had Eagan not trained her earlier, she wouldn't have known what to expect. She wouldn't have known to relax. She wouldn't have trusted him so much.

Ananda's body shook at the sensation. He expanded her, mind, body and soul. Eagan did slow, rhythmic thrusts inside of her.

"So tight," he growled. "So wonderful."

Ananda nodded. It was a feeling like she'd never felt before. After the anal plug, she knew she would like anal sex, but with Eagan it was absolutely incredible. His size filled her completely. The motion rubbed the right spot inside of her, causing wave upon wave of electric sparks shooting through her. He owned her body. And if he didn't pick her for the show, he would still own her body.

Eagan increased his speed. Ananda bent over more to give him better and deeper access. Then she hooked her foot around his leg, urging him to take her harder.

"You can come, Begonia. Do it!" he demanded.

As though he flipped a switch on inside of her, she let out a long, low moan. Her body shook as she let the climax overtake her. Yes, she needed this man. Hopefully, he would see he needed her, too.

"Eagan, I have those reports for you. Jesus!" As quickly as Phil opened the door, he slammed it just as fast and hard when he caught Eagan and Ananda together.

Eagan kissed Ananda's shoulder before sliding out of her. "You may use my bathroom to clean up, if you want."

Ananda picked up her clothes and held them in her arms. "No. I'll go down to the bathroom I've been using. Until I'm officially your submissive, I won't use your quarters." She kissed him. "Not yet." Then she walked out of the room, passing Phil in the hallway.

Ananda glanced back and saw Phil and Eagan standing together and staring at her. At least this time Eagan didn't give her the usual speech about the sex not securing her in the house. And he said he did miss her. These were all great signs. Now she would just need to get him alone to tell him about the dancing. He would understand. He would have to.

* * * * *

"Are you fucking nuts?" Phil stomped his foot. "The day before elimination, and you fuck one of the contestants."

"If she wins, I'll be doing that and more to her." With the condom discarded, Eagan fastened his pants and headed down to his bedroom with Phil following him.

"Have you seen the latest?" Phil tossed a copy of the *New York Post* on Eagan's bed. Splashed across the cover read the headline 'Ebony and Ivory: Which will Morton Choose?' "They are making this a black-and-white issue. The message boards are lighting up again. I had them run a poll."

Eagan undressed and slipped on his robe. "And?"

"And it's split. Forty percent said you should choose Sunny."

“Because she’s white?”

“And because she’s a real submissive and has been on top this whole competition.”

“And the other sixty percent?” Not that Eagan put much stock into polls or public opinion. At least not this time.

“Another forty percent want you to choose Begonia.”

“Because she’s black?”

“Some. But also because they say they notice some chemistry between you two.” Phil scratched his head. “She’s not the one you’ve been fucking the entire time, is she?”

“You’re getting off track here.” And Eagan didn’t want to answer the question. “What about the other twenty percent?”

“Fifteen says you shouldn’t choose either one. Two percent want Ophelia back and three percent didn’t have a decision either way.”

“So they’re split down the middle on the two women.”

“Yeah, but for your career, for your image, you should definitely choose Sunny.”

“Why? With Ophelia, they saw who my last submissive was. They know my history. I’m not going to buckle under public opinion.”

“Then how about your career? You will lose viewers if you have a black woman as your submissive. There are already campaigns against you and talk of boycotting your films if you do this. If you choose her, you won’t win.”

“But if I choose someone based on what the public wants and not what I want, I won’t win. From the very beginning, this has all been about me. Don’t lose sight of that now.”

“Don’t you forget that you’re a public figure. Fans will turn on you at the drop of a hat.”

“Wouldn’t be the first time.” And Eagan knew it wouldn’t be the last.

He had a very tough decision to make. Sunny said and did all of the right things. She was the ultimate submissive. She even did his aftercare and then some when Eagan whipped Begonia. But Begonia, she had his heart. Whenever he saw her in a room, he had to have her.

Whose idea was it to do this damn show?

* * * * *

“How did things go for you?” Ananda asked Sunny.

“The same. Everyone in my life knows what I’m into so it was basically hearing them all say good luck and be supportive. What about you?”

Ananda shook her head. “Not so lucky.”

“Sorry. Master Eagan warned you it wouldn’t be easy.” Sunny set her suitcase down and immediately stripped.

Seeing her naked body, Ananda was immediately reminded of something. “Hey, I don’t think I told you the other night, thank you for, um, what you did.”

Sunny smiled. “My pleasure.”

Ananda slipped down from her bed. “Speaking of pleasure, you up for a little adventure?”

“What did you have in mind?”

Ananda didn’t say a word. She took Sunny’s hand and led her out of the dungeon.

“Where are we going?” Sunny asked in a whisper, although the crew had already gone.

“You’ll see.” Ananda crept up the steps and stopped at Eagan’s bedroom door.

“We can’t do this. We’ll get in trouble.” Sunny pulled her hand back.

“No more in trouble than when you licked my pussy the other night.” Ananda knocked on his door and waited.

“Enter,” he called through the door.

Ananda’s sweaty hand turned the knob and she stepped inside.

“Begonia? What are you doing here?” he asked. Eagan sat in his bed with a laptop next to him. His bare chest screamed to be licked.

“We,” she pulled in Sunny behind her, “wanted to thank you for allowing us to be on the show and letting us be the top two that you’ll pick from tomorrow night.”

“It was your hard work and dedication that got you there.” He set his computer on an end table just as Ananda closed the door behind them. “You know there are cameras in this room also.”

Ananda looked at Sunny. They held hands. “We know,” Ananda said.

“Come here.”

The two of them approached Eagan’s bed.

“You know I could kick you both off the show.” He volleyed his attention between the two. “I saw you the other night. Sunny, I saw what you did to Begonia.”

Ananda never felt her heart beating so hard. “How did you --”

Eagan cut her off. “The mirror in the room, it’s a two-way mirror. I watched the whole thing. I saw you come.”

“I’m sorry, Master Eagan.” Sunny bowed her head.

“Sorry for what? Sorry you did it or sorry you got caught?”

Sunny remained quiet, but Ananda spoke up. “Sorry we got caught.”

Sunny snapped her head to Ananda’s direction.

“Good, Begonia. I like your honesty. But you shouldn’t be here in my room.”

This time Ananda looked down.

“While we’re here, is there anything we can do to please you?” Sunny wrapped her arms around Ananda and held her close.

“No.” Eagan hopped off his bed. “Not here. Follow me.”

He padded out of his room and back downstairs while Ananda and Sunny walked two steps behind him. It shouldn’t have surprised Ananda that he returned to the dungeon. After opening a cabinet next to the mirror, Eagan clicked a switch, lowering a vertical bar.

Then he sauntered to both of them. Eagan slipped his hand behind Ananda’s head and pulled her forward, crushing his lips against hers. He broke the kiss. Then while still holding onto Ananda, he put his hand behind Sunny’s head and gave her the same rough kiss.

Without being asked or told, Ananda and Sunny moved closer together and gave each other a softer, more sensuous kiss. With passion and courage coursing through her veins, Ananda grabbed the waistband of Eagan’s pajama bottoms and pulled them down over his jutting cock.

“Sunny, on your knees. Begonia, stand up.”

Sunny lowered herself in front of him while Ananda stood. Like the master he was, Eagan put his hand to the back of Sunny’s head to encourage her to take his cock. She did so, wrapping her hand around his meaty shaft. She licked his mushroom tip and slid the length of him in her mouth.

Eagan kissed Ananda and pushed his tongue into her mouth to encourage her to do with his tongue what her counterpart was performing below. Ananda sucked his tongue as she ran her fingers through his hair.

His hand cupped her breast. When he circled her nipple with his thumb, Ananda’s stomach quivered. She had to lean back against the platform to maintain her balance.

“Get on the table,” he growled.

Ananda obliged. He parted her thighs and moved carefully to keep Sunny sucking while he bent over and did his own breath-taking motions with his mouth. He spread her labia open then teasingly blew his hot breath over her needy cunt.

Ananda writhed on the platform, waiting for him to put her out of her misery.

“I don’t know if you deserve me eating out your pussy,” Eagan said. “Sunny made you come this way not too long ago, which is in violation of the rules. So why should I do it now?”

“I’ll make you so happy in return. I promise.” Ananda curved her hips up to encourage him.

Eagan paused a couple of times and closed his eyes. Sunny really must be doing a number on him. All she could hear was Sunny’s constant slurping.

“Happy how?” Eagan pressed. To tease her even more, he took a quick lick on her clit. Ananda writhed on the platform; it felt so good.

“I’ll do anything you want.” Ananda stared at him in his eyes. He had to know she meant what she said.

“You’ll do that anyway. What else?” This time, when he licked her from her anus to her clit in such a slow pass, time stopped for Ananda.

“God!” She grabbed the edge of the platform that was above her head.

Gazing up, she found Eagan pumping his hips. Must be fucking Sunny’s mouth. Ananda had been in that position before and loved it.

“I’ll know what you want. I’ll anticipate your every need and mood.” She sat up. “I’ll fight for you.”

With those words, Eagan buried his head between her legs. For as rough as he could be, he was surprisingly gentle to her pussy. His skilled tongue darted in and out of her making her body twitch with each pass. He covered her clit with his mouth and it made her body jerk off the platform.

His oral assault on her sex made her body hum, until he suddenly stopped.

“Oh no. Not yet.” He took a couple of steps back, bent over and hoisted Sunny to her feet and onto the table.

After instructing Sunny to lie on her back, he slid his index and middle fingers inside of her. For Ananda, he took her hand and put it on her pussy. She knew exactly what he wanted her to do. Her fingers eased down between her slick nether lips. Then, she plunged the middle finger inside of herself.

Playing with herself in front of Eagan made her rethink breaking out her vibrator when things got to be too much for her. Her finger found her pleasure spot.

“Eagan,” she moaned. Relief needed to come soon and he had to grant it to her or she would just burst.

He stepped back from the table. Grabbing Sunny’s hands, he pulled her up and led her to the bar he’d lowered when they first came to the room.

“Hands over your head.”

Sunny did so without question. Eagan secured her wrists to the bar in wrist cuffs and then raised her just enough for her toes to reach the floor. He cupped one of her breasts as he licked and sucked the other.

As much as Ananda had always thought she would hate seeing Eagan pleasure another woman, seeing him with Sunny made her juices flow. Ananda drove her finger inside of herself deeper, rubbing her clit to get a powerful sensation.

“Eagan, I can’t hold out much longer. Please.” Ananda squirmed on the platform, trying not to notice Eagan pleasuring Sunny, but unable to look away.

Eagan gave Sunny a gentle shove, making her swing back and forth before he stormed away from her and went to Ananda.

Standing at the end of platform, Eagan watched her, his hands planted on his hips. "Come on, Begonia. Here I am giving you the chance to finally pleasure yourself and you're being tame."

With her free hand, Ananda cupped her breast, massaging it as she plunged inside of herself faster and harder. The heel of her hand rubbed against her hardened clit.

"P-p-please! I need to come." Ananda couldn't stop her body from shaking out of control. Under his sultry stare and her constant manipulation, an orgasm was imminent.

"Put your hands over your head." Eagan crossed over to the end of the platform by her head.

Thinking he didn't mean at the moment, Ananda continued masturbating.

"If I have to tell you to put your hands over your head again, you'll be out of the house. Do it now!"

Ananda eased her finger out of her tight, warm channel and removed her hand from her breast. She placed both hands over her head.

Once there, it didn't take long for Eagan to hold onto both wrists with one hand. As he strapped both of her hands down, his mouth sucked her juices from her fingers.

"So good," he said between licks. "Pull on the restraints."

Ananda did so, finding herself secured. Weeks ago, a feeling like that would have freaked her out. Now she couldn't wait to see what he would do next.

Still standing over her head, he leaned over and gave her a kiss upside down. The feeling felt odd but intense. Her only regret was that she couldn't touch him.

Like a man on a mission, Eagan trotted down to the other end of the platform. He grabbed her ankles and parted her legs roughly. Just as he'd done with her hands, he bound her ankles to the platform, rendering her immobile.

If the helpless feeling wasn't enough to get Ananda wet and ready for Eagan, she watched him carefully select a leather flogger. Each tail of the individual straps held a small knot. Ananda's toes curled at the thought of what he would do to her.

"Do you know what this is, Begonia?" he asked as he feathered the toy over her skin.

"A flogger, sir." The light dusting over her arms and breasts tickled her. She writhed under the touch as much as she could but being held down, she couldn't move very much.

"Very good. You are a fast learner." He swiped the tails down her legs, careful to avoid her aching pussy. "Do you know what I'm going to do with this?"

Ananda stared at him in his intense eyes. She shook her head. "No."

Eagan slammed the flogger between her legs and walked away from the platform. "You had better think about it then and let me know."

Son-of-a-bitch! He went to the wall of toys and scanned the items. When he pulled down a black paddle, Sunny's legs flailed.

Eagan strolled to the swinging woman. "How do you know this is for you?"

"I don't, Master Eagan. I'm hoping it is."

Eagan stood next to her. Ananda had to raise her head to see over her arm to watch the action. He whispered something to Sunny, which made her turn her head to him. He kissed her hard, nibbling her bottom lip. With everything he did, Ananda wanted him.

He slid his fingers in between Sunny's puckered nether lips then in a blink of an eye, he paddled her ass. The sound of the smack echoed in the room louder than Sunny's cry.

"You like that?" he asked in a growl.

"Yes, sir!" Sunny nodded just as he paddled her again. "Oh, God! Yes!"

When Ananda saw him move his fingers in and out of her as he paddled her, she had to lay her head flat on the platform. She felt like butterflies swarmed over her body and in her stomach as she listened to Sunny's spanking.

"You are fun to play with," Eagan said.

Breathlessly, Sunny replied, "Thank you, Master Eagan."

Ananda closed her eyes to imagine what he would do to her. She heard slight banging against the wall. Gazing to the side, she saw Eagan pulling down a fur-covered paddle that he used to rub against Sunny's ass. She reacted the same way to that treatment that she did for the paddling.

"Your ass is nice and red," Eagan said, as he continued smoothing the furry paddle over her. "You might have to sleep on your stomach tonight. Do you mind that, Sunny?"

"No, sir." She shook her head.

He walked away from her again and went to the wall of toys. This time he grabbed the nipple clamps attached on a long silver chain. No coaxing was needed to get Sunny's nipples out this time. Eagan attached them to her nipples.

Ananda heard her competitor suck in a quick intake of breath, then moan, when Eagan tugged on the chain.

"It might be hard for you to sleep on your stomach too, huh?" He licked both nipples.

"Y-y-yes, sir."

"Do you mind?"

Sunny, no longer able to speak, shook her head.

"Good. How about another swing?" After dropping the chain, he pushed her body again, sending her swinging back and forth.

In her gut, Ananda knew that meant he was coming back to her. She watched him stalking her, moving around her platform like a shark circling its prey.

"Figured out what I should do with the flogger?" he asked.

Ananda nodded. Her throbbing clitoris screamed its answer to her, but she wanted to ignore it. There was no denying what this man could do to her body.

“What, Begonia?”

“Spank my pussy, Master Eagan. I want to feel it there.”

Eagan picked up the toy. “You two are making it very difficult for me to choose between the two of you.”

Ananda gazed at him. The seriousness of his statement masked his face. Who would he choose tomorrow?

With a flick of his wrist, Eagan brushed the tails of the flogger over Ananda’s legs first. A tease to the very end.

Ananda squirmed on the platform. “Please, sir, don’t tease me.” But teasing was exactly what her body wanted. The more the tails brushed her flesh, the hotter she got.

Eagan worked his way around her body, smacking the tails against her stomach and breasts. When the leather straps touched her nipples, they distended to a painful extent that only the flogger could relieve.

As Eagan worked his magic over her body, Ananda closed her eyes. She drifted away into thoughts of creating a life with Eagan Morton, how she could have this treatment daily if she wanted. Every part of her being wanted this and more. She had to have him. Losing him tomorrow was not an option.

Just as she lost herself in thoughts about the man, she felt what Eagan had been warming up her body to accept. One hard smack pounded against her clit. Stars burst in her eyes and her body arched off of the platform.

That didn’t stop Eagan. With easy turns of his wrist, he repeatedly slapped the tails of the flogger against her soaked pussy over and over and over again, until Ananda lost her voice screaming in pleasure. She gripped the leather straps holding her wrists down and tugged against the restraints at her ankles.

“Tell me what you want, Begonia. I want to hear it.” With his intense stare, he summoned her to say what he wanted to hear.

“I want you to fuck me. Please. Fuck me and make me come.”

He stopped the assault on her sex. Before addressing her needs, he strolled back to Sunny and removed her clamps. He kissed her and sent her swinging again.

Then he climbed on the platform in between Ananda’s legs. “You’ll come when I say you can.” He covered his cock with a condom, then slithered the tip between her pussy lips before thrusting deep inside of her. “Right now, I’m not ready for you to come.”

God, Eagan was a machine. He pounded into her hard and fast. It didn’t matter that the whole world watched the display. Ananda needed this man and had to have him. What began as a joke, a dare, wasn’t a laughing matter any more.

Ananda's body contracted in anticipation of an intense orgasm. She yanked on the wrist straps until she felt like she would rip them off. Just when Ananda thought she couldn't take much more, Eagan said the magic words to her.

"Now, Begonia, now!"

Ananda screamed as she thrashed her legs as much as she could. "Oh, God! Yes! Yes! Yes!" She pushed her hips upward so that he could drive in deeper.

Ananda tightened everything in her body until she could come back down from the orgasmic high. Her arms and legs flopped onto the platform. He kissed her, but he wasn't done yet.

After jumping off the platform and changing to a fresh rubber, he sauntered over to Sunny who was still cuffed. Instead of releasing her, Eagan brought her legs around him then lowered her on his cock, impaling her, while still hanging from the bar. It was primal and sexy and all-together Eagan.

Ananda watched in exhaustion, but in awe. What a magnificent man Eagan was. Sunny moaned and leaned her head back as he fucked her. Only after he granted her permission did Sunny finally come.

He kissed her just as sweetly as he'd kissed Ananda.

"Shit! What the hell am I going to do tomorrow?"

Ananda smiled. She hoped beyond hope that he wanted her as much as she wanted him. Her mind was already made up.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Eagan thought he would have been more nervous the last day. The show would be live. He had to pick one woman. And he'd left Phil at the helm. Eagan stared at himself in the mirror as he adjusted his shirt and tie. In the reflection, he caught Phil chuckling and shaking his head.

"Care to let me in on the joke?" Eagan asked.

"Dude, I can't believe you banged Sunny while you had her suspended on that bar. You're my new hero."

Eagan turned around. "How many times did you and the crew watch that?"

"Once maybe twice or three or a hundred times. It was hot. You need to do this show like every three months."

"I don't think I could take it. It's bad enough I have to choose between Begonia and Sunny. They're both great."

"Yeah, but you have to decide this. Who will make better ratings? You go with one, she's kind of safe. You go with the other, you're in the middle of a hotbed of controversy. Then again, you live on controversy."

"No, I live my life. The media lives on twisting what it is that I do."

Aspen walked into Eagan's bedroom. "Do you need my assistance, sir?"

"Brush me down."

She nodded and picked up a lint roller. In long even strokes, she brushed the lint off of his back and shoulders.

"Remember, the show is live and we don't have a lot of time." Phil walked to the door. "We'll run some previous episode clips to fill the time, then you'll go in for the kill."

"Got it. No problem."

“So, are you going to tell me who you’re going to pick?”

Eagan tilted his head to summon Phil to come toward him. He leaned down and whispered in Phil’s ear, “I’ll give you a hint. She’s wearing a mask.”

Phil shook his head. “You’re an asshole, you know that?”

“Master Eagan, there’s something I need to tell you,” Aspen began.

“It’ll have to wait until after taping.” Eagan kissed Aspen’s cheek.

She dropped her gaze to the floor. “Yes, sir.”

He headed to the door and stopped when Aspen called for him again.

“Sir, just remember. People make mistakes. I know you’re a forgiving, kind, and decent man. I know you’ll understand.”

Though cryptic, Eagan nodded and accepted her statement. It was bad enough he was going through this without Tony and his right-hand woman, Nina. He just hoped they were okay.

* * * * *

Ananda had to pinch herself as she stood in the same spot she’d been standing since the show began. This was it. The last show and it was live.

Now she was ready. Clothed in a slinky black halter dress and black patent leather stilettos, she was ready to ditch the mask and show her true self. Once she explained her situation, Eagan would understand.

As soon as she saw Eagan at the top of the stairs, her heart stopped. The world slowed as he took years to descend the staircase. This was torture. Couldn’t he move just a bit faster?

When he stood in front of the two women, the reality of this reality TV show hit her.

“Good evening, ladies.” He kissed Sunny and she held the back of his head and moaned throughout the kiss. When he kissed Ananda, she slid her tongue in his mouth and wrapped her arms around his shoulders. He pulled back from the kiss, smiling.

“Hi, Master Eagan,” Ananda and Sunny said in unison.

“It’s been quite a journey. From not knowing what being collared is to our magical night last night, this has been a fun, wonderful ride. Unfortunately for one of you, the ride will be over.” Eagan picked up a flat, wide square box from the table. When he opened it, the most gorgeous collar rested inside of it.

This one was all silver, or was that platinum? A thick band went around the center with thinner bands going around the top and bottom.

“When I name the winner, she will receive this new collar. You will be my submissive for at least a year, then we’ll take it from there.”

Ananda could care less about prizes. She just wanted to know who he would pick.

“This has been a very, very tough decision.” He faced Sunny. “Sunny, you are a Dominant’s dream. You anticipate my every move, you know the Lifestyle inside out. And you’re willing to try new things.” Then, he turned to Ananda. “Begonia, you started off wild. Honestly, after the first show, I didn’t think you would make it. But you made it. You persevered and managed to grab my attention in the process. Most importantly, you made sacrifices in order to be here. That means a lot to me.”

Sunny reached her hands out and held onto Ananda’s. Never did Ananda think she would want to comfort another woman at this point, but holding Sunny’s hand felt right for the moment. She clasped her other hand around Sunny’s as she kept her gaze on Eagan.

He shook his head. “I didn’t think the decision would be this difficult. You’re both wonderful women. If the show didn’t already dictate that I would only pick one woman, I would have you both.”

Ananda and Sunny smiled. Ananda’s insides quivered the longer he took to make his decision. She chewed on her lower lip as sweat rolled down her back. *Come on, Eagan. Just say it.*

Eagan stopped pacing and released a long, harried breath. “The first, last, and only winner of *Love My Way* is,” he cleared his throat, “Begonia.”

As soon as he mentioned her name, Ananda had gone partially deaf. She was sure people were saying things to her, but all she could see were lips moving. Then everything became loud and in focus.

Graciously, Sunny gave her a hug. “Guess the better woman won.” She kissed Ananda on the lips.

“I’m sorry, Sunny. I really am. I liked you a lot.” Eagan shook his head. “I decided that I needed to go with my heart, instead of what fits my Lifestyle, or what the country thinks, or what the world thinks, for that matter.” He held Ananda’s hands. “You touched my heart.”

Sunny sniffed. She removed her mask, revealing a strong, yet beautiful, face. Her small nose looked perky enough to eat. Pale freckles dotted her face.

“My name is Foster. I’ve been in the Lifestyle for over ten years. I would have loved to have been your submissive, Eagan Morton.” She glanced at Ananda. “Good luck to the both of you. I wish you two well.”

Eagan nodded and held out his hand. “I hate doing this to you, but I do need your collar.”

Foster took a deep breath before finally taking off her necklace and putting it in Eagan’s hand.

“Now your turn.”

Ananda went to take off her mask when he stopped her.

“No! I want to see your face and your new collar all together. Remove your old collar.”

She did so. Just as Eagan was about to affix the new collar on her, a voice sounded over the crowd.

“Now’s your chance, Ananda. Do it! Get Eagan back!”

Ananda peered around Eagan’s frame and saw Carter standing behind him trying to egg her on.

No! God, no! Not on the happiest day of her life. Not when Ananda finally figured out what it is she wanted in life and found her dream man. Not when he’d just declared to the world his love for her.

Eagan turned to his employee.

“What did you say, Carter?”

“This whole thing was a scam. Ananda doesn’t love you. She doesn’t want you. She wanted to come on here to embarrass you like you did her when you turned her down for the *High Stepper* audition. Go ahead, Ananda. Now is your chance.”

Why wouldn’t Carter just shut up? Ananda found it difficult to look Eagan in his eyes. Her side of the story, though, still needed to be told.

Eagan reached for her mask and pulled it off. He stepped back several feet when he saw her face. “I always thought you looked familiar. The mouth.”

“So do it. Humiliate him on live TV. He would deserve it after the way he treated you.”

Eagan turned to his staff. “Carter, you asshole, you’re fired. Get him out of here.”

Richard and another security guard grabbed Carter’s arms and shoved him out of the front door. By no means, though, were Ananda’s problems solved.

“So, is that the only reason you came on the show, Begonia, I mean, Ananda? You wanted to embarrass me?”

“No, not really.” She chewed her fat lower lip.

“There was the dancing also,” a voice said from the top of the stairs. Aspen glided down the steps and walked over to Eagan.

This couldn’t be happening to Ananda. She blinked to make sure she wasn’t imagining that her life was crashing down around her.

“Aspen, your mask.” Eagan tried covering her face, but she swatted him away.

“I don’t care anymore, Master Eagan. My family can be embarrassed of me all they want. I have one life.” Aspen glared at Ananda. “When I used to teach dancing, Ananda was my star pupil.”

“Was she good at the arabesque?” Eagan didn’t stop glaring at her.

“She excelled in all areas of dance.” Dameron turned to Ananda. “I’m sorry. Like I said, my loyalties are to Master Eagan. I don’t want to see him hurt.”

“So, let me get this straight. You used this show as a platform for your dancing career.” He gritted his teeth and stood over Ananda. “After everything I shared with you.”

He turned to the stairs.

“Eagan, are you going to put the collar on her?” Phil asked.

“No.”

“Is Sunny the winner?”

Eagan continued up the stairs, only stopping when Ananda screamed his name. He stopped and turned to her.

Ananda said, “I love you. And I’m fighting for you.” Tears streamed down her face.

She lowered herself to the cold floor and crouched down into her waiting position. She would only move for a fire or if someone physically removed her from the spot. Right now, she had no plans of budging, no matter how long it took him. She had to show him that she changed.

“Keep one camera on her. If I know her, she’ll be up in a few hours, like when we had our competition. I want the folks in America to see just how devoted she *isn’t*,” Eagan screamed.

With her face on the floor, her hands stretched out in front, Ananda would prove him wrong. They could watch her, but she wouldn’t move. Never.

* * * * *

Eagan sat in his office the next day, continuing on with business as usual. Why should he stop his life again? Besides, something had to fill that emptiness that grew inside of him.

“I’d like to apologize for my client,” Dris’s agent began the conversation. “He had no right coming to your house like that. He did make some outlandish demands. Dris Markham can still continue on the *Infinity* project and he would truly like to do that.”

Good. Eagan had him. Take that, Dris Markham!

“I’m already talking to Rip Von Tussel about taking over the role. The two look so much alike from the back and side, I don’t think it would cost that much to re-shoot.” Eagan hadn’t talked to anyone about taking over Dris’s role yet. But he needed the jerk to squirm a bit and this would do it.

“You can’t use his likeness in the picture.”

“I can do any damn thing I want. You remind your client of that when he’s looking for other work.” Eagan hung up the phone.

A knock sounded on Eagan’s door.

“Enter.”

He was surprised he heard it. Since Ananda started her vigil, a small crowd gathered down the street from his house, screaming words of encouragement and wanting his head on a platter.

Phil walked inside. He must have gotten tired of running his hands through his hair. It was shorn down to his scalp.

“New look.” Eagan sat back in his chair.

“I thought if I changed it a bit the crowd out in the street would leave me alone. I thought the people would hate you for picking Begonia. Now they hate you for ignoring her.”

“Not Begonia. Ananda. Ananda Zelder. This is her second go ‘round with me.” Eagan shook his head, stunned that he didn’t recognize her before. Admittedly, he looked at her body more than her face.

“Okay, do I think she started this competition to get back at you? Sure. Did she maybe cheat along the way? Absolutely not. They found a book about BDSM in her room. She’s not talking right now, so I didn’t know if she brought it or if Carter gave it to her. So I watched the tapes taken from the cameras in her room.” Phil popped in a DVD and played it. “See, Carter put that book under her pillow.”

Eagan glanced at the screen quickly to see the short, fat bastard creeping into the women’s bedroom to slide the book under her pillow.

“Now watch this.” Phil advanced the DVD. “She finds the book, but never opens it. As a matter of fact, she hides it under her mattress and that’s where it stayed until the crew found it yesterday. She didn’t cheat.”

Eagan gritted his teeth as Phil talked. “Yes, she cheated. She was the contestant I had sex with throughout the competition.”

Phil furrowed his eyebrows. “And you didn’t tell me who she was at the time?”

Eagan glared at him. “What’s your point?”

“Why don’t you just admit that you like her? Hell, I’ll go as far as to say you love her. You could have had her kicked out of the contest for having sex with her and been justified. But you didn’t. Why is that? And for what that woman is going through right now, I think, no, I know, she loves you, too. It’s been a day, man. Let her up. Talk to her.”

Eagan knew it had been a full day since Ananda had gotten down into her position. Eagan kept a close watch on his monitor in his office.

“Love had nothing to do with me having sex with her.” Eagan chuckled as a way to seem unaffected, even though he was.

“Picking her as your submissive would have to do with how much you love her. I saw the way you lit up when you picked her.” Phil shook his head. “I wish ... never mind.”

“What? Just say it, man.”

“You drop people so easily out of your life. Ophelia, your family, Dris Markham, Tony, Nina. Why can’t you ever stop to save the ones who matter to you?”

“I’m the only one who matters. If they make me feel like shit, I’m dropping them.”

“You need to start giving people a second chance.”

Eagan sprang from his chair. “I give people second chances. I gave Ananda a second chance before I knew who she was. I called her before I sent her home to offer her a spot on the *High Stepper* show. Then I find out that that was her plan the whole time.”

“So give her a second chance now. Talk to her. Get her side of the story. That woman let you do things to her that someone who was supposed to be an opportunist, like she has been characterized, wouldn’t do. She’s no Poppy.”

“Like Ophelia, she’s a good actress.”

“Unbelievable. So how long are you going to let her stay down there like that?”

Eagan sat down again. “She’s free to go at any time.”

Phil walked around to where Eagan sat at his desk. He turned on the monitor Eagan had been watching, just moments before Phil walked into the office.

“Does it look like she’s going to go at any time without your permission?” Phil pointed to the screen.

“She’s going to break. They all do. And when she does, I’ll have proven my point.”

“Which is that you’re an uncaring, unwavering, pompous asshole with no heart or soul.” Phil marched to the door. He turned to his friend. “You need to learn that people are fallible. Will you drop me if I ever disappoint you?”

Eagan remained silent.

“That’s what I thought.” Phil opened the door. “Have a nice life, Eagan.”

Damn! Eagan turned to the serene setting outside. He’d had a bad feeling about this show concept from the very beginning. Phil and his big ideas. He should have never let anyone in his house. No, that wasn’t the problem. It was letting them in his heart that got him.

The sight of a small rowboat floating close to his property, with paparazzi taking pictures, prompted Eagan to leave his office and go down to his bedroom. As soon as he opened his office door, Aspen stood outside of it.

“Yes?” he asked when she opened her mouth but remained silent.

“For what it’s worth, sir, when I knew Ananda, she had no aspirations of becoming an actress.”

“Thanks for telling me. Why should I know this?”

“Her feelings are real and genuine. She’s showing you such devotion right now.”

“Yeah, *now*, because she’s been caught. Trust me. She’ll give up soon and go home. Until then, I don’t want anyone touching her.”

He continued to his bedroom when the next chilling words Aspen spoke froze him to his spot.

“I’ve stopped eating, sir.”

Eagan pivoted around to her. "What?"

Aspen shuffled in her spot. "I worried about whether I measured up to Willow and Apple. The worry made me stop eating and I started exercising all of the time. I didn't want you to see me as old and useless."

Eagan put his hand to the side of her face. "Honey, considering I'm older than you are, why would I think that or treat you any differently than Apple or Willow? I love you."

Aspen sniffed and wiped her eyes. "Thank you, sir." She held his hand.

"I'm going to get you the best help out there. A therapist will come here or I'll send you to a place where you can get help."

"If possible, I'd like to stay here with you, sir."

Eagan nodded. Phil was wrong. These people in his house were his family. He liked taking care of them, fallible or infallible.

Aspen took in a deep breath and on the exhale said, "That day you came home and found me and Ananda in your office, I told her about my eating disorder."

Eagan dropped his hand from her face.

"I told her I knew her from my dance class and told her I would tell you. I fainted in front of her and I confessed about my eating disorder. She begged me to let her tell you her secret. I asked the same of her."

"Why are you telling me this now?"

"One of us had the integrity to keep her word. The day of your last show, she could have easily said that I had been lying to you all of this time about my diet, and she would have been right to do so. But, she promised me she wouldn't do that, and she's a woman of her word. She also said that she would tell you about her dancing and her initial plan. If I hadn't intervened, I believe she would have told you. I feel responsible for what's going on now."

Eagan shook his head. "Don't. Like you said that day, you have an allegiance to me, not her. You did the right thing." So why didn't Eagan really feel that inside? "Go on to your room, Aspen."

She nodded and kissed his hand before retreating to her room.

He ducked into his bedroom and slammed his door. Eagan clicked the TV on to have some noise other than the screams from the people down his street. On the CNN crawl scrolled a message about Ananda's progress: *Twenty-seven hours and holding.*

Ananda would quit soon. She had to have been doing this for publicity. Right now, she was getting it in spades. Eagan could hold out longer. He wasn't the one who had to prove himself.

* * * * *

“You’re on Day Two,” Ananda heard Willow whispering next to her. “Let me know if you need anything.”

Ananda said nothing. With what she was doing, she didn’t think she would have to. Her actions should speak for her. Eagan had to see she wasn’t lying about her feelings for him. She loved him with all of her heart and soul.

Ananda’s back ached from the position. She felt the burning in her shoulders after the first few hours. By the second day, the discomfort came as an intruder and set up house in her body. Sharp shooting pains spread from her knees all the way through her legs and back. Needless to say her bladder wasn’t too happy with her either.

No matter what, she wouldn’t budge from that spot. She would die there, but she would die knowing she took a stand for someone she trusted and loved.

Eagan’s hurt expression replayed in her mind every time she closed her eyes. Ananda had wished she could have explained the situation to Eagan before the taping. She truly hoped she would have been the one picked. Then she hoped he would just listen to her.

Footfalls sounded coming across the room. Not unusual. She listened to the crew as they broke down the set around her. Plus, there was one cameraman keeping an eye on her at all times. The footsteps stopped next to her.

“You’ve made your point.”

Ananda recognized Eagan’s voice. Her body shook, but she fought hard to control it.

“You can have a spot on the *High Stepper* show.”

Did he think she was still doing this for a spot on the show? Ananda remained quiet and still. After two days, he wasn’t getting her gesture. Sad and painful, but she wouldn’t quit.

“And this is why I like plants. You give them water. You put them in sunlight. They do what they’re supposed to do. They flourish. People?” Eagan grumbled.

After a few seconds she heard him walking away. She hoped he would come around to his senses soon. As it was, hunger and exhaustion plagued her. Ananda didn’t know how much more she could take. She wouldn’t quit.

* * * * *

Eagan took a deep breath before walking into his dining room. Seeing Nina and Tony holding hands still shocked him enough that he blinked at the sight.

“Thank you for coming here to see me.” Eagan held up his hand to nonverbally ask them to take a seat.

Tony pulled out a chair for Nina then sat next to her, keeping himself in between Nina and Eagan.

“I’m surprised you would want anyone over here with what you have going on now.” Tony shook his head. “What has it been? Three days for her?”

“Just about.” Eagan glanced at Tony. “I had no right to tell you two what to do with your lives. I was concerned for both of you because I know your pasts.”

Tony chuckled. “That’s your problem, Eagan.”

Eagan gritted his teeth, but listened silently.

“You have this one impression of people that you hold on to and won’t let go. I’m sober. I’m clean.” He turned to Nina and kissed the back of her hand. “And I’m in love. She’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me.”

Eagan knew full well what he meant. He didn’t know how valuable Nina was to his organization until he fired her.

“Nina, how do you feel?” Eagan asked to verify she felt the same way.

She stared at Tony and smiled. “Like the luckiest woman alive. I thought landing a job with you was great. It’s nothing compared to waking up next to him every day. We’re so supportive of each other.” She stared at Eagan. “I know relationships are hard without the outside influences that could ruin it for both of us. We’re willing to fight for each other ... like that young woman in there has been fighting for you.”

Eagan didn’t need her reminding him of that. With each minute that ticked by, he understood full well what this all meant to Ananda ... and to him.

“I have a proposition for you both. First, Nina, I would like to offer you your job back with an increase in salary.”

Nina wiped tears away from under her glasses. “You mean it?”

“You are a valuable part of my team. I can’t do this without you.” Eagan turned his attention to Tony. “I have an even bigger proposition for you. Dris Markham recently abandoned his role in the sci-fi flick *Infinity*.”

“Rumor around town was that you were giving it to Rip.”

Eagan shook his head. “I haven’t even talked to his people. I said that to Dris’s camp to shake them up. I want you to take the role.”

Tony beamed. “Really? You want me in the *lead* role?”

Eagan nodded. Butterflies, bats, and all birds of prey flapped around in his belly right now. Deep down, he felt like this was the right decision to make.

Tony jumped from his seat and threw his arms around Eagan. Eagan sat still for a while, then hugged him back. The feeling of comforting someone hit him hard. Eagan stood and backed away from Tony.

“I need you two to pack and head to the set now. We’ve already lost so much time with all of Dris’s antics. You’ve got a lot of ground to cover.”

“Yes, sir.” Tony gave him a cockeyed salute. “Thanks again for believing in me. You don’t know how this feels.”

Nina approached Eagan. Instead of waiting for her to hug him, Eagan wrapped his arms around her tiny frame.

“Take care of our boy, okay?”

She nodded when she pulled back. “So what’s going to happen to Ananda?”

Eagan hadn’t thought that far. Right now, he was taking it minute by minute. He knew something had to happen soon.

After the duo left, Eagan had one more big relationship to repair. He picked up the phone and punched in seven digits. He didn’t even trust voice-activation or speed dial to get him connected.

The phone rang and with each ring his stomach fluttered. The click at the third ring surprised him. As though the party on the other side of the line could see him, he sat up straighter.

Eagan took a deep breath, then spoke. “Mom?”

“Eagan? My baby.”

He closed his eyes for a moment. “We need to talk.”

“Oh, God. It is you.”

He closed his eyes and savored his mother’s voice. It was one relationship he desperately needed to repair. He wasn’t sure if the relationship between he and Ananda was even salvageable. Was he strong enough to try?

* * * * *

Ananda blinked so slowly she wasn’t sure if she was taking small naps in between the blinks. She heard voices. Sometimes, they were loud and angry telling her to get up and go home. Sometimes, they were whispers telling her she was doing the right thing. After so many days and so many hours, she didn’t know what was real and what stemmed from her imagination. *Please believe me, Eagan. Trust me. Love me.*

Her body settled into the position. Her back tightened with slight movements. She would ruin her legs for dancing, but Ananda didn’t care. This was the hardest she’d ever worked for anything and Eagan was worth it.

She felt a hand touch her back. Not so unusual. Willow made it a point to rub her back on occasion. The connection and the soothing touch comforted Ananda.

This time the touch was harder. The hand felt heavier than Willow’s. She felt an arm go around her waist and the other hand slipped under her butt.

“No,” she said. She wanted it to come out like a scream, but instead it came out like a whimper. No food, water, or sleep for three days tapped her energy. “Put me down. Don’t touch me.”

Ananda was now off the floor and cradled in someone’s arms. She blinked several times to see who had stopped her. Seeing Eagan’s face broke her. She wept as she wrapped her arm around his shoulder and allowed him to carry her up the stairs.

Ananda closed her eyes and pressed her face against his chest. His familiar scent was a great payment for all of the hours she’d spent on the floor.

Eagan brought her into his bathroom. When Ananda looked over at the tub, she saw Aspen, Willow and Apple all around waiting. Eagan set her on the side of the tub, but she wasn’t willing to let him go yet.

“No, please don’t leave me.”

Eagan unclasped her hands from behind his neck and held them in his. “You’re never getting rid of me.” He kissed her softly. “I’m so sorry.”

The connection made her head swim. This was her true prize in this whole thing. Eagan Morton. Not the money. Not the fame. Not anything else.

“You want us to bathe her, sir?” Willow asked.

Eagan shook his head. Kneeling at her feet, he took off her shoes then her dress. After taking care of some much needed bodily functions, Eagan helped her into his bathtub. It took less than a second for him to strip out of his clothes and join her in the bath.

“Leave us alone, ladies,” Eagan said to his slaves.

They bowed and left the silent room. Eagan wrapped his arms around her and held her close against him. Her head rested on his shoulder. Her legs, though, remained bent.

As though reading her mind, he said, “I’ll massage your legs. I know they must be hurting.”

The compassion he showed her after everything that had been revealed made Ananda weep out of joy. Eagan held her tighter.

“Let me get you cleaned up and we’ll go to bed.”

She shook her head. “I’ve waited so long for you to just hold me like this. Let me enjoy this moment.”

He kissed the back of her neck.

Once the water became frigid and their fingers and toes turned to prunes, Eagan got her out of the tub and dried her off. Wrapped in a white terrycloth towel, he carried her to his bedroom and sat her on his bed.

“Cameras?” she asked.

“They were gone the night of the show. The only camera left was the one on you. Now he’s leaving.” Eagan smoothed his fingers over her face.

He crawled in bed and helped her under the sheets. This was where she was meant to be.

“I know you think the worst of me.” Ananda kept her back to Eagan, afraid to look him in the eyes.

“No, you’re wrong.” He attempted to turn her over, but she stopped him.

“No, let me finish. I did plan on using this show to launch my career. And I had made plans with Carter to get to the final two and embarrass you. But all of that changed the very first day of taping. I’ve loved you since the moment I stepped into this house.” She rolled onto her back and held his hand. “If I damaged my legs from kneeling so long, I don’t care. All I care about is you and making you happy.”

“You want to make me happy?” he asked.

She nodded.

“Shut up and kiss me.”

Ananda smiled. “Yes, Master Eagan.” She brought her head up from the pillows to kiss him when he stopped her.

“Oh, yeah, another thing.” He reached over her to the night stand and pulled a box from the drawer. He cracked open the box to show off the collar, the one he was going to put on her that night and didn’t when everything went down. “You can’t call me Master Eagan until you have this on.” He stared at her. “Ananda, do you want to be my submissive?”

She smiled with tears in her eyes. “I never wanted anything more.”

Eagan wrapped the adornment around her neck and surprised her by locking it with a small padlock. “Only I have the key,” he said and held it up.

She kissed him softly, but soon after Eagan pressed her against the bed and smothered her in a passionate and breathtaking kiss.

He pulled back and gazed down at her. “I can’t believe you stayed down there all of that time.”

“I can’t believe you thought I could ever leave you.” Ananda stroked her fingers down his face. “I told you that I would fight for you.”

“You did, honey. And now you get it all. The money, the car, the jewels and the show.”

Ananda shook her head. “I don’t want it. I don’t want you thinking I did all of this to get in on your show.”

“I don’t. Before I knew who you were, I called and left a message with your roommate that I wanted you for the show. You earned your spot all on your own without any help from me.”

“Give it to someone else. I’m too old.”

Eagan shook his head. “The hell with that age thing. You’re a hell of a dancer.”

“But I’m a dancer who understands her limits. I appreciate your willingness to give me another chance, but maybe your first instincts were right. I’m not the one for your show.” She put her fingers over his mouth. “All I want is you. It’s all I need.”

“What will you do? You’re not going to sit around my house and be my submissive all day.”

She stared into his green eyes and smiled. “Maybe choreograph.”

He nodded. “I think we can work something out. You’re easy to please, if that’s all you need.” Eagan went in to kiss her again, when she stopped him.

“Well, not all I need.”

He blinked.

“I miss Foster.”

When he furrowed his eyebrows Ananda clarified. “Sunny. You’re Eagan Morton. Can’t you have something for the runner up?”

He smiled. “I’ll think about it. For now, I’ll see if I can handle you.” He ran his fingers through her hair. “You want something to eat?”

“Believe it or not, I’m not really hungry now.”

“You will be. I’ll leave some fruit and veggies in the room for you in case you get hungry. I’m sure right now you want to get some sleep.”

“I do.”

He held her so tight she thought she would become a part of him. That’s what she felt like now, a needed part of Eagan.

“How do you feel? Are you in pain? I’ve called Sergio to check you out, but he won’t be here until --”

Ananda cut him off. “I’m fine. I’m better than fine.”

To prove it, she wrapped her arms around him and kissed him. Their tongues touched each other, but Ananda wanted more. She sucked it in her mouth.

After breaking from the kiss, she said, “Make love to me.”

He stroked her face. “Are you sure?”

Ananda nodded. “Just no doggy style position, though. At least, not right now.”

Eagan laughed. “I can oblige.”

His fingertips coasted down her body, over her breasts, and down between her legs. Everywhere he touched on her body awakened new senses that had been lying dormant for the last three days. He slipped his finger in between her puffy nether lips.

“You’re already so wet.”

She nodded. “You trigger responses in my body that no one else has been able to do.”

“Let me see about that.”

Eagan made love to her entire body. He kissed her forehead and eyelids. His mouth coasted over to one ear. Ever so slowly, he dragged his tongue over the shell of one ear, making Ananda suck her breath in and hold onto his broad shoulders. He repeated this languid treatment to her other ear. When she tried to do more for him, he stopped her.

“I’m taking care of you this time. Enjoy it.”

He kissed down her body to her breasts. Turning his head to and fro, he brushed his lips against her nipples. When he gazed up, Ananda took the opportunity to express her feelings.

“I love you.”

He smiled then continued down her body. When he licked her stomach, he left a cool trail over her heated flesh. Goose bumps erupted over her body. Like the great tease that made him Eagan Morton, he skipped her vagina and kissed down her legs.

His large hands massaged her inner thighs and moved down to her calves. The ache that had captured her body over the last three days melted under his touch. From the very beginning, he knew how to play her body. A touch here, a kiss there. He stirred emotions in her that she didn’t know existed.

By the time Eagan crawled over her body, Ananda was more than ready for him. Eagan settled between her legs. Holding the base of his shaft, he slid the tip of it up and down her pussy. She heard her juices as he continued to tease her. Unlike in previous times, where sex with them had always been fast and furious, he slipped his thick head inside of her and held it there.

Ananda gripped his shoulders. As much as she wanted to wrap her legs around him, the best her sore legs could muster was to rest on top of his calves.

Being the intuitive lover that he was, Eagan moved in and out of her slowly. The connection was more powerful than anything Ananda had ever felt. More than her love for the church, more than her desire to dance, more than anything.

Eagan curved his hips, hitting a crucial spot inside of Ananda. She fisted his hair in response. As much as she wanted this session to last, she couldn’t deny that fire burning in her pussy.

“Master Eagan, may I come?”

“I don’t know,” he said, without breaking his rhythm. “I will let you, if you promise me one thing.”

Ananda felt her cunt walls tightening around his shaft. He had better make this deal quick. She couldn’t hold out for much longer.

“What is it, sir?”

“Promise me that when you’re one-hundred percent, we can go back to doing it rough.”

She beamed. “As you wish.”

“Come, baby!”

Ananda arched her back and screamed. Sex with Eagan Morton had always been intense. Now that he loved her, sex was off the charts.

“I love you, Ananda. I love you.” He kissed the side of her face.

“I love you, too,” she paused before addressing him, “Master Eagan.”

And now she had her man. He pushed her body to the limits. And she loved it.

 THE END 

Bridget Midway

Bridget Midway writes what everyone else fantasizes about but won't admit. This award-winning writer enjoys making her readers laugh as much as she likes seeing them fan themselves down after reading a hot, sexy scene. She writes everything from contemporary romance to futuristic romance, all with multi-racial characters and/or with interracial romances (because when you have a box of chocolates, you have to taste each one and enjoy the differences). To get updates, read exclusive excerpts and participate in contests, please check out her website at www.BridgetMidway.com