



Unmasking Dorian

Jenner's Law

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This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents and dialogues in this book are of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is completely coincidental.

Blurb

Dorian Jenner is an undercover vice cop and a serious Dom. Cassidy Anderson-Lassiter has moved to Detroit with her daughter to work for her new brother in law Marcus Worthington, and to heal from the loss of her husband.

She finds a book on BDSM in her sister Carrie's old apartment. The subject immediately catches her attention. Since the death of her husband Cass has put all she is into raising her daughter. Her wild child days are over, but there is something missing. She's grown cold inside, afraid to make the wrong move in life. To add some excitement she decides to explore the on-line world of D/S. It couldn't hurt, it's not like she was ever going to meet someone from the computer. That is until she meets Master Darken. He is patient and kind. He takes her to places she'd never known. What starts online eventually leads to a real life meeting. Even though she can't see his face, his actions, his words wrap her in a whirlwind of erotic sensations that thaw the cold in Cassidy's soul.

Hidden behind the mask, Dorian knows that Cass was meant for him, but she is skittish and afraid of the world outside the safe cocoon she's wrapped herself in.

One night she begs to see who the man behind the mask is. What follows is a tempest of emotions that threaten everything Cassidy thought she wanted and needed for herself and her daughter.

Because Unmasking Dorian will force Cassidy to choose between love, faith and hope or an overwhelming fear that could tear her apart forever.

Chapter One

Cass sat in front of the computer looking at the black and red web page. She hit the join button and was transported to the sign-up page. A knot formed in her stomach. Was she really going to do this? Looking at the book next to the computer she remembered the words so clearly. Her body had softened as she pored over every page. But this, this was a huge step.

She sent a quick glance toward the hallway, toward Katie's room. Her baby, who at almost two years old wasn't such a baby anymore, was safely tucked in her crib. Cass looked back at the screen. Dynamic images shifted, forbidden fantasies brought to vivid life in the anonymity of cyberspace. It's not like she was hitting the clubs. She wasn't embarking on a series of meaningless flings. It's not like anything she did online would be *real*.

She took a deep breath and plugged in her information, along with her credit card number. She would try it out for a week. Just one week, just to see if she truly felt the same as she had reading that damn book.

She needed a name. Well... She sat and thought. She hated making up screen names. They always seemed silly, or pretentious. She certainly didn't want a bubble gum name. Taffy69. CandyKisses2009. *Yuck*. Ok, what about Wild Child? She turned it over in her mind. Yep, that was the one she was going with. So maybe it was silly and pretentious; it's not like anyone would know who she was. Besides, it's what Carrie and her folks had always called her when she'd ended up in some wacky escapade as a kid. It seemed fitting; there was nothing wild about her life now, nothing but work and her family and Katie. If this little online experiment was supposed to wake her up, make her feel alive again, then it was poetic irony that she used the nickname of the woman she used to be.

She entered her vital statistics, then re-read her answers: SWF, 27, 5'7", a few extra pounds. She loved the weight descriptions, thin, average, a few extra pounds and stocky. So much more appealing than "shaped like a summer squash".

The next two pages were a laundry list of what she was willing to do or not do in the name of BDSM. She quickly checked a bunch of no's. No, she didn't want a woman, nor would she have any sexual contact with one. Fine for others, she mused, but she was an outtie girl, not an innie.

The next set of questions piqued her interest. Would she have a ménage with two men? In real life, maybe a few years ago; there was no way she'd take that risk now. But in this online, fantasy life? Yes, definitely. Being pleased by two male bodies? The idea sounded heavenly.

Spanking, maybe. Tied up, another maybe. Cass continued onto the second page, checking each of her answers twice. She was trying to be honest, but she wondered if anyone was really honest on these things.

Maybe she should have described herself as a tall, willowy blonde with deep green eyes. Blah, she wasn't born that way so why lie about it? Besides it's not like she really expected to get any responses. And she certainly wasn't going to be sending her picture out into cyberspace. There were too many horror stories on the news about that kind of stuff.

Near the bottom of the survey her eyes bulged as she read some fetish choices. She tilted her head at some of the things listed. Was it really possible to do that with another human being? And, damn, that just wasn't hygienic! She wasted no time clicking no to all the questions. Those things might be just fine for other people, but not for her.

The last section was a box asking her to tell what she was looking for. This was a little trickier; she didn't want to sound like a fool or a wannabe. Biting her bottom lip, she let out a deep breath and decided to keep it simple.

Single female interested in speaking to a man. One who would like to have long, intense, deep conversations concerning D/s. I am new to this and would really like to talk with someone experienced. I am not looking to meet anyone, just for someone to talk with during the long hours of the night.

Okay, not the most inspired of ads, but she really didn't know what else to say. Somehow she didn't think *I found my sister's BDSM book under the bed and it really turned me on* was going to fly.

She looked at the clock; it barely registered nine-thirty. She got up and checked on Katie. Her baby was getting so big now, her light brown hair growing thicker by the day. She was snuggled down with her pink bunny, a smile ghosting across her sleeping face.

Cass kissed her daughter's forehead and left the sleeping child. She would be out until morning.

Pouring herself a glass of tea and grabbing some cookies, she went back to the computer, looking over everything the website had to offer. *Chat Rooms!* Sounded promising. She decided to enter one titled Newbie's and lurk a bit.

Immediately she was instant messaged. *So, slave: name, age and location.* Cass looked at the words and answer icon. Was this person kidding? She hit the ignore button. A minute later, as she was trying to follow the rather confusing conversation in the room, another message popped up. This one asked the same as the first, only he wanted to know if she was playing with herself. Oh, yuck. Was he serious? Did women really fall for this kind of crap? *Stop it, Cass, you're here to learn something about yourself.*

She was starting to regret ever venturing into the chat, but decided to hang out just a little longer, to see if the conversation would start to make sense. In less than ten minutes she had five more instant messages, each opening line more obnoxious than the last. Then in the middle of the conversation in the room, her name popped up. The last messenger she'd ignored was talking about her, telling the room that she was a bitch and refused to answer her messages.

Okay, time to leave. Chat was definitely not the way to go about this. She left the room. She would have a better time reading her new erotic novel. Before she could sign off, though, another message popped up. She almost ignored this one as well, until she read the first line. *You have to ignore those assholes, Wild. Their egos can't take it if someone fails to fall all over them.*

Cass laughed and typed, *Good to know. I thought it was me.*

Not at all. You're new here, aren't you?

Yes, I am. Is it that obvious?

Darken. Interesting screen name. Sounded kind of like something from Star Wars, or Star Trek. Well, it wasn't any worse than the others she'd seen. At least his didn't contain a sexual reference.

LOL... Yes, I can tell. You weren't participating in the room.

You caught me. I won't be going in there again anytime soon.

I can't imagine why. You have to be very careful who you speak to.

Cass raised an eyebrow. *Yes, I am aware.*

So, would you like to tell me about yourself?

Not really, she thought. She wasn't convinced this person was any better than the previous ones.

I have a profile. I really have to go now. If you read my profile and still would like to talk, then e-mail me. The screen was silent for a moment. Guess he wasn't interested after all.

And then... I'll do that. We can talk more tomorrow. Look up my profile as well. Good night, Wild Child.

He was gone. Cass was intrigued and her curiosity was more than she could stand. She pulled up his profile. Read it once, her insides quivering, and then read it again, more slowly this time.

His information was pretty standard. He was 6'2, 180 lbs. Dark hair, brown eyes. "Fit and toned." He sounded yummy on paper. He was gainfully employed and single. That is, if you could believe a word onscreen.

Cass laughed. She *wanted* what she was reading to be true. She read through his list of interests. He definitely was into spanking, binding, clamps and piercings. He used lots of toys. Cass found herself writing down the names of various things so she could look them up.

She wasn't a prude, but aside from her trusty vibrator, she'd never used toys. The idea made her panties wet.

He liked collars and leashes. She wasn't too sure about the whole leash thing. He liked ménage with two women, or a man and another woman, but didn't engage in bisexual activity. That was good to know, except for the two woman thing. It may be every man's fantasy, but it certainly wasn't every woman's. He wasn't into the more fringe elements of BDSM. Cass hadn't realized she'd been holding her breath until she let it out in a gust of relief.

She scanned down to places he met women. Again, pretty standard: clubs and the like. He didn't mention meeting them online. That was something she would have to keep in mind if she ever spoke to him again.

Chapter Two

“Lick your finger and thumb and place them around your nipple. Those are my fingers, baby. It’s me touching you, pulling on your nipple, pinching it. With my other hand I stroke your clit, slowly.” Cass panted as she followed Darken’s instructions, unable to catch her breath; totally caught up in the sound of his voice. “I’m going to keep stroking your clit while I pinch your nipple harder because I know the pain makes it right for you. Feel the pleasure in your pussy as I stroke, the pain in your nipple as I pinch hard. Tell me when the pain fades into pleasure.”

Cass cried out as the sensations crashed over her. For two months now, three days a week, she talked with her online Dom. He’d gone slowly with her, introducing her to a new way of thinking, of seeing herself. He’d started with several hard and fast rules. They met three times a week, always at nine-thirty. She was to be naked for him, ready for his pleasure. She was to follow directions immediately, no questions, and no hesitations. Finally, and somehow most difficult, she wasn’t allowed to censor herself. He’d forbidden her to backspace or delete her IM’s. He wanted her gut reactions, her unvarnished truths. In return, he’d introduced her to new pleasures, deeper feelings than she’d ever experienced before. Feelings that threatened to swallow her whole at times.

“Oh, God, Master.” The pleasure rushed over her in waves, caught her in an undertow that threatened to destroy her entirely.

“Tell me how it feels, baby. What am I doing to you?” His voice stroked over her, an almost physical caress.

“You’re...” she couldn’t think, couldn’t focus.

“What am I doing?” His words became a velvet whip, snapping her back to the moment, jarring her off the edge of orgasm.

“You’re squeezing my nipples. First one, then the other.”

“How does it feel, baby?” His approval surrounded her and she shuddered with the sensation.

They’d moved from online to the phone after a month. The first time she’d heard the deep timber of his voice she’d whimpered aloud. Denied the sight of him, the taste of his skin or the heat of his touch, her sense of hearing had become painfully acute.

He seduced her with his voice, ravished her with his words. The first time he’d made her come for him he hadn’t allowed her to touch herself. He’d brought her over solely with his descriptions of what he wanted to do to her; what he *was* doing to her. She’d cried when she’d come, overwhelmed by how vulnerable she was. Her Master understood and talked her through the deep emotions bubbling to the surface.

He’d taken to calling her his baby. She called him Master. It was the oddest thing at first, calling a man that, but it was one of his rules, and it felt like the first test of how far she was willing to take their play.

He gave her a list of toys, each specifically chosen to goad her burgeoning sex drive. She went out and bought them, a few at a time. With his coaching she learned how to use them; learned how to please her body by pleasing the man on the other end of the phone line.

“Do you have your clamps ready, baby?” She moaned an affirmative. He wasn’t

about to let her get away with that, though. "Answer me correctly." His voice, deep and uncompromising, sent shivers down to her soul.

"Yes, Master," she finally managed to force out in between gasping breaths.

"That's good, baby. Very good."

She'd had phone sex before. Her college boyfriend had transferred schools mid-year and, before distance and neglect had mellowed the relationship to friendship, they'd shared plenty of steamy conversations in the wee hours. *This* was nothing like *that*. Lord God knew it was physical, but her sessions with her Master transcended the body; they stripped her down to the marrow, bared her soul. Master was able to draw out the wild woman that still lived deep inside of Cass. The woman she'd been before marriage and motherhood.

"What else am I doing while I play with your nipples?"

"You're touching my clit, petting it."

"Are you ready to come?" That deep voice took on a teasing tone as he followed a conversational trail they'd taken many times before.

"I was ready to come when I heard your voice," she gritted out.

He laughed, low and satisfied. "It pleases me to hear that, baby. Knowing your body responds to me, recognizes who it belongs to, makes me very proud of you."

"Master..." She let her voice trail off, unsure how he'd respond to the question that had been burning in her mind for weeks now.

"What is it, baby? What do you need from your Master?" She didn't answer at first, caught between the claws of emotional and physical need. As always, he seemed to understand, waiting her out in silence.

"Does it feel the same for you?" she finally managed. "So deep you feel like you're drowning?" She nearly moaned in embarrassment as she heard her own words. Master had made it clear that this wasn't about his emotions, it was about hers. But God, she ached for some sign that he was as undone by their time together as she was.

"It's deeper, baby. Knowing you belong to me, knowing you've put yourself in my hands, given me pieces of you that you've never trusted to anyone else is the deepest pleasure there is."

It was something, she thought, but not enough.

Turning over her pleasure to him, talking by phone and not touching each other bordered on physical pain. Her little experiment had gone much further than Cass had ever intended. She'd formed a bond with this faceless man, and if she thought about it too much, it scared her down to the bone.

She lived for their phone calls, counted the hours. For the first time in years the numbness that kept her so cold on the inside started to shake. In the heat of his voice she caught flickers, little fleeting glimpses of what real pleasure was. The intensity was incredible and always left Cass shaking and panting for more.

"Move your hips back and forth, press down until you feel the plug penetrate deeper into your ass." He hummed, a low sound of pleasure. "My ass, baby." The first time she'd inserted a plug Master talked her through it, taught her how to breathe through the burn, how to relax into the invasion until she reached the point where pain and pleasure were so intertwined she couldn't tell where one ended and the other began.

"Pinch your nipples harder for me. Now take one clamp and slowly clip it onto your left nipple. Keep stroking your clit with your other hand, and do not come."

She attached the clamp and cried out high and hard at the flash of pain, the rush of fire.

“I’m going to fuck you now, baby.”

Legs spread wide, Cass desperately grabbed the dildo from the desk, setting it against her hungry entrance as she waited for his permission to slide it in. He’d told her exactly the one to get, had shown her the link online. It was nine inches long, thick and veiny, and he promised her it was exactly the same size as his cock. He teased her mercilessly with it, making her hold off her orgasm until she was close to tears.

“Now, baby. Fuck yourself now. It’s *me* inside of you, pounding hard into *my* pussy.”

“Master, please…” Cass begged without shame or pride, knowing he would give her what she needed so desperately.

“Come for me, baby,” his voice took on a gravelly tone, one that said he might be just as close as she was to the cataclysm. “Come *now!*”

Cass cried out as her body went into full orgasm; her eyes misted as her thighs squeezed down on the thick toy between her thighs.

“That’s my baby, good girl,” he soothed, guiding her down from that place of pure feeling. “I want to meet you.”

Cass froze. It wasn’t the first time he’d asked, but tonight his voice was different, almost vulnerable.

“Anywhere in a public place if you choose. Tell me yes, baby.”

God, she wanted to. More than anything she wanted to meet him. She hesitated, torn. This, what they shared, wasn’t her real life. Her real life was work and Katie. But with Master she felt so alive, so much like the woman she’d always wanted to be. The feelings he drew out of her were so big she was afraid that if she met him in person, she’d never be able to stuff them down again.

He sighed in her ear at her continued silence, but when he spoke his voice was low and even. “Never mind, baby. I understand. I won’t push you.” The resignation in his tone broke her. She could fight her own needs and desires, but she couldn’t deny his.

“Yes,” Cass cut him off.

“Yes, what?” The caution in his voice reinforced her decision.

“Yes, Master, I’ll meet you.” Her words rushed out as she made her decision. She wanted this; she needed the feel of him, the smell and taste of him. She wanted to come home and rub his scent all over her sheets. She wanted him to mark her. She wanted her marks on him.

“This pleases me. Do you know where the club Velvet Ice is?” The name hit Cass hard and she wanted to laugh. Of course she knew it; her brother-in-law was part owner. She also knew that if Master belonged to the club then he’d been checked out thoroughly by Brady Ryder. The manager and co-owner of the club would know everything there was to know about Master.

“I know where it is,” she replied, her excitement growing tenfold.

“Good. Friday night at eight o’clock you will go to the club. Use the private side entrance. A woman named Ty will be waiting for you. Tell her you are there for me.”

Cass didn’t like the idea of him not meeting her personally. Worse, she didn’t like the lick of jealousy she felt at the idea of him with another woman, even if he was just using her as an escort for Cass. She forced it down, though.

“Yes, Master. I’ll be there.”

“Wear white for me, baby. You know I love you in white.” His voice was gentle, almost as if he’d felt her conflict. He probably had, she realized. Her Master had an uncanny way of sensing when she was troubled about something.

“Yes, Master.” She was ridiculously near tears, she realized. Overwhelmed yet again by the forces this man drew out in her so easily.

“I need your name, baby. I need to give it to Ty so she can let you in.”

“Cassidy,” she whispered. “My name is Cassidy.” It was the first time she’d told him her real name. Somehow it seemed almost more intimate than anything they’d done before.

“Cassidy,” he murmured, her name sounding like silk as he spoke it aloud. “Friday night, Cassidy. Don’t keep me waiting.”

“Yes, Master.” The phone clicked off and Cass replaced the receiver in the cradle. Her hand was shaking as she realized what exactly she’d just done. She hadn’t had a lover since Kevin’s death, hadn’t planned on looking for one. But Master wasn’t really a lover, she rationalized. He was her fantasy. Friday couldn’t get here soon enough. She’d have to call Carrie in the morning to see if her sister could take Katie for the night.

* * * *

Dorian let out a slow breath, and sat staring at the now-silent phone. His dick ached like a sore tooth, his hands were shaky, and it had been more than two months since he’d had any sort of satisfaction. But none of that mattered. She was going to meet him. His baby. Cassidy Lassiter.

If he’d been anywhere besides a cramped surveillance van, he’d have jumped up and pumped his fist, shouted *yes* loud enough to wake the dead, let alone wake Carlos’ idiot “generals” as they dozed outside the dealer’s Grosse Pointe mansion.

Two months ago when he’d come across Wild Child on the alternative website, he couldn’t believe his luck. She had an innocent curiosity that, when combined with her down-to-earth common sense, was completely refreshing and enchanting. He’d connected with her in a way he’d never connected with a sub before. She was eager to learn, to explore the boundaries of her sexuality, and her pleasure in giving over all control to him was obvious.

In general, Dorian wasn’t a “cyber-Dom.” He preferred to Master his women in person, where he could touch and taste. Hell, where he could order his sub to touch and taste him. But he was undercover, ferreting out the man in charge of the drugs being funneled through Marcus Worthington’s properties, so he had to be more discreet than usual. No hanging out at the club. No drawing attention to himself.

Finally boredom and sexual frustration led him online; led him to his baby. With every interaction she compelled him more. The Dom in him demanded that he discover her identity, and the cop in him had the resources. He’d unapologetically taken advantage of his position to learn who she was. And nearly shit his pants when he discovered his baby, his dream sub, was none other than Cassidy Anderson-Lassiter.

He’d seen her for the first time at Marcus and Carrie’s wedding and had been attracted, but her obvious fragility had kept him at a distance. She’d just lost her husband, just had a baby, and just relocated from another city... She’d been in no position, no frame of mind, for the kind of sex a man like Dorian needed.

Sex. That's all it would have been about. He hadn't been looking for a relationship, hadn't wanted one. Dorian was a ladies' man. He played the field, played hard, and moved on easily... Until now. Until Cassidy's soft, hesitant voice had called to something he hadn't known was inside of him.

He was still leery of "the R-word," but he couldn't seem to resist. Cassidy, his baby, drew him in as effortlessly as a flame drew a moth. He had an almost physical need to claim her, to collar her, to mark her as his own.

Times had changed. Cassidy was ready for him now; ready physically and emotionally. And, God knew, he was more than ready for her.

Chapter Three

“So, when are you going to give in and go out with me?” Cass smiled as she lifted her head. Dorian Jenner stood next to her desk in his faded denims and a black leather jacket, looking good enough to eat. The man was sex on a stick. His crooked smile made her shake her head.

“So, when are you going to give up?” He was a gorgeous man, from the top of his dark hair down to his long muscular thighs, but he was a cop. Not just any cop, but an undercover cop. Not that it was common knowledge. He was currently working at the Worthington’s building site, had been there for a year, working on the interiors of the Convention Center property, and most people believed he was nothing more than Dorian Jones, the foreman. As Marcus’ personal assistant, Cass knew his true identity, but didn’t know the details, nor did she want to.

Dorian showed up at the main offices to meet with Marcus, Meredith and Matthew Worthington about once a week, and he asked her out each and every time he came. She actually looked forward to his little visits. He’d flirt, she’d reject him, he’d make a funny comment then go in to see one of the Worthington siblings.

His eyes twinkled as he dramatically placed his hand over his heart. “You’re killing me here, Cass.”

“Somehow, I seriously doubt you’re in need of my company.” She was surprised when a slight frown marred his otherwise perfect brow.

“You have no idea what I need, Cassidy.” The frown disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. “But I could show you.”

She laughed and shook her head at his smile and wink. “Nice try.”

He tilted his head and studied her, brown eyes speculative. “Is there someone else?”

The question hung there between them for a long moment. Before she realized she was going to say it, the words came out. “Yes, in fact, there is.”

He sighed deeply and stepped back. “Man, rejected!” He clutched his chest in mock pain, making big puppy dog eyes. “Sorry, Cass. I didn’t mean to put you on the spot.”

Cass shook her head, laughing a bit. “Marcus will be awhile; Carrie’s in there with him.”

“No worries, I’ll just drop this off with Ms. Worthington,” he waved the manila folder he was holding in a jaunty farewell. “See ya, beautiful.” He turned on his heel and Cass watched his impressive ass move down the hall toward Meredith’s office.

Dorian Jenner was tempting, but too big a risk for Cass to take. Kevin had met an awful death in Iraq. She wasn’t about to hook her star to a man with a job that was almost as dangerous. Kevin’s death had left her scared and alone and now a single mother. Her dead husband had never even laid eyes upon their daughter. Katie would never know her father. Cass wouldn’t put herself or her baby through that again.

Not to mention the fact that even flirting with Dorian felt like she was cheating on her Master. She suppressed a shiver. It wasn’t cheating. They didn’t have a real relationship. It was safer for everyone that way.

* * * *

The elevator door closed and Dorian grinned from ear to ear. His conversation with Meredith Worthington had been a productive one. He knew that most people looked at Meredith and saw a stone cold bitch, but Dorian had seen the vulnerable, flustered woman under the icy shell while Tony Renatto had been courting her. She was much more involved in this investigation than Dorian would like. He'd prefer she stay the hell out of his way and let him do his job. And he knew Tony must be sweating bullets at the thought of her exposed to even the hint of danger. But Dorian understood her need to be a part of things. The Convention Center was her project, hers and Tony's, and the idea that someone was fucking with it must be driving her nuts.

Yeah, Meredith was a piece of work, but that wasn't why Dorian was smiling. He was smiling because Cass had someone else. Of course he already knew that, because she had him, or rather she had *Master*.

Today his normal flirtations had made him hold his breath until she admitted she had someone else. She'd unknowingly laid claim to him, and he was stoked beyond belief to hear her admit he'd laid claim to her, too. She called to his soul, the light and the dark, and he'd known fate had given her to him the moment he discovered she was his baby.

He'd still have to tread carefully. If he went too fast, she would flee and he might lose her forever. That was completely unacceptable. No, Dorian was prepared to go slow for Cassidy. He was going to show her a world she'd only dreamed about. He was going to make her his, forever.

* * * *

"Kneel here, legs spread. Good. Now clasp your hands behind your back. Present your breasts. Eyes on the floor. Perfect." Cass followed Ty's instructions to the letter, jealousy twisting in her stomach. Was the other woman another of Master's submissives? She had no claim on him, no right to care how many women he was with. Still, the idea of him commanding the tall brunette standing over her made her want to claw the woman's big green eyes out.

"This is your presentation position. It's the position you will assume in your Master's presence until he gives you other directions." Cass gave a slight nod to acknowledge the other woman's words.

"You're in for a treat, Cassidy." Ty's hand passed lightly over her hair and Cass jumped, startled. "Master D has a wonderful reputation at Velvet Ice. His subs always come back begging for more."

Shivers rioted across her body; part fear, part anticipation. What if she hated this? What if she wanted to run like hell? It was one thing to play in the privacy of her own living room, no witness other than a voice on the phone. It was another thing entirely to literally put herself in her Master's hands.

He'd told her on numerous occasions that it had to be safe, sane and consensual. He wasn't interested in emotional head-games; the only games he liked were those of pleasure. The kind of games that gave the kind of pleasure Cass had only dreamed about.

Even with his reassurances, she couldn't help the fear creeping into her mind. She was kneeling, looking at the red carpet, her hands behind her back, vulnerable and waiting. Waiting to be at the mercy of this stranger, who probably knew her better than anyone else in the world.

She looked at the way the white lace panties stretched over her rounded tummy.

She'd told Master on several occasions that she was soft and slightly round, and he'd insisted that physical appearance was the least of his requirements.

At first she hadn't been able to believe him, but as time went on she'd begun to change her mind. Would she care if he wasn't the most attractive man in the world? The answer was a resounding *no*. Cass didn't care about how he looked. She cared about how he made her feel; sexy, feminine and cherished. Without ever having laid eyes on the man, she felt a connection to him, and she prayed that when he entered the room that connection would be real and not just in her head. She'd been searching for something for so long. Master seemed to hold the answers to what she really wanted, needed, in life.

*

Dorian opened the door quietly and gazed down at Cassidy. He took a deep, silent breath and clamped down hard on his nerves. He had no reason to be nervous. The mask he wore would keep her from recognizing him as anything other than her Master.

She was in position, dressed as instructed in a white lace bra and matching panties. Her stockings and garter were also snow-white. Innocent, like she was.

He had to catch his breath; the picture she made was so beautiful, her body soft and full. It was as if her curves had been designed for his large, rough hands. He curled his fingers, making tight fists to keep from reaching out to touch her. It wasn't time for that yet.

Dorian had never reacted this way to one of his subs, never felt this soul-deep yearning for absolute possession. It rocked him to the core. It scared the shit out of him. What if she couldn't take what he needed her to? What if he couldn't push her boundaries, show her what real need, real desire, real *release* felt like? He wanted to give that to her, *needed* to give her the freedom to surrender, the freedom to take the pleasure into herself and come apart in his hands.

Once he had himself under control, he approached her, placing a hand on her shoulder. She shuddered beneath his touch. He continued to caress her shoulder, her neck. He ran his hand along the top of her silky hair. The blonde and brown strands glided through his fingers, and he tightened his hold, lifting her face. She wore very little make-up, just like he preferred.

"Your safe word is innocent." He kept his voice low and husky, masking his normal cadence. It would be disastrous for her to realize who he was right now. Later, after she spent time with her Master, then he would come clean and tell her who he was.

"Say the safe word, and I will stop. Say the safe word if you don't feel good about anything that's happening." His thumb traced the outline of her lips. "What's your safe word, Cassidy?"

"Innocent," she replied, her voice barely above a whisper.

He tightened his hold on her hair slightly. "Innocent *what*, Cassidy?"

She scrunched up her small nose in a questioning gesture.

"How do you address me, Cassidy?"

"Master."

"So answer my question. What's your safe word?"

She licked her lips. Dorian's cock jumped. "My safe word is innocent, Master."

"That's much better," he praised, and rewarded her with another caress to her mouth, dipping his thumb slightly inside and then dragging the moisture across her full lower lip. It would be far too easy to lose himself in her, Dorian realized. Far, far too easy.

He stepped back. "Stand up for me, Cassidy." He held his hand to her. She grasped it and he gently pulled her into a standing position. Her hand was dwarfed by his larger one, and it made him feel like a giant. He squeezed her fingers lightly before leading her into the private room he kept at the club.

"Stay here," he directed, as he moved away to the wardrobe where he kept his toys. He could feel her eyes on him as he opened the door. He shook his head. She was going to need reminders, he realized, until she got used to the differences between playing on the phone and playing in person. "Cassidy, you may not look at me until I tell you to. Eyes back down."

Dorian felt a glimmer of a smile tilt his lips when her eyes hit the floor instantly.

"I'm sorry," she whispered.

His smile grew. "You're sorry *what*, Cassidy?"

"I'm sorry, Master."

God, she was luscious, all trembling and unsure.

Dorian retrieved the items he was looking for, but paused before returning to Cassidy's side. He knew her anticipation, her curiosity over what he planned to use on her, would take her higher. He wanted her high. He wanted her completely off balance and stirred up. He wanted to be the only anchor, the only reality in her universe.

Finally, when he could see the fine tremble in her shoulders, could see the muscles in her neck straining against the urge to look up at him, he moved back to her side. He pressed a soft, chaste kiss to her forehead, then moved to stand behind her.

"Cassidy, it's important for you to remember the rules or I will be forced to punish you for disobedience."

"Yes, Master."

Dorian grinned; his baby was learning fast.

Working efficiently, but slowly enough for her to feel every movement, Dorian wrapped a set of wide leather cuffs around her wrists. He dropped to his knees behind her and felt her breath catch as he pressed his lips to the tender skin of her wrists above the rough leather.

Unable to resist, he ran his hands along the length of her firm, curvy legs. She was like satin beneath his hands, warm and shuddering. God, he wanted more. Forcing himself back on-task, he quickly fastened a second set of leather cuffs around her ankles. They looked bulky against her delicate limbs. The contrast had his dick trying to burrow a hole through the zipper of his leathers.

"I want you to spread your legs for me, as wide as you can." Her thighs trembled as she moved them out to the sides. Dorian grabbed a chain from the accessories he'd piled next to her, clipping it to an eye-bolt screwed securely into the floor and then to each leg. He took a longer length of chain and bound it to the cuffs at her wrists before locking the other end into the hook in the floor.

At last he stood behind her again. Lifting the heavy fall of her hair, he pressed his lips to the tender nape of her neck, smiling a little when her breath hitched. Slowly, he fitted a wide leather collar around her neck. He'd collared other submissives in the course of their play, but never had he felt the surge of sheer possession that washed over him as he visibly branded Cassidy as his possession. Placing the collar on his other submissives had been an amusing part of their play. Placing the collar on Cassidy felt more like making a vow.

For a moment he hated the collar, because it was impersonal, plain black leather. He wanted something special for Cassidy, something uniquely her. A statement to the world that she belonged to him, Dorian. He moved to stand before her. "You're beautiful, Cassidy, restrained and ready for me."

A small shake of her head made him frown. "You don't believe me?"

"It's hard for me to believe that you think I'm..." Dorian cut her off, grasping her chin in uncompromising fingers.

"You are *mine* Cassidy, and when you insult yourself, you insult me. We've discussed this many times. Your body is perfection the way it is. If I desired something else I could *have* something else. I wouldn't be here. Do you understand me?"

Her lips trembled as she squeaked out a small. "Yes, I understand." Dorian narrowed his eyes and let his mouth get hard. When he frowned, she quickly added, "Master! I understand *Master*."

"I'm disappointed, Cassidy. You've earned your first punishment."

Chapter Four

Cassidy was close to tears as Master forced her to meet his gaze. He wore a mask that covered his head and most of his face. The only features she could see clearly were his strong chin and sculpted lips. She couldn't even make out the exact color of his eyes, shadowed as they were by the black leather. He was tall, at least five inches taller than she was, and standing so close to him she felt positively petite.

His upper body was bare, glistening golden in the muted lighting. A light dusting of hair roughened mile-wide pecs. His abdomen was ripped, the skin appeared satin smooth. A silky looking trail of dark hair picked up under his navel and meandered down to eventually disappear behind the fly of the black leathers that wrapped lovingly around his legs. God, his thighs were so thick, like tree trunks. Heck, all of him was thick, hard, and substantial. She knew that in his arms she could feel secure, be safe.

He was gorgeous, the kind of gorgeous a woman like her only ever dreamed about. His touch was gentle but firm as he ran a finger along her cheek and lips. When he'd fastened the collar, she'd almost protested. It felt too personal, too intimate. It felt like it meant more than a fantasy should be allowed to mean.

Being chained to the floor was another surprise—not the fact he'd done it, but how she reacted to it. Cass had done her homework, had read books on bondage and domination, obedience and submission. She'd checked out the websites. She knew what to expect. She'd thought she was prepared. Now she realized nothing could have prepared her for this feeling of vulnerability. Master could literally do anything he wanted with her in this position; she had no way to protect or defend herself. But he'd given her the safe word, her out if “safe, sane and consensual,” became scary.

“What are you thinking, baby?” Master was circling her slowly, tracing his finger lightly along her collarbone, the line of her shoulder blades, moving back around to stroke his thumb over her lower lip again.

“I've been so numb, for so long.” It didn't even occur to Cass to lie to him. He was her Master, and she'd given herself to him for the time they were together.

“Tell me about it.” He dropped to a crouch in front of her. She would have been self-conscious at the way his eyes coasted the length of her body, but she was too distracted by the way the leather of his pants cupped the bulge between his thighs.

Oh, yeah. Every bit of him was big, thick and hard.

“After they came to tell me Kevin was dead, it felt like I was stuck in this... I don't know, bubble or something. I could see and hear what was going on around me, but I couldn't *feel* any of it.” It was only as she tried to describe her feelings that she began to understand them. “I was always the wild one in the family,” she continued slowly. “I think when Kevin died and I knew I was all Katie had in the world, I felt like I had to shut down.”

He nodded slowly, reaching out one hand to wrap around her ankle above the leather cuff. His heat radiated into her, threatening the ice she'd inadvertently formed to protect herself and her daughter.

“Why did you need to shut down? What were you afraid of?” His voice was completely non-judgmental. Nothing in his tone made her feel the need to defend herself.

He offered complete understanding; complete acceptance.

“I think,” she paused, startled by the words coming out of her mouth. “I think I was afraid that if I let myself feel, I’d be tempted into doing something reckless, something that would blow up and end up hurting Katie.” Cass felt her eyes grow wide, and the words rushed out now. “Master, I didn’t trust myself. I didn’t really believe I could put Katie’s *needs* before my own *wants*, so I didn’t dare want anything.”

“You haven’t talked to anyone about this, have you?” His voice stayed gentle; so did his hand, which he’d begun to stroke along the length of her stocking-clad leg.

“Carrie, my sister, has tried to help.” Cass shook her head a little and gave a sad smile. “But how do you tell your best friend that you’re just going through the motions of life?” Master rose and stood facing her. He lifted his hand and cupped her cheek, seemingly captivated by her words. “How do you tell her that, except for when you’re holding your baby, every touch leaves you cold and aching for more?” She turned her cheek into his palm, whispering her final confession against his rough skin. “How do you tell your sister that you feel like you’re lost, looking for your purpose, for the one place you fit in this life?”

When she’d stumbled across Master, Cass had felt the ice begin to crack, just a bit. With every conversation, he’d warmed her a little more, until she thought maybe, just maybe, this man could help her to find the courage to really live again. Even if it was only a fantasy.

Master leaned in and pressed a tender kiss to her forehead. “Tonight what you’re going to experience may not be what you expect. What we are going to share isn’t about the toys I use, or the way I tie you down. It isn’t even about sex.”

The tip of his wet tongue teased the spot beneath her ear. “It’s about the experience. What you feel, what you sense happening all around you and how it affects you inside. It’s about finding your fulfillment in my pleasure, in following my commands. It’s about trust, Cassidy. You trusting that I can fulfill your desires, even if you didn’t know you desired them in the first place.”

Master walked over to the curtain and pushed a small button on the wall. The black velvet slowly moved back to reveal a giant mirror. Cass gasped as she saw her reflection for the first time. It was like looking at a stranger. The full, red lips looked nothing like hers. Those eyes, big and blue and glittering with excitement, couldn’t belong to her. Her breath became heavy as she took in the white lace, the chains and collar. Standing there, bound for her Master’s pleasure, Cassidy looked beautiful.

Master moved behind her. “I want you to keep your eyes on the mirror, baby. I want you to see every little thing I am about to do.”

*

Dorian placed his hands on Cass’s creamy shoulders. Her skin was so soft and carried the faintest scent of cocoa butter. He slid his hands down each arm and back up again, drinking her in through his palms. He stroked his hands along her shoulders, down the center of her spine, then slid them around to caress her rounded tummy. He walked his fingers up slowly until they came in contact with the lace of her white bra, smiling as she shivered beneath his touch.

Her nipples hardened and pressed against the lace, begging for attention. His cock answered, straining against his zipper, demanding freedom. He felt his control fraying with every shiver, every tremble of her soft, white skin.

He cupped her breasts, covering the sensitive tips with his palms and rubbing. Her big blue eyes widened in response. Her body pushed against his hands, silently begging for more.

He *wanted* to give her more.

He peeled down the stretchy lace cups of her bra, revealing each full globe to his eyes and his hands. He pinched her nipples lightly, and she sighed in response.

“Oh, baby, we can do better than that.” He increased the pressure, gripping her tender tips and twisting until she gasped “You like it harder, Cassidy?” The question rolled off his tongue as he licked her earlobe.

“I guess so.” She laughed a little, looking rather embarrassed.

Dorian pinched harder. “You guess?”

“Yes, Master,” she moaned. Dorian eased the pressure, then trailed his fingertips south. He skimmed over her belly, her hips, savoring the way her skin shivered beneath his touch. He paused to cup her hips, squeezing them appreciatively before stroking lightly over the lace of her panties. They were damp, and Dorian’s body went into revolt. He had to choke back the intense need to dive between her legs and gather her creamy honey on his fingers; to savor it on his tongue. Fighting for control, he hooked his thumbs into the elastic band stretched over her hips, and eased the white lace to her knees.

He slid his hands slowly up her inner thighs. Catching her swollen outer lips with his thumbs, he eased her pussy lips apart, opening her to his ravenous gaze. God, she was so fucking wet. So perfect and pink and ready to take him.

“Look, baby,” he raised his hands, fingers glossy with her moisture, and stroked along her bottom lip. He could barely force his voice past the gravel in his throat, nearly rendered speechless by the stunning sight of her. “Look how wet you are for me,” he whispered.

*

Cass couldn’t find her voice as Master opened her. He exposed her body, but it felt like he was also exposing her soul. She was beyond vulnerable, beyond any emotion she’d ever experienced. An ache began, deep in her core and growing until it consumed her. A need to be touched, to be filled. To be owned by this man, her Master.

He was right. She was very wet, and the moisture glistened against her trimmed curls. The cool air from the room drifted along her pussy and sent a shudder down her spine. He slid his thick, tanned fingers along the slick surface of her outer lips, holding her open so they could both see how much she wanted him.

Cass felt as if she was standing outside herself, watching her body push against his, pleading for fulfillment. He only continued his slow perusal of her, circling one finger softly around her clit, then coasting down her slit to dip into her quivering sheath. He gathered her slick moisture and traced a line to her rear opening. She wiggled, wriggled, bent her knees to give him better access, but he only pulsed his finger against the tight muscles there.

“Master,” she whimpered, desperate for a deeper touch, but he just shushed her.

“My will, baby. Remember, this is all about *my* will.”

How in the hell could he stand it? She was dying with the need to come.

Slowly he drew his fingers away from her flesh. Lifting his hand to his mouth, he looked her straight in the eye and licked her honey from his fingers. The gesture sent a sunburst of sensation through her and even more arousal coated her thighs in a hot rush.

Still keeping his eyes on hers, he reached down and pulled her panties up. Leaning in, he pressed a hot, damp kiss to the spot where her neck met her shoulder, and carefully tucked her breasts back into her bra.

“Well done, baby,” he whispered before laying a kiss to her cheek. “I’m pleased with you.” He turned and walked from the room.

Cass stood there for a moment, frozen with shock. *Was he serious?* She wanted to stomp her foot in sheer frustration. How could he just leave like that? Her body was screaming for release, and she knew he hadn’t been in much better shape. What the hell? If he was going to get her all stirred up and then refuse to satisfy her, she’d just hike her lace-clad ass on down to the dance floor and find someone who would.

The thought was so ludicrous it had Cass laughing out loud. But dammit, her body was humming with a kind of desire she’d never experienced before. Master had given her the most erotic experience of her life, and they hadn’t had sex. Hadn’t even come. Hell, she hadn’t even gotten to touch him. While she was pissed he hadn’t finished what he started, she appreciated the gift he’d given her. Her body was coming alive.

*

Dorian couldn’t get out of the private room fast enough. He moved down the stairs to the second-level dance floor like he had a demon on his heels. Hell, maybe he *did* have a demon chasing him. Demon lust. Demon emotion. Demon fucking possession. Because when he’d looked at Cassidy, bound, soft, tearful and so damned open to him, he’d heard a great rushing noise, a roar. It was the sound of his life changing forever.

Because he’d looked at her and known beyond a shadow of a doubt *she’s fucking mine*.

Once on the second level of the club, Dorian leaned against the wall and let the chaos envelop him. The music was loud and techno, the lights spun hot color over the dance floor. DJ Wicked was throwing a hell of a party tonight. Dorian let his head fall back against the wall. It had taken every single ounce of willpower he had to walk away without plunging balls-deep into his woman. The texture of her skin was branded onto his fingers, her scent tickled his nose. His dick was screaming bloody blue murder, but it was all worth it when he remembered the look on her face.

Her blue eyes had been wide with wonder; her pale skin flushed a perfect pink and her breathing shallow. She was so fucking gorgeous. He knew he needed to go slow with her. He knew enough about her, about her life, to know things hadn’t been easy for her. Besides, she had a child to consider, and Dorian wasn’t about to rush anything. He had no intention of ever hurting her, or her baby, but she needed time to learn that; to trust him. For now he had to be careful and take it slow. One wrong move and she’d be gone.

“Jenner.” A deep voice ripped him from his reverie and Dorian’s eyes snapped open.

“Oh, fuck.” Brady Ryder, part owner of Velvet Ice, marginal friend and one scary son of a bitch was standing in front of him, a look of seething anger in his usually blank eyes. It didn’t take a genius to figure out what had put it there.

Brady was flanked by two stunning women. Snow White and Rose Red, Dorian thought wryly. The blonde was tall, statuesque, and built for speed and pleasure. Not that he’d ever considered taking a ride himself. She was one of his baby sister’s best friends. Besides, Megan didn’t scream submissive to him.

“Hey, Meg.” He knew his voice was resigned, and that seemed to amuse Megan all out of proportion, if the smoky laugh she let out with was any indication. Dorian spared a

prayer of thanks that Kendra, the third in his sister's Terrible Trio of Doom, was safely engaged to Velvet Ice's events coordinator. Of course, Kendra had been the sensible one. God alone knew what fresh Hell his baby sister would get up to without Kendra's calming influence.

Ah, his baby sister.

Celia stood on Brady's other side, dark and delicate. Dorian very deliberately did not look at the amount of skin left bare by her abbreviated club garb. Some things a man never needed to notice about his sister. What he did notice was that while Brady had one big hand wrapped around Megan's upper arm, he very carefully avoided any physical contact with Celia. In fact, when Celia reached out to run her slender fingers down the big man's arm, the normally inscrutable Brady Ryder jerked away from her touch and shot her a distinctly hunted look.

"I believe this belongs to you," Brady growled, shoving Megan none too gently toward Dorian, and stepping back so Celia couldn't brush against him as she followed. Dorian narrowed his eyes as Celia deftly adjusted her course, rubbing cat-like over Brady's side on her way by him.

"Jesus." It was bad enough Celia was there. And how the fuck had she made it to the second level, anyway? If his fearless little sister had her sights set on Brady, she was in for a world of hurt.

"Good grief, Dorian, is that you in there?" He reached up and yanked off the stretchy mask that covered the majority of his face before she could touch it. She gave him an impish smile and snatched it out of his hand. "What have you been up to, you perv?"

Dorian just shook his head and tried to ignore her. Looking up at Brady, he winced sympathetically at the look of befuddled anger in the other man's eyes. God knew Celia'd provoked the same emotions in Dorian and their brother Morgan on more than one occasion.

"Sorry, man," he muttered, grabbing Celia and dragging her to his side. "I'll just escort the ladies home."

Brady didn't respond beyond a painfully relieved look and a short nod of his head before turning to disappear into the crowd.

"That man needs to be unwound," Celia murmured to Megan, who laughed again.

"Celia Lynne, you stay the fuck away from Brady Ryder," Dorian snapped, beginning to lead the women down the stairs to the public dance floor.

"I thought he was your friend." She shot him a curious look as she skipped lightly down the stairs at his side.

"Men like him don't have friends," he told her. "They have acquaintances and enemies."

Unfortunately, his warning didn't seem to faze her at all. In fact, she looked even more intrigued.

"Well, that's just wrong," she murmured as she allowed him to propel her out of the club and into the muggy night.

Chapter Five

Dorian closed the surveillance van's door and folded himself into the seat next to his brother. "So what do I need to know?" he asked.

Morgan, his older brother by a mere ten months, handed over a note pad. "Not much. We haven't seen anyone coming or going from the site after hours since last week. I think Carlos might have been tipped off."

Dorian frowned. They'd been on this investigation for well over a year now, and, "Who the fuck would tip him off?"

Morgan shrugged. "Leu thinks we might have a leak, but I don't know who the hell it'd be."

Dorian threw the notepad across the interior of the van. "We can't lose this guy. Not when his shit's showing up all over the fucking Metro area."

"He's a careful asshole; been in the business a long fucking time. We knew this would take awhile."

"Mark's still dealing small time out of the site. It's been hell keeping Renatto and the Worthingtons out of there."

Tony Renatto, the contractor for the Worthington's Convention Center project, had discovered a stash of drugs on the site early in the first phase of construction. He'd brought his suspicions to Dorian, who'd eventually gone undercover on-site as the man in charge of interior work. It had been a matter of days to identify the worker ants. Men like Mark Byers, a small-time dealer with several arrests and no convictions, were easy to spot.

Renatto and the Worthingtons weren't interested in the foot soldiers, though. They wanted the generals, and Dorian agreed. Unfortunately, the war wasn't over once they'd identified the men in charge. No, that was just the beginning, because then they had to find proof that would hold up in court.

Dorian had been working the case for a almost two years now, with Morgan and his partner Rico as his back-up, and sometimes it felt like they hadn't made any progress at all. With every day that passed it was harder to keep Renatto and the Worthington men out of the investigation. And as difficult as the men were, not one of them could hold a candle to Meredith Worthington.

The Convention Center was her project, her baby, and she'd taken it personally when they'd found drugs on the property. When she'd married Renatto, Dorian had a brief glimmer of hope that the other man could keep her under control and out of police business. He'd been doomed to disappointment. Marriage hadn't mellowed her a bit. Dorian pictured her icy silver eyes and shuddered. Meredith Worthington-Renatto was one scary female when she was on the warpath.

"Got some more bad news," Morgan broke into his thoughts. "Worthington's first wife is not only Carlos' lawyer, but also his fiancée." Dorian's brother leaned back against the vinyl seat, crossing his ankles.

"Son of a bitch. Does she know about Carlos' real business?" When Marcus found out he would hit the fucking roof.

Morgan shrugged his shoulders. "Not sure, but I don't think so. She's too busy

shopping and showing off her five carat diamond. They don't spend a great deal of time together. Carlos is no fool. He knows she's the best defense attorney in Detroit. What better cover to have than being married to her?"

"This just gets better and better," Dorian muttered. "Shit."

"And on that happy note, don't you need to get to work?" Morgan sent him an evil grin, grey eyes glittering with amusement.

"Aw, kiss my ass," Dorian replied, reaching for the door to the van. Actually, he didn't mind the construction work. It was a hell of a lot less stressful than his actual job.

"Wanna come by for a beer after work tonight?" Morgan tossed out before Dorian could step out of the van. "I've got steaks, and the Wings are on."

"Can't," Dorian replied, hand on the door. "I've got a date." It had been two days since he'd seen Cassidy, and she hadn't returned his calls. He'd finally left her a message that he'd expect her online tonight. No excuses. No threats. Just the rock-solid confidence and command of her Master. And he knew she'd be there waiting for him, because everything in her yearned to submit to him.

"Yeah," Morgan mocked good-naturedly. "I guess even the Red Wings can't compete with tying some pretty little piece of fluff up and spanking her until she calls you daddy."

The teasing was nothing new. His brother wasn't a Dom and had no desire to sample the lifestyle, but he didn't look down on Dorian for his more exotic tastes. Morgan simply couldn't resist the opportunity to try and get a rise out of his "baby brother." Dorian was usually able to ignore the taunts, but somehow, having them aimed at Cassidy, they weren't quite so harmless. Still, he managed to keep his temper in check and keep his voice bland when he responded. No need to give Morgan any more ammo than he already had.

"You're just jealous, bro, 'cuz you got no one to call *you* daddy."

Morgan was laughing when Dorian slammed the door closed behind him.

* * * *

Cass booted up her computer at exactly ten P.M. She'd avoided her Instant Messenger and ignored her voicemail for the last three days, but she knew she couldn't put off talking with Master forever. His voice had been dark and commanding in this morning's voicemail. *Cassidy, you will be online tonight, and we will talk about whatever it is that has you running.*

Cass nibbled her bottom lip. They did need to talk. She needed to understand why he'd left her that way; wet, wild and unfulfilled. The more she'd thought about it, the more embarrassed she'd become. She'd been out of control; so turned on she'd thought she might die if she didn't come. She'd thought he'd been just as affected as she was, but now she wasn't sure. If he'd been as into the moment as she, he'd never have been able to walk away like that.

She signed into her messenger with a sigh, and his message popped up immediately. *Explain yourself, baby.*

Excuse me? Cass stared at the dialogue box in disbelief. *You're kidding, right?*

No. I'm not. There was a long pause, and Cass knew he was waiting for her reply, but she was too incensed, to hurt and embarrassed, to answer. Finally a new message blinked onto her screen. *Am I your Master, Cassidy? Are you mine? Because if you are,*

you will answer me now, and you will tell me the truth. Without that trust, without that truth, we have nothing and our relationship was built on nothing more than fog.

There was that word again: relationship. She'd tried to compartmentalize; tried to rationalize her feelings away. Master was going to force her to be honest; not only with him, but also with herself.

Finally, she typed, *You left me alone.*

How do you address me, Cassidy?

Frustration beat at her. She was torn between hurt and outrage, unsure of how she was supposed to feel. But she wasn't ready to give up yet.

Master, I need to understand why you left me the way you did. She was trying for forceful, but God, she sounded pathetic. She wanted to cry. How could one meeting, one aborted encounter, fill her with such turmoil? Her emotions were running wild. One second she was madder than hell, the next she wanted to fall to her knees and beg him to feel the same way she did, and that just made her angrier.

Cassidy, I told we were going to do things my way. Not follow a script from BDSM 101. My pleasure becomes your fulfillment. Leaving you Friday night did not mean I didn't want you, nor did it mean I didn't want to see you again.

Cass shook her head. *I don't understand. What did humiliating me prove?* There. She'd said it. She'd been embarrassed, her pride stung.

There was an even longer pause, and Cass held her breath, afraid she'd made him angry enough to leave her for good. And, dammit, what right did *he* have to be angry? He wasn't the one who'd been left high and ... well, not dry by any means. She'd practically worn out a set of batteries by the time she'd given up on using her vibrator.

Baby, I was not trying to humiliate you. That may be some other Dom's kink, but not mine. Cassidy, a Dom/sub relationship is about trust, and the willingness to give up control. You're such a natural at this that I forget how new it all is to you.

My reason for walking away Friday night was two-fold. First, I need you to see that, while a Dom/sub relationship is definitely sexual, it's not just about sex. It's about your trusting me to take care of you in every way you need. Second, by insulting my woman, you insulted me. I told you you'd earned a punishment. Denying you your orgasm was it.

Cass's shoulders sagged, and she realized just how badly she'd needed to hear him say he wasn't trying to hurt or humiliate her.

I thought I was all alone, she typed. *I thought you didn't want me the way I wanted you.*

Oh, baby, she could almost hear the amusement in his words. *If I'd wanted you any more, I'd have left the evidence of it soaking through my pants.*

Relief flooded her, and then another feeling wrapped around her like a blanket. One of excitement and anticipation.

I believe you, she managed to type with shaky fingers.

Good, I want to see you again. Can you make it this Friday around nine?

Yes, Master. Heck, she didn't know if she could wait that long.

"I'm pleased. One more thing, Cassidy. A command from your Master. You may not touch yourself until I see you. Your orgasm belongs to me.

What about you? Cass didn't know where the words came from, and she didn't know which was more appealing: the idea of Master with a perpetual hard-on because he wanted her, or the idea of him getting himself off with her face in his mind.

Just worry about yourself, baby. Of course he wouldn't answer. Damned man. She was beginning to realize he loved to see her squirm. *And be ready, baby, because I have a special surprise in store for you.*

* * * *

Cass slowly followed Ty up the winding stairs to the third floor of Velvet Ice. The other woman held her elbow, escorting her to Master's room. Cass was vaguely grateful for the woman's support. Her stiletto heels were killing her, and she was very much afraid she'd end up tripping and landing on her ass in the middle of the staircase. She had a fleeting hope Ty wasn't the surprise Master had promised her. The raven-haired Amazon was certainly gorgeous, but Cass just didn't swing that way. The worry evaporated almost before she finished the thought, though. Master knew her preferences. He might push her boundaries, but he wouldn't subject her to anything she found truly distasteful. Ty smiled gently at her as she opened the door to Master's room. Cass devoured him with her eyes as she moved past Ty, already having forgotten the other woman.

He was sitting in a tan leather chair, dressed in black leathers. He wore nothing on his chest and Cass's mouth watered as her eyes caressed the bronze expanse of his torso. His mask was in place, covering his face yet again. Would he ever reveal himself to her?

He was leaning back, completely at ease, drawing a long, silver chain through his fingers again and again in a hypnotic motion. The chain ended in a clip that was obviously meant to attach to a collar.

Cass caught her breath.

He extended his hand to her. "Come here, Cassidy." She walked toward him as if she were in a dream. The uncomfortable shoes, the fear of embarrassing herself, it all disappeared under the hard glitter of his eyes.

When she finally stopped in front of him, Master leaned forward and unbuttoned her coat. Tonight she wore a simple black dress.

He grasped her hand and brought it to his mouth, turning her hand over to place a chaste kiss on the inside of her wrist. His lips burned her skin where they touched her.

"You look beautiful. Almost perfect." He smiled and stood. "Turn around for me." Cass complied and sighed as he placed the collar around her neck. Everything inside of her went soft and hot and she felt as if a giant tension, one she hadn't even been aware of, had suddenly released within her. She couldn't say why her reaction to such a simple action was so profound, but somehow by placing his collar around her throat, Cass felt as if Master had set her free.

A little of her tension tried to return with the faint click as he hooked the silver leash to the back of the black leather. Master sensed her unease and stroked his finger down the back of her neck. Cass deliberately relaxed her muscles again. "On your knees, baby." His breath whispered along the nape of her neck, distracting her so that it took a second for his words to register. Cass's feet seemed frozen to the floor. Surely he didn't mean for her to crawl!

Warm, irresistible hands on her shoulders pressed her to the ground, demonstrating that yes, he did indeed intend for her to crawl. "Now you're perfect," he murmured, stepping around to examine her. She perched awkwardly on her knees, and glared down at the soft carpet beneath them. Some of her resistance must have shown on her face,

because he squatted in front of her. She was distracted for just a second by the generous bulge his position showcased, and had to force herself to pay attention to his words.

“What is my job in this relationship, Cassidy?” His voice had taken on the unmistakable tone of command that immediately had her soaking her panties.

“You are my Master.”

“Yes, baby, but what does that mean?” he prodded.

“Your pleasure is my fulfillment.”

“Good girl,” he murmured, running a hand through her hair. “And what is your job?”

“To let you see to my pleasure.” She sighed as she heard her own words. The constant push and pull of her emotions was exhausting. What’s more, there was no reason for it. She’d already decided to give in. She had no intention of denying him. So why was giving over to him so damned hard?

“It’s supposed to be difficult,” he whispered, seeming to read her mind. “It’s meaningless if there isn’t a struggle.” He stroked a hand over her hair, then stood and walked ahead of her, pulling the chain slightly. Cassidy dropped to all fours and began to move forward, her eyes never leaving the carpet. When they reached the door he crouched again and reached out to stroke her cheek. “You won’t look down until we reach the table. I know you want to,” he tipped her chin upward, “but I won’t allow you to hide.”

“Yes, Master.” His caress sent liquid fire straight to her core; one simple touch and she was ready to roll over and beg him to take her. Not because he had her by a leash, but because of the way he looked at her. He held her eyes long enough to make her feel like she was special, not the way a guy looked at a woman on a date when he was trying to get in her pants. No, Master looked at her like she was a gift made especially for him.

“Remember, your safe word is innocent.” He stood and led her out the door into a lounge area. There was heated techno music and lights, but at a more subdued level than the first two floors. Couples, and even groups, writhed on the dance floor, rubbing and grinding against each other. Cass didn’t know whether to be aroused or appalled. She waited for someone walking by or sitting at one of the small occasional tables to stare at her.

Many of the other Doms and Dommies nodded to Master as they walked by, and even more let their eyes wander approvingly over her. She expected to be upset, embarrassed, but that wasn’t the case. She didn’t feel like a dog on a leash, but a sexy feline. Her hips swayed as she became more comfortable with her position. Her nipples hardened and goose bumps covered her from head to toe. Who knew crawling on carpet, being led by a man who had the finest ass on the planet would make her feel like Venus? But it did. She felt a small surge of sexual power coursing through her veins as anonymous eyes stroked over her, and she wanted to laugh with the freedom of it. With Master leading her, she could enjoy the attention without being concerned about another man pawing at her or making some lewd comment.

They approached a table where another man sat. He was huge, not fat but he was at least six and a half feet and built like a football player. He was dressed simply in a white button down shirt and worn jeans. His obsidian hair was cut military short, and his large gray eyes were emphasized by long, dark lashes that any woman would kill for. Before they reached the table a tall, voluptuous blonde stopped at his side. Master’s back tensed, and he paused in their forward progress as the blonde tilted her head and spoke softly.

The big man seemed to shiver when the blonde trailed long, slender fingers along his shoulder, and he looked genuinely regretful as he slowly shook his head. He stood as Master stepped up to the table, and the lovely blonde turned laughing eyes in their direction.

“My, my,” she drawled in a rich Southern accent that seemed to ooze honey and magnolia blossoms. “So this is the competition.” She sent the gray-eyed giant a slow, lazy look. “Ah, well, sugar. Maybe another time.” She flicked a playful finger over Master’s chin, and Cass had to suppress the urge to growl at her. Master seemed to sense her irritation, because he dropped a hand to stroke lightly through her hair.

“Or maybe not,” he countered firmly. Cass had the strong feeling that Master knew the woman, and she found herself fighting down a surprising surge of jealousy.

With a final, sultry smile, the blonde drifted away from the table. The stranger’s gray eyes followed her for a moment, but when Master cleared his throat his gaze snapped back in their direction.

“Gregori, this is Cassidy.” Master’s voice was warm with approval, and she felt a glow of pride. “Greet Gregori, baby.”

Cass raised her eyes to the other man and felt her stomach clench. While the sight of this man didn’t flood her with heat the way her Master did, he did give off an enormous sensual spark.

“Hello, Gregori,” she murmured, carefully mimicking Master’s pronunciation. Gre-GOR-ee. She liked the exotic, sensual sound of it. Master stroked his hand over her hair approvingly.

“You may touch her, if you like.” Master’s voice was so vibrant it took a second for Cass to register what he’d said. It was only when the big man’s eyes flared with interest and his massive hand moved toward her face that she realized what was about to happen.

This was her surprise.

Chapter Six

Master must have felt her tense up, because he trailed his fingers from her hair to the nape of her neck, just above the collar. It was, she knew, a move designed to remind her who was the master and who was the sub. It also reminded her of his promise, to give her nothing but pleasure. If she trusted him, it had to be one hundred percent. Cass forced herself to relax and was rewarded with a gentle stroke to her cheek.

Gregori placed his finger under her chin, tilting it further up.

"She is exquisite," he said. His voice was a low rumble, and he spoke with a faint accent. European, Cass thought, maybe Russian. Gregori rubbed his thumb along her lips and Cass felt as if he were running them along another part of her that was even more sensitive. Her cheeks burned and Gregori laughed, the deep rich sound tumbling from between straight white teeth.

Master grinned and sat down. Cass automatically moved to sit gracefully near his chair, and it felt completely natural to lean her head against his knee. When he stroked her cheek, she unthinkingly turned her face into his hand, pressing a kiss into his palm. His smile widened at the unconscious gesture, and she basked in his approval.

"So, Gregori, have you considered my proposal?"

"Indeed, and after meeting your Cassidy, I must say that I would love to accept." His accent licked up Cass's spine, causing a shiver to escape.

This time Master laughed. His voice wasn't quite as deep, but it warmed Cass in a way the other man's never could.

Gregori reached down to take her hand as Master tipped her face up to meet his gaze. "So, baby, would you like to experience two men seeing to your every desire?" The words rolled off his tongue like black velvet, and Cass wanted to scream yes, yes, *yes*, but her voice wouldn't work. Instead she felt herself start to tremble, caught in a tidal wave of desire and panic that threatened to swallow her whole.

"What is your safe word, Cassidy?" Master's voice cut through the fear, reminded her who was in control, and unlocked her voice.

"Innocent, Master."

"Do you need to use your safe word, baby?" His eyes burned into hers. The contact, both his hand on her face and his gaze on hers, steadied her, and she was able to slowly shake her head.

"No, Master," she whispered. "I don't need to use it."

"Excellent," again that flashing smile. It was warm and somehow familiar.

"Tonight," he continued, "Gregori will help me to fulfill one of your most secret fantasies. He will obey my every command, and your every desire." The words startled her, and her gaze snapped back to Gregori. He was so imposing, so charismatic, that she'd assumed he was a Dom. The idea that he was a sub like her was surprising and intriguing, but the evidence was clear now that she knew to look. He wore a slender, simple black collar. The lack of rings or chains implied he had no master. When *her* Master mentioned Gregori obeying him, the big man's eyes had flashed electric, and had swept hungrily over Cass's body.

"Would you like that?" Master murmured. "Would you like for me to let Gregori

join us? To let him play with us and pleasure you with me?"

A hint of her earlier fear remained, but the idea sounded like heaven, like her darkest fantasy come to life. She gave a jerky nod.

"Out loud, Cassidy." Clearly Master wasn't going to take anything less than her total submission to his will, and Cassidy desperately wanted to give it to him.

"Yes, Master." The words might have been whispered, but they came easily now that the decision had been made.

"Perfect."

Both men stood, and Master cocked his head to the side and gave Gregori a long look. The sub immediately dropped his gaze to the floor and offered his wrists. Master smiled slowly and placed the end of her leash in one of Gregori's big hands before wrapping the length of it around his wrists several times in a symbolic binding. Gregori's thighs tightened and the already impressive bulge between them seemed to leap against the snug denim of his jeans.

With a satisfied nod, Master turned and led them back to his private room.

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"Gregori, take Cassidy to the chair." Dorian moved to turn the lights down and the stereo on. A soft, haunting instrumental whispered through the room. He lit fat candles he'd strategically placed along the walls, immersing the room in flickering light, setting up the atmosphere. Some Masters preferred a stark, cold room for their sessions, using the sterile and bleak environment to keep their slaves on the edge between fear and desire. Dorian wanted to wrap Cassidy in a cocoon of sensual delight. He wanted the warmth to seduce her, to remind her that she was safe with him; that it was good to let go of all the bullshit and just be the sexual, sensual creature she really was.

He glanced over to see Gregori standing next to his leather chair, Cassidy at his feet. She sat gracefully, her full bottom planted on her heels, obviously awaiting more instruction.

"Unfasten your shirt, Gregori, and then sit down." He smiled as surprise registered on Cassidy's lovely face. Good. He wanted to keep her guessing; wondering what was going to happen next. Her eyes flickered, from him, to Gregori, who was obediently opening his shirt, to the floor. He grinned. His baby didn't know where to look. He'd have to help her out with that. He moved up behind her, brushed the hair away from her neck and laid a kiss to the soft flesh just below her ear.

"Does his body please you?" he murmured against her skin, pressing his teeth against her neck when she shivered in reaction. "Did I choose well for you?"

"Yes, Master," she whispered.

He reached around her and tilted the chair back. As it reclined a built-in foot rest extended, so that by the time he was finished, Gregori was stretched out before them like an offering.

"Unzip his jeans and pull them off." He licked his lips as her shaking fingers grasped the button fly and opened it. One at a time she popped the buttons, each tug revealing another inch of the big Russian's erection. Finally she moved to the foot of the chair, grasped the hems of the denim and worked them off Gregori's body. Her breath caught audibly at the sight of the man stretched out before her, and Dorian knew he'd chosen well; not only the activity, but the partner.

"Good girl. Now I want you to straddle the chair." She moved to obey, pausing at

Gregori's waist. Dorian placed his hands on her hips and guided her further along the other man's body. "Higher up, baby. Don't stop until you reach Gregori's chest." Dorian followed her, sliding his hands to her waist. When she'd reached her destination he lifted her, helping her to take position straddling Gregori. The width of the brawny man's chest forced her thighs wide, and she automatically shifted her weight, compensating for her lack of balance.

Her eyes were full of nerves, but her mouth was lush and red, her nipples peaked beneath the silky black fabric of her dress.

Dorian moved to face her, cupping her jaw in one big hand. He dragged his thumb over her moist bottom lip and leaned in for a brief, almost chaste kiss.

"Arms up," he commanded, and lifted the black dress off of her. She was wearing the palest baby blue satin bra and panties. He stroked the soft skin at her ribs, then moved to unsnap the front clasp of her bra. Her full breasts sprang forth and filled his hands. He held back a groan and swept his thumbs across the nipples. They beaded immediately and he continued to rub them with his palms.

"She has perfect breasts, does she not?" He leaned over Cassidy's shoulders to see Gregori's face.

His Russian friend did not disappoint. His eyes were hooded with hunger. "Indeed, Master, she is magnificent." The other man stayed in place, moving nothing but his mouth. Dorian allowed his hands to slowly explore Cassidy's torso, gliding over satiny skin. He smiled when goose bumps rose and covered her arms. If possible, her nipples beaded even tighter.

Dorian slung a leg across Gregori's body, straddling the man behind Cassidy. He flattened his hands on her hips, slid them up her sides and finally cupped her breasts again. They filled his hands to overflowing with warm, resilient satin. He took the opportunity to pinch the tips with his thumbs and forefingers. Her head flung to the side and she bucked back against him as a cry escaped her throat. Dorian moved flush against her ass, his cock iron hard and growing harder by the second as he ground it against her cushiony cheeks.

Fuck, but she was sweet and lovely and a million other things Dorian couldn't possibly think of at the moment, since the blood had left his brain.

He kept one nipple in his grasp, pinching harder as he slid his other hand down to the front of her panties. "Oh, baby, you're so wet. Do you enjoy the way Gregori is looking at you?" he asked. He glanced down at the other submissive, whose tongue slipped from his mouth to lick his lips. The rather large wet spot on the front of her panties was a wonderful enticement to the Russian, whose oral skills were legendary within the club.

"Don't be shy, Cassidy. Does the idea that he wants to lick you until you gush in his mouth turn you on?" Dorian emphasized the sentence with a kiss that started on her left shoulder and skated across to the right.

"Yes, Master." Her voice was rushed and faint, her body was pliant.

"Good, baby," Dorian whispered against her throat. "That's very good." With one smooth move he grasped her panties in both hands and ripped them from her.

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Cass yelped with surprise and dismay when her twenty-five dollar panties were torn from her body. The thought was a fleeting one replaced by a needy hunger as Master's strong fingers dipped between her vaginal lips. He brought the moisture that coated his

finger to his lips and sucked it noisily next to her ear.

“Fuck, Gregori, she tastes like the sweetest honey. Cassidy I want you to move forward and straddle Gregori’s face, then I want you to sit.”

“On his face?” She hadn’t meant to sound like a schoolgirl and quickly amended her question. “Master, you want me to sit on his face?” Her body burned as a scalding blush blossomed under her skin.

“Gregori, would it please you if I allowed you to service my baby?” Master was slowly maneuvering her forward with a firm but gentle touch. She looked down into Gregori’s eyes, a sea of thunderous gray.

A slow, wicked smile spread across the Russian’s face. “If it’s your will, Master, it would please me greatly.” Master’s hands landed lightly on her shoulders and guided her down.

She let her eyes slip closed; she couldn’t maintain the intimacy of Gregori’s knowing gaze. The first movement of his velvet tongue coasted lazily along her inner lips, wrenching a sound of shocked pleasure from her. He continued to stroke languidly, running his tongue the length of her labia, sliding out to lap at the honey coating her inner thighs before slipping back in to tease her opening.

A sudden chill at her back told her that Master was gone. He had moved to stand in front of her. He reached beneath the chair and unwound a short length of chain.

He took both of her hands and hooked the chain to the leather cuffs she still wore, forcing her to bend forward and hold on to the back of the chair or topple over. She was unable to pull herself up; she was trapped in her present position.

Master stood back and watched as Gregori licked, sucked and tongued her burning pussy. His eyes glittered at Cass when Gregori’s giant hands moved under her to open her up wide. His tongue traced a ceaseless figure eight, circling her clit then swirling around to circle her entrance where it plunged inside, thrusting like a cock would. He plundered her hole over and over, before placing his mouth against it and sucking the juice from her. Cass heard herself screaming as if from a distance. No man had ever done that to her, drank from her like her pussy was a glass of wine.

Cass heard herself whimpering, caught in an almost panicky rush of arousal. Master laid his hand against her cheek, and she shuddered at the comfort that washed over her.

“Move your hips, baby,” Master commanded. “Ride his face hard.” She knew her consternation must have shown on her face when he gave a rough laugh. “Trust me; he’ll enjoy the fuck out of it.”

Biting her lip Cass began a sway her hips slightly. Gregori growled into her pussy and gripped her ass, dragging her even tighter to his mouth. Soon she was moving more confidently, setting up a rhythm to match Gregori’s dancing tongue.

Gregori was devouring her like a starving man at a feast, but it was Master who commanded her attention. She kept her eyes on Master, and watched in fascination as he pulled his leathers down. His gorgeous cock seemed to leap free, reaching for her. A gold hoop hooked through his sac, and a gold barbell glinted dully under his thick head. Clear liquid beaded the top of his cock and rolled down to the barbell. Cass couldn’t take her eyes off the small tear of pre-cum dangling from the end of the stud.

Her mouth watered as Master fisted his cock. As if he could feel her hunger, he moved the plump crest along her lips, moistening them with his growing arousal. Cass slid her tongue out, greedy to taste more of his unique flavor. She’d never been to keen

on giving blow jobs. She knew how, and had never had any complaints; it just wasn't an act that had ever particularly appealed to her. Now she craved it. She yearned to know how he tasted, how he felt on her tongue, everything that made him groan. Instinctively she surged forward, dragging her tongue along the thick vein that ran along the bottom of his cock. Master growled and pulled back.

"Gregori," Master rasped, "she is not allowed to come. She has forgotten her manners and seems to believe she can act without instruction." Cass huffed, not meaning for the sound to escape, but it did. Master shivered as her breath puffed over the head of his cock, and laughed a deep husky laugh that curled her toes in her shoes.

"See, Gregori? Even now she likes to misbehave." He cupped her chin. "Open your mouth, Cassidy, and take me."

Cass followed his instructions eagerly, opening her mouth and allowing him to enter. He stroked her face with both hands before wrapping his fingers in her loose hair.

Cass pulled back slowly, sucking hard and savoring his grunt of surprised pleasure. It was surprisingly easy to compartmentalize, to relegate the magic Gregori was performing between her legs to the background and concentrate on Master's heat and hardness.

"Do what comes natural to you, baby. I *know* you can please me."

Fine, if he was letting her do as *she* wished, then first things first. She ran the tip of her tongue across the barbell and sucked the liquid bead that escaped the head of his cock into her mouth. His sharp intake of breath told her she'd done something right. She kept her tongue focused on the piercing.

She slid her lips and tongue along the gold bar, and reveled in the way his thighs tightened in front of her. She knew from the placement of the bit of gold that playing with it stimulated the super-sensitive spot just underneath his crown. She moved down the length of his shaft, licking and mouthing her way to the front of his balls. She slowly sucked each one into her mouth, savoring the round rough sacs. His thighs began to vibrate, and she had the impression that he wanted to squirm. She took a chance and caught the hoop between her teeth, tugging lightly.

She got the desired reaction as Master's hands tightened almost painfully in her hair and he cried aloud. She'd discovered one of his secret pleasures, and it sent a shiver of appreciation down her spine. Gregori hummed into her wet, swollen flesh, clearly approving of the rush of moisture Master's pleasure drew from her.

She tugged again, and Master abruptly seemed to have had enough. He took control of the situation, pumping slow and shallow into Cass's mouth.

"That's it baby, take it in. Open those sweet lips and suck my dick." His words were as effective as a caress. Cass widened her mouth on a whimper as he continued, "It's time, baby," he groaned. "Gregori, lick her until she comes for me."

Cass's body rocketed into overdrive as both men penetrated her, one with a tongue to her core, the other with his cock in her mouth. The dual sensations were a lightning rod for every single nerve ending in her body.

Gregori put his mouth on her clit and sucked every bit as enthusiastically as she was sucking Master's cock. They worked in tandem, Gregori eating every inch of flesh between her thighs while she devoured as much of Master's monster erection as she could manage. Gregori's noisy moans drummed in Cass's ears and vibrated in her pussy, and she mimicked his cries with her own. Her thighs trembled as she felt herself tighten, pulling off of Master in panic.

“Master,” she gasped, clamping down on her orgasm, desperate to come, but unable to do so without his permission.

“What do you need, baby?” He cupped her cheeks, rubbing his thumb over her lips before dipping between them. She closed her lips over it automatically, feeling the echo of her suction in her core.

“I need to come,” she moaned. She felt tears pricking behind her eyes, completely overwhelmed in sensation. “Please, Master,” she sobbed. “Please may I come?”

Master groaned, deep and guttural, and crouched in front of her. “Come for me, baby,” he commanded and caught her lips with his. She screamed into his mouth, jerking against Gregori’s eager mouth. Her cry was shockingly loud to her own ears as she pushed her hips harder down on the man who’d just given her the most incredible oral release she’d ever had.

Chapter Seven

Master remained in front of her, cupping her jaw and drinking in her cries as the aftershocks of her orgasm undulated her against Gregori's lips. When she quieted a bit, he pulled back and unlatched her cuffed hands, allowing her to stand. Gregori slid easily from under her, leaving her straddling the headrest of the chair. She chanced a look at him; his face was wet from her orgasm and he swiped the side of his hand across his mouth, then licked the moisture away in a deliberate, sexy move.

Master took her hands and guided her off the chair, leading her around to stand next to it. He sat down and pulled her into his lap, guiding her legs around him so she straddled his thighs.

She heard the familiar squirt of lube, and cool liquid pooled in the small of her back.

"Gregori is going to take your ass tonight, baby. We are both going to fill you up."

She shivered as Gregori dragged his fingers through the slick puddle of lube, drawing it down to her tight hole. She'd been using increasingly larger plugs at Master's command, but Gregori was *extremely* well endowed. She knew fear crept across her face; she'd never been very good at hiding what she was feeling.

"Cassidy, do you trust me to know what is good for you? What will give you pleasure?"

She didn't even have to think about her answer. "Yes, Master. I do trust you."

His mouth tilted up into a grin, and his approval warmed her like sunlight. He reached over to a side table and grabbed two condoms, tossing one to Gregori, then leaned forward and pressed his firm lips to hers. She sighed into his kiss, feeling his hands move from her hips to her ass. He spread her cheeks apart. Seconds later, she felt the probing head of Gregori's penis.

"Just remember what I told you before. Relax and breathe." His mouth covered hers again, this time his tongue invaded the recesses. Cass tasted the vodka he'd drunk earlier and his own unique taste, a flavor she knew she'd always associate with the pleasure and the burn of submission.

He squeezed her ass hard, his fingers digging deeply into the pliant flesh. Gregori's cock head penetrated the tight pucker, and Cass froze for a second, breath stolen. Then Master nipped her bottom lip and as he licked the slight pain Gregori's fat head pushed through the barrier of muscles that tried to keep him out. Cass breathed deeply and tried to welcome the burn.

Master's face blurred before her, and she realized she was crying. It *hurt*. Master wrapped one big hand around her throat over her collar and pressed his forehead to hers.

"Breathe, baby," he reminded her. "Push out and breathe."

She almost stopped Gregori, but then he broke through with a small pop and seated himself deep within her. His breath gusted hot on her neck and his heat surrounded her from behind. He remained completely still, letting her ass relax some more, and the pain began to shift, to slide into something else entirely.

Master moved his head back, looking into her eyes. Cass felt so damn sexy as he continued to gaze at her, his approval clear in the glitter of his eyes and the iron-hard dig of his cock against her belly.

“Well done, baby. Most women aren’t brave enough to let Gregori in like you have.” He kissed her nose lightly. “I’m proud of you.”

Her screaming muscles were beginning to unclench and become more pliant. Gregori vibrated against her back, clearly a hairsbreadth from losing control.

“In just a moment, baby, Gregori is going to pull out. When he does, you will take my cock and put it in your pussy.”

She didn’t even try to imagine how they would both fit. Gregori might be massive, but Master wasn’t a small man, either. When Gregori began to move, the dark ecstasy momentarily froze her in place. Master gritted out her name, and Cass remembered her orders. Without taking her eyes from Master’s, Cass wrapped her hand around his shaft, pulling it toward her. Gregori had pulled almost all the way out now, and she lifted slightly and lodged the head of Master’s cock against the mouth of her vagina. Master placed his hands on her hips and helped her move down his length.

Cass had never known her body would ever be able to not only stretch as much as it had, but that it would feel so fucking good. She didn’t have to do anything but relax into their bodies.

“That’s it Cassidy, take us both.” Master’s voice was rough with the ragged edge of control. “Restrain her,” he grunted when her pussy rippled along his length. Gregori’s hands came around, grabbing hers and clasping them behind her back in one of his. The move startled her, but she relaxed almost immediately because it allowed her the luxury of just enjoying the pleasure. With her hands behind her, she couldn’t move, couldn’t do anything but *feel*.

Master flexed his hips upward and she felt the ends of the barbell rake along her inner walls with a maddening friction. He bottomed out, then drew back without a pause. As he pulled out, Gregori drove into her. As Gregori moved out of her, Master dug deep. Again and again they repeated their thrusts, each taking a turn driving slowly into her body, driving her slowly out of her mind.

She felt the heads of their cocks pass over each other, separated by the most delicate barrier of skin imaginable. Each man shuddered at the contact, and those shudders worked through Cass’s body, too. Master’s mouth found her neglected nipples and he took turns with each, biting at them, licking and sucking.

Cass let out a breathy, uncontrolled cry and leaned back, giving him freer access to her breasts. Gregori placed one hand in the middle of her back while still holding onto her hands. She was supported from the front and back, and the last bit of nerves left her body. She was little more than a bundle of sensation: desire, arousal, raw passion and such overwhelming need. There was nothing else left inside of her, nowhere to run and hide, and no desire to do so, anyway. She had no choice but to take what Master was giving her.

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Dorian was in heaven; he was in hell. Cassidy was no longer holding back. He felt it the moment she let go and let her body take over and close her mind to everything except the joy of being taken care of. Of being *taken*.

She was almost painfully tight around him, each slow stroke drawing a ripple of muscles along her sheath. He felt Gregori with each thrust, felt the other man’s tension, and the way Cassidy grew even softer, hotter and wetter with each stroke. He couldn’t resist; he had to rub her swollen little clit, enjoying it as it swelled into a tight button. Her

little mews of pleasure grew louder and more demanding as both men took her, riding her body harder and harder until she was utterly pliant in their hands.

"That's it, Cassidy," he muttered as she clamped down on him as he pulled almost all the way out. She cried out in distress, and Dorian felt the sweat begin to trickle down his back. "Ask me, baby. Ask for what you need." Her sleepy, glazed eyes focused on his.

"Master, I need to come. Can I come please?" The words were broken and breathless. His dick swelled and he felt Gregori's do the same. The Russian was holding onto his control by a thread, but he knew Gregori would only release on command.

Riding the edge, Dorian tortured the three of them for a few strokes longer before thrusting up hard and letting the orgasm detonate inside him. "Come now!"

Gregori cried out in his native Russian, guttural words that Dorian didn't have to understand to recognize as profanity, and Cassidy screamed. Her body shook wildly and she ground her pussy down on his cock, seemingly milking every last ounce of pleasure out of the orgasm before collapsing against Dorian's chest.

He caressed the sweat-soaked strands of her hair.

Gregori had already removed his condom and was putting his pants back on by the time Dorian brought his own breath under control.

"Thank you, Gregori." Dorian mumbled as his arms tightened around Cassidy's tired body.

"The pleasure was all mine, I assure you," the Russian replied with a slight, respectful bow, before backing out of the room.

Dorian sat holding Cassidy close, feeling her erratic heartbeat slow back down, her heated skin become cool to the touch.

"Master, may I see you now?" The question was asked with such reverence and sincerity, Dorian couldn't deny her. Besides, he knew the time had come. She deserved to see who her Master was once and for all. After the trust she'd afforded him this evening it was the least he could do for her.

He put his hand over hers and together they pulled the mask off.

"Oh my God!" Cassidy jerked in his arms, and before he could catch her she fell on her butt.

"Oh my God. Holy shit." Her voice rose to an almost hysterical pitch as she scrambled away from him, climbing to her feet and searching the darkened room for her clothes.

"Cassidy," Dorian started to rise from his chair.

"*Innocent!*" The word sounded like a curse. Dorian sat back in the chair, powerless to do anything else. The session was over. She'd called out her safe word and Dorian would respect it, but it didn't mean he couldn't talk to her.

"Cassidy, if you would just listen." He deliberately kept his voice calm, no longer needing to make it deeper. At the sound of his normal voice Cassidy narrowed her eyes as she scrambled to yank her dress over her head.

"How could you? You *lied* to me."

"I've never lied to you." Lame, but technically true. The fire in her eyes told him to not even go there, she wasn't buying it. And, dammit, he couldn't blame her. But Dorian wasn't about to let her go so easily. He stalked over to the door and stood next to it while she searched for her shoes and coat.

"Cassidy, this is no lie. This is who I am outside the job and in my private time."

Dorian wasn't used to having to explain himself; not in his job, and not in this club. Cassidy had plenty of reason to be angry with him, though, and Dorian would do just about anything to diffuse her anger. But she wasn't listening.

"How long did you know it was me on the other end of the computer?" A look of pure horror pinched her face. "Oh God, did you spy on me? Find out what I liked and stalk me online? I'm so fucking stupid." She pointed a shoe at him. "This is what I get for wanting to try something that doesn't fit in with real life... *My* real life."

"I didn't know it was you when we started. I didn't find out until later." Fuck, he sure as hell didn't feel like a badass Dom at the moment. No, at the moment he felt like a man desperate to keep his woman from walking out the door.

"You *bastard*! You *used* me. What did you think? I was an easy mark? I was the desperate single mother in need of attention?" She shook her head and rolled her eyes. "What am I saying? I *was* an easy mark. So is that how it is? Does Detective Jenner always skulk about, preying on vulnerable women?"

Okay, understanding her anger was one thing, letting her accuse him of being a sick stalker was another thing entirely.

"Wait one minute, Cassidy. You're the one who went online looking for a Dom. You came to this club of your own free will both times. I never tricked you into participating. You wanted this as much as I did."

She was pissed, righteously so. He was pissed, too. Still, Dorian wanted to go to her, hold her close and kiss her. He had an almost physical need to comfort her.

A deep sadness filled her eyes and she shook her head. "You know something? You're right. I *did* come here of my own free will, but I came here to see *Master*, not *Dorian Jenner*."

He crossed his arms over his chest. "There's no difference, baby. Being a Dom is a natural part of who I am, just as your submissive self is a natural part of who you are. You can't have one without the other." Dorian took a step closer to her. She backed away, holding her shoes out like a shield. He shook his head in resignation. "Try and deny it all you want, but you felt it tonight, Cassidy. You gave yourself to me, wholeheartedly. What we shared..." he caught her eyes, trying to make her see the truth through the sheer force of his will. "This thing between us? It's real. Anything else we can talk about."

Cassidy stopped trying to put her shoes on and instead held onto them by the heels. She walked to where he stood blocking the door and stared pointedly at his chest. "The Dom doesn't scare me, the cop does. And so does the man who is honest only when it's convenient." Dorian moved back just enough to let her slip through the door, but she had to press up against him to make it by.

"*You* can run, Cassidy, but I'm not going anywhere" He caught her arm as she slid around him, but released her immediately when she pulled back with a sharp jerk. He felt his throat close up on a thick wad of dread as she pushed past him, her head down, eyes determinedly on the floor. "I'll be here, baby, no matter how long it takes," he whispered, shutting the door behind Cassidy's retreating form.

Chapter Eight

Cassidy sat staring at her computer, her mind in a daze. Her Master was Dorian Jenner. Her secret life wasn't a secret after all. It had the potential to creep into her everyday life and detonate like a bomb. Not only that, but her Master had lied to her. Yes it was merely a lie of omission, but that didn't make it any less devastating. It didn't make Cass feel any less betrayed.

She thought back to the last time Dorian had stopped by her desk. He'd asked her if she was in a relationship, and she'd said yes. How he must have been laughing at her, knowing that her so-called relationship was with him.

Cass stared at the open IM box on her computer screen. She'd made herself "invisible" on-line, had not only avoided any D/s sites, but had even deleted them from her browser. Still, every time she logged on to check her e-mail, there was a message waiting from Master. No, she corrected herself, from *Dorian*.

Today's message, *I'm not giving up on us, baby*, caused a painful little tug at her heart. Once she'd gotten past the mortification of discovering her fantasy lover was someone she knew in real life, she'd come to the conclusion that, aside from hiding his true identity, he'd been honest with her. But that wasn't the worst of it. Instead of bringing relief and hope for their relationship, this knowledge just depressed her more. Because Dorian Jenner was *so* not right for her.

She'd been a wild teen. Not promiscuous, but more than willing to follow where her heart led. She'd been a leaper, not a looker. That "bring it on" attitude had led her to Kevin Lassiter. They'd fallen headfirst into an affair that probably would have ended amicably enough when he deployed if they'd just been a little more careful.

Instead of their relationship coming to its logical end, a month before Kevin shipped out Cass had discovered she was pregnant. Their whirlwind affair had led to a whirlwind wedding, and Cass's head had barely stopped spinning when the Marine chaplain knocked on the door, bringing the thanks of her country and the news that she'd be raising her baby on her own.

Having Katie had changed everything. Cass knew she no longer had the luxury of following her heart without thought of the consequences. She needed to create a stable home for her daughter. A safe and happy childhood. Cass would never forget the first time she looked into her baby daughter's red, scrunched-up little face. A wave of love like nothing she'd ever experienced had welled up in her, and she'd promised Katie she'd do whatever she had to, to keep her safe.

Dorian was not safe. He was a narcotics cop. He worked undercover with the scum of the earth. He was in danger every day of his life. So it didn't matter whether or not he was sincere about his feelings. It didn't matter if she forgave him his lies and omissions. She would not, could not, jump into a relationship with a man who could easily be dead tomorrow. She wouldn't do that to herself, but even more, she wouldn't do that to Katie.

"Cassidy."

Cass blinked, convinced for a moment that she'd conjured that voice up from her imagination. Slowly bringing her gaze upward, she met Dorian's bottomless brown eyes. She'd seen them dance, spark with mischief and, in his persona as Master, she'd seen

them smolder. She'd never seen them this solemn, this filled with something that looked almost like regret.

"Marcus isn't here," she told him quickly, eyes flickering over his tall form, taking in the worn denim hugging his legs, the rich caramel of his button-down shirt and landing on the manila envelope in his hand. "I can put that in his office for you."

"Cassidy, baby, we need to talk." He moved closer, laying the envelope on her desk.

"I can't do this," she said softly. If they had this conversation, she just knew it would end with heartbreak. Her heart breaking, to be specific.

"Baby, you're not a coward." He moved to perch on the edge of her desk, and she tore her eyes away from the way his jeans hugged the thick lines of his thighs and gloved the substantial bulge between them.

"No, this isn't about being a coward, Mas..." She trailed off, not sure what to call him. He laid his hand along her cheek, tipping her face until their eyes met. His melted into hers, a well of emotion she could easily drown in. She shook her head and forced herself to continue.

"This isn't about being a coward. It's about knowing what I can and can't live with. I can't live with constant fear that one day I'll get a call from someone telling me you're in the hospital or in the morgue because your cover got blown."

"That does happen," he agreed, and she was glad he didn't try to downplay the danger his job put him in. If he had tried to convince her he was in little to no danger, it would have meant he thought she was too dumb to know better, and would have disrespected them both.

"I can't deny I have a dangerous profession," he continued. "But I can promise you it isn't usually as dicey as it has been for the last six months while I've been undercover at Worthington, and I can promise you that when I am in dangerous situations, I take every precaution possible to ensure a good outcome."

He strummed his thumb absently over her bottom lip, and she caught back a sigh. "And, Cassidy, I can promise you that if you allow me to be a part of your life, I'll make damned sure the only risks I take are absolutely necessary. I won't worry you needlessly."

Cass shook her head. It all sounded lovely, but there was so much more to consider. "What about Katie?" she whispered.

Dorian frowned, looking confused.

"How is it going to affect her, knowing that her mommy lets someone paddle her butt?" Understanding dawned in those depthless eyes, and he gave a little smile.

"The only way Katie will know that is if you tell her. I would never try to dominate you sexually in front of your child." The smile deepened. "At least, not in any way she could recognize."

"That's not what I meant." She turned back to face her computer, causing his hand to fall from her face. "Dorian, your sexual preferences aren't a secret. If I'm with you, people are going to know what I'm letting you do to me. Someone's bound to say something in front of Katie." He was shaking his head, but she forged on. "I have to think about her, about what's best for her. I can't just blindly follow my heart into a situation I know has disaster written all over it."

"Cassidy," his voice had dropped, sounding more like her Master and sending a trickle of heat through her core. "Have you ever looked down on your sister because of

what she and Marcus do in private?” Cass slowly shook her head. Honestly, aside from the heat that sparked around Carrie and Marcus like lightning, she didn’t really think of the specifics of their sex life.

“Have you ever heard anyone besides that viper Marcus used to be married to comment on what they do in private?” She shook her head again. Frankly, she was fairly certain that if anyone said something to make Carrie uncomfortable, Marcus would calmly rip their liver out through their nostrils.

“Then why would what we share be any different?” He gave a frustrated little sigh. “Cassidy, what we have together is special, unique. And it’s nobody’s fucking business except ours.”

She’d been around enough to know he was right; what they shared *was* special and unique. And she wanted it, wanted it more than she’d wanted anything else in her life.

“How would it work then, Dorian?” She let her eyes meet his and shivered at the crackle of electricity she saw there. The edge of his mouth quirked a bit and he stood, picking up the manila envelope she’d completely forgotten, so caught up was she in their conversation.

“It works like this,” he handed her the envelope. “You take this in and put it on Marcus’ desk.” He took her hand and guided her to her feet. “Then you take off your panties and wait for me.”

*

Cassidy stood bare-assed in her brother-in-law’s office and wondered what the heck she was doing. A relationship with Dorian Jenner was an invitation to heartbreak, but here she was, following his directions to the letter and feeling everything in her go hot and liquid at the look in his eyes when he followed her into the room.

God, the man was fine. Snug, faded jeans showcased thick, muscular thighs. The deep caramel of his brushed cotton shirt emphasized the width of his shoulders and played up the bittersweet chocolate of his eyes.

“Unbutton your blouse.” The face might be Dorian, but the voice was all Master. Cass was fumbling with the buttons before she’d fully processed the command. She started to slide it down her shoulders, but he stopped her with a gesture. “No, we’re at work. There’s no time to get naked,” he grinned wickedly, “as much as I love having you naked.” He stepped closer, running a finger along the lacy edge of her bra. “No, you’re going to leave your blouse and bra on.” He flicked the lace with one rough finger. “Pull the cups down so I can see your nipples.”

Cassidy’s hands started to shake as she reached to obey him. Somehow standing there almost fully clothed, her breasts lifted and presented like a gift by the cups now stretched under them, she felt more exposed than if she’d been fully naked.

“You’re beautiful, baby.” His voice was like a caress of velvet. “Now play with your nipples. Make yourself hot for me.”

She felt like she was in a dream. Somehow all her reservations had slipped away. Maybe she was sliding into what some of the BDSM websites called “sub-space,” that space when a sub lost his or her will entirely and became simply a agent of their Master’s pleasure. The corner of her mouth quirked just a bit. Or maybe she was just drowning beneath the hot, slippery flood of lust this man always inspired.

Reaching up, she rolled her nipples between her fingers, catching her breath at the thrill that shot from breasts to pussy, a thrill caused as much by Dorian’s eyes on her as

by the actual physical touch.

“Harder, baby.” He’d moved around her, breathed the words against her neck. “Make it burn. You know you need a little burn to make it right.”

Her fingers clenched involuntarily, and Cass cried out at the streak of fire that shot through her.

“Now move your left hand down, pull your skirt up.” She followed each direction in a daze, the moist gust of his breath on the skin behind her ear, the knowledge that he was looking down, devouring the sight of her hard, ruby nipples with famished eyes sending fissions of heat to her core.

He took a ragged breath when she grasped the side of her skirt and began gathering it in her fist. The idea she could affect him as strongly as he affected her was intoxicating, and she wasn’t ready for it to end. Cass slowed down her pace, dragging her trim gray skirt slowly up the length of her thighs. His breath caught nearly silently when the hem cleared her pussy, revealing soft golden curls and bare, silky lips.

“Beautiful, baby,” his lips brushed the back of her neck, bared to his touch since she had her hair twisted up in a clip, and she shivered. His hand covered hers at her hip, and he moved up against her, a hard, hot presence at her back.

“Touch yourself,” he murmured, reaching around to hold up her skirt on both sides. “Keep squeezing that pretty little nipple, and slide your fingers into all that creamy honey.” Her fingers slid easily, eagerly, through her folds. “Pet your clit, baby, make it feel good.” She caught the swollen bud of sensation between two fingers and pulsed it in time with the pressure on her nipple, feeling the rush of pleasure start in her chest and knowing it would take almost nothing for her to...

“Don’t come, Cassidy.” The damned man must have been reading her mind. Cass lightened her touch. She couldn’t stop, not until he gave her permission, but God, she was so close to going over.

“Fuck yourself, Cassidy.” His voice was dark, rough with the heat generated between them. He tightened his grip on her skirt, using it to pull her back hard against him. She could feel his chest expand with a rough breath as he ground the iron and fire bar of his cock against her ass. “Fuck yourself, and tell me what you’re feeling.”

Cass slid her hand deeper between her thighs, painfully excited, painfully aware of his eyes on her. Moving slowly, provocatively, she slipped one finger into her sheath. “I feel so hot,” she whispered dreamily, smiling a little at his throttled groan. “So hot and wet.”

“I bet you taste like hot honey,” he murmured against the back of her neck. “Let me taste you, baby.” Slowly, so slowly, Cassidy ran her fingers the length of her pussy, gathering up heat and moisture. Then she reached up, trailing her fingers over her abdomen, leaving a glossy streak she knew would make him crazy, until she finally reached back over her shoulder. Their moans mingled as he sucked her fingers between his lips. His tongue stroked velvet fire over her fingers, and he nipped restlessly at her finger tips as she drew free. “So sweet, baby,” he rasped. “Now fuck yourself, Cassidy.”

She slipped a second finger in and began a slow, teasing slide, savoring the way her breath shuddered in and out, savoring the subtle pulsing of his cock against her ass.

“Talk to me, baby,” he commanded. “Tell me what it feels like.”

“I feel so empty,” she moaned, loving the way his cock kicked against the cushion of her ass. “My fingers aren’t big enough, they aren’t hard enough.”

He groaned and bit lightly at her nape. His hips moved subtly against her, and she ground back against him.

"Keep talking," he rasped against the side of her neck. Every word sounded like more of an effort, and knowing she was making him come unglued was as big a turn on as her fingers on her nipple and against her clit.

"I need you inside me," she whispered. "Master, I need your cock in my pussy, in my mouth, I just need you inside me now."

His laugh was low and tortured. "Baby, I knew from the first IM that you're a natural submissive." He licked a path of liquid fire down her throat. "You're just begging for a spanking, aren't you?" He jerked on the fabric of her skirt, grinding his cock hard against her butt, and she moaned in hunger. "You think you can push your Master over the edge." He bit down on her collarbone and they both panted. "Don't you?"

"I just need you," she moaned, all calculation gone. She was so empty, had been so empty for so long. Her relationships before now had been about fun and pleasure. She'd never felt the soul-deep hunger Dorian inspired.

"It's *my* place to say what you need, Cassidy." His words stirred her hair and she shivered. "And it's my place to say when you get it."

Cass let her head fall back against his shoulder. He surrounded her, took her over, and owned her. There was a part of her that was still confused, still afraid on so many levels, but an even bigger part knew this was where she wanted to be. She wanted to belong to Dorian, to her Master. She wanted him to belong to her.

"So, you want me to fuck you?"

"Yessss," she nearly hissed as his hand slid up to cover hers on her breast, sending heat and shudders through her whole body.

"I don't know," he mused, pinching her nipple and tugging gently, then not so gently, drawing low, broken moans from her. "You've been difficult." Tug. Moan. "You've caused me no end of aggravation." Tug. Twist. Whimper. "Why should I reward you for defying me?" *Squeeze.*

"Because I'm yours," she sobbed. "Because I belong to you, and you promised to take care of me, to give me what I need." His hand stilled on her breast, his breath seemed to stop. "Because I need you to take me, just you. I need you in me and around me." Her voice dropped to a broken whisper. "I need to *feel* you owning me."

"Ah, fuck Cassidy." His breath hitched in his chest and he raised his hand to tangle in her hair, using his grip to pull her head back far enough for his lips to savage hers. His tongue surged into her mouth, laying claim to each slick surface. She felt his teeth on her lower lip, the sting followed by lush suction that seemed to draw directly on her clit.

*

Dorian dragged his mouth from hers and used his grip on her hair to propel her down, onto her knees. He knew, had always known, that the true power in a Dom/sub relationship lay in the hands of the submissive. Her willingness to offer everything, to utterly submit to his will spoke of far more strength and courage than it took for him to bark out orders.

Even knowing that, Cassidy's complete submission humbled him. Coming so close on the heels of her panicked flight, the sound of her begging for his possession was like a balm on his soul.

He gazed down at her, burning her image into his mind for eternity. Her silky brown

hair tangled in his fist, knees spread wide for balance, skirt bunched around her waist, she was mesmerizing. She'd returned her hands to her breasts, cupping their fullness in her palms, letting her nipples peek shyly from between her fingers. Her eyes were glued to the bulge between his thighs. He felt it throb under her regard, and then buck against his zipper as her eyes narrowed and she dragged her lower lip between even white teeth.

"So beautiful, baby," he growled, using his grip on her hair to tip her head back until her eyes met his. "Tell me what you want, Cassidy. Tell your Master how you want to serve him."

"Whatever you want, Master," she whispered, but her eyes kept flickering back to his raging erection. "Whatever pleases you will please me."

Dorian lifted his free hand and cupped her face gently, feeling a smile soften the tense line of his mouth when she cuddled her cheek into his palm. So soft. Like satin against the rough skin of his hand.

"That was the correct answer, precious." She closed her eyes and turned her face as far as his grip on her hair would allow, pressing a moist, open-mouthed kiss into his palm. "Now tell me what you are craving."

She kept her eyes closed and spoke against his hand. "Your cock, Master." Her hot little tongue darted across the surface of his palm, a lick of fire. "I crave your cock, your cum."

"Where, baby? Where do you want my cum?"

"In my mouth," she breathed against his skin. "In my pussy, my ass." Those fathomless blue eyes opened, and Dorian knew he was staring straight into her soul. "On my breasts, my belly, I want you all over me."

Her words, breathless and desperate, nearly did him in. He could feel the orgasm feathering his spine and clenched his lower body against the flood.

"Suck my cock, Cassidy. Make me nice and wet, and swallow me whole."

"Yes, Master." She leaned into him, tugging against his hand and making a little hum of anticipation as she wrestled with the button and zip of his jeans. His cock lunged free, a beast with a mind of its own, and she untangled him from his briefs with light, gentle fingers.

"Put your mouth on me," Dorian commanded, guiding her closer with his hand in her hair.

Cassidy followed his directions to the letter, placing her lips against his tip in a soft, moist kiss. He thought the top of his head might explode. Before he could command her, demand more, she took a slow breath in and engulfed him.

Hot, wet fire. The faint threat of teeth. Dorian's entire being focused on Cassidy, on what she was doing to him. Her eyes rolled up to meet his, achingly vulnerable and completely open to him. He wondered if his heart was as visible, if his soul was as clearly on display.

She drew back slowly, cheeks hollowed with a suction that nearly crossed his eyes. She lashed his cockhead with her tongue, toying with his piercing, rubbing over the tender spot just under the head that sent his balls crawling up against his body, desperate for release.

Just when he was ready to pull her off, unable to stand any more stimulation, she took him deep, deeper than before. He could feel her throat closing convulsively against his tip. The sounds she made, muffled and frantic, vibrated the length of his shaft.

Ah, fuck. He wasn't going to last, and dammit, this time he needed to come inside her.

"Enough," he rasped, dragging her off. She whimpered and tugged back, swiping her tongue in a lush stroke up the length of his cock.

"*Enough,*" he repeated, giving her hair a sharp tug. The glaze in her eyes receded a little, but her tongue still stroked repeatedly over her swollen lips, as if searching for a last taste of him.

"I'm going to come inside your tight little pussy, Cassidy. I'm going to mark you inside and out as mine. You will never forget who this body belongs to and you will, by God, never run away from me again." The words were a vow, as sacred to him as any promises they could make in church.

"Yes, Master." Her teeth closed on her lower lip, and her eyes moved from his cock to his face and back. "Make me yours."

Chapter Nine

Cassidy was shaking when Dorian released her hair and moved behind her; shuddering with arousal and fear. Not fear that he would hurt her physically. No, her fear was more basic than that. She'd put herself entirely in his hands, body, heart and soul. Now she had to trust him to handle her with care.

He dropped to his knees behind her, his thighs bracketing hers, his calves pressed along the outsides of hers. Slowly he slid one large, warm hand up the length of her spine, clasping her nape gently and using the grip to guide her upper body toward the floor.

"Cross your arms in front of you, baby. Make a cradle for your head." His voice was like another caress, sending shivers along her spine. "What's your safe word, Cassidy?"

"Innocent, Master." The word tasted like ashes on her tongue, a bitter reminder of how their last session had ended.

"Innocent, Cassidy. Say it if you need to but, baby, don't abuse it. Remember who you belong to, and don't abuse it." He curled over her, whispering directly into her ear. "This isn't a game. Being a Dom is who I am. It doesn't just turn off when I step out of the bedroom or out of the club." She shuddered under his warmth, under the weight of his body and his words. "But I'm not just any Dom, baby. I'm *your* Dom, *your* Master, and you belong to *me*."

He pressed his palm between her shoulder blades, holding her in place, and she felt him sit back on his heels, giving himself access to her behind. The hand not holding her down was on her skirt, yanking it up impatiently, baring her to a gaze she swore she could feel burning over her.

His hand moved to her ass, rough pressure opening her cheeks. Then his cockhead, huge and hot, was rubbing along her slit, spreading heat and honey from clit to hole.

"I could fuck this pretty little ass so good, baby." She felt the blunt pressure of his cock prodding the puckered opening, and didn't know whether to be afraid or excited. She was more turned on than she'd ever been in her life, but she wasn't prepared, and he was huge. "Would you like that, Cassidy? My cock in your tight little ass?" He was rubbing now, relentlessly stimulating the length of her slit, and she was shifting in his grasp, trying to deepen the contact.

"Anything, Master," she gasped, finally able to force the words past the pounding of her heart. "Fuck me anywhere, any way you want to."

"Ah, fuck, baby," his voice broke on an oath as he prodded his cock against her tight, forbidden opening. "Next time," he groaned, and then slipped down to wedge the head against the mouth of her pussy.

Slowly, inch by inch, he worked his way in, rotating and stretching her sensitive tissues. He forged deeper and deeper for what seemed like hours, days, until she felt the silky skin of his hips cupping her buttocks, the rough bush of his pubic hair scraping over her ass. Until it felt like he was in her so deep he could touch her heart.

"Don't come," he growled, beginning to thrust, and she clenched down in dismay. She hadn't even recognized the flutters along her sheath until his warning; she'd been too caught up in the feel of him inside her. This was, she realized, their first time alone.

Maybe even the first time they'd really made love and not just sex.

His movements were speeding up, brutally hard and painfully slow. A pleasure so perfect with each thrust it was almost agonizing. His hand slid the length of her back, coming to rest on her neck, pressing her face down, leaving her with her ass in the air, completely at his mercy.

The flutters were starting up again and she could feel the orgasm building in her chest, tingling in her fingers and toes. "Master," she panted, desperate. "Please. May I come?" She didn't think she could hold it back, even if he did deny her.

"Are you ready, Cassidy?" Each word was punctuated with a thrust. Each thrust brought a gasp, a grunt, an erotic symphony that wrapped around her until she felt enveloped in Dorian, in sex.

"So ready, Master," she sobbed, "please let me, I'm so close."

"Who do you belong to?" The words were clipped, abrupt.

"You, Master."

"Who owns your body and your pleasure?"

"You, Master."

"And will you ever run from me again?" The raw pain in his voice pierced her to the heart, and she softened even more, took him even deeper.

"Never, Master. I won't run."

Dorian was pounding into her now, a jackhammer out of control. Each thrust strafed over a painfully sensitive spot inside she'd always thought was a myth. G-spot, her fractured mind supplied. She couldn't wait, couldn't stop, couldn't...

"Come, Cassidy!" Even as he spoke the words she was convulsing, screaming, and clawing the plush carpet as she jerked in his arms. "Come for me now," he roared, slamming hilt-deep into her grasping sheath. "Come for your Master!"

It was the never-ending orgasm, and she shook helplessly in its grasp. Just when she thought she might come down, Dorian ground his pelvis against her ass and began shuddering against her, shooting long, hot spurts of cum into her greedy sheath and sending her orgasm soaring again.

His, she thought incoherently. All his.

* * * *

Tony Rennatto was guiding his wife toward the elevator, intent on a long lunch, when the door to Marcus' office opened. When Marcus' pretty little assistant stepped out looking dazed and debauched, he felt Meredith grow still at his side. When Dorian Jenner stepped up behind her and Meredith's jaw dropped, he grinned and gently tapped her mouth closed.

Dorian had noticed them but Cass clearly hadn't, and Tony had an idea it would be best for everyone if they kept it that way. With a wink and a grin at the cop, Tony prodded his speechless wife into the elevator. As the doors slid silently closed, he turned to her with a mock frown.

"Why am I the only person in this damned building who doesn't get to have sex in Marcus' office?"

* * * *

Being a Dom is who I am. It doesn't just turn off when I step out of the bedroom, or out of the club.

Those words rang in her ears as Cass stood watching through the kitchen window as Celia whirled Katie around in circles in the back yard. The whole afternoon had a surreal feeling to it. She was here with Dorian. Dorian was her Master. His family knew what they did together. And her daughter was involved now, too. The mind boggled.

Hard, hot hands surrounded her shoulders.

"You're thinking so loud I can practically hear you." Dorian murmured the words in her ear, and she tried to choke down the shiver that followed them. "Don't." His hands tightened dangerously. "Don't ever try to hide your responses from me."

Cass turned to face him. He let his hands glide caressingly down her sides before planting them firmly against the counter on either side of her hips, effectively pinning her against the sink.

"I don't know the rules," she confessed. "I don't know how you expect me to behave. Am I supposed to call you Master here, in front of your family?" She could feel the first flutters of panic, and desperately shoved them down. "Master," she whispered, "may I meet your eyes?"

"Cassidy." He tipped up her chin and his expression held such affection and such disappointment that Cass wanted to cry. "I would never humiliate or shame you," he scolded. "I would never command you in ways that would embarrass you, either." Cass lowered her eyes, unable to meet the disappointment in his.

"I'm sorry, Master," she whispered wretchedly.

"Look at me," he commanded, his voice taking on the unmistakable tone of command that never failed to make her heart thud and her panties damp. "You insult me by believing I'd ever compromise you. I'll punish you for that, but later. Privately." He tapped her chin decisively, and then lifted his hand to sift his fingers through her hair. "I'll take some responsibility for your mistake, as well," he continued. "Perhaps I needed to be clearer with you."

He curled his fingers in her hair and tugged lightly. Cass's pussy went liquid. "I don't stop being your Master in public; however, I will never command you to perform in a situation that would cause you true distress." His brown eyes pierced hers. "When we're in public, or with our families, you will behave as you've always behaved. If I desire or expect something different, I'll instruct you in advance." He smiled wickedly, and Cass caught her breath at the thrill it sent trickling through her. "And if you manage to earn a punishment," he swept his thumb over her lower lip, "like you did today, well, then I'll have no problem giving you what you deserve."

* * * *

Two hours later Dorian was coasting, feeling like everything was right with his world. Cassidy fit so well with his family, laughing and joking with Celia and ignoring Morgan's dumb-ass comments with practiced ease.

The sun was shining, the food was good, and the only thing standing between him and perfect contentment was the fact Cassidy had left his side to change Katie's diaper.

"You can just stay the hell out of that damned club." Morgan's angry voice jerked him out of his reverie.

"I don't see what the big deal is," Celia was saying in her patient, "you're an

imbecile” voice. “I go there to dance and have fun.”

“The big deal,” Dorian interrupted, “is that dancing and having fun are not all you’re there for.” Ignoring his sister’s narrow-eyed glare, he continued. “If you were just there to dance, you wouldn’t end up on the second floor every other weekend.”

“Damn, Ce,” Morgan groaned. “You’re not stupid. You *know* what goes on up there.” He shook his head. “Sweetheart, is that what you really want? To be somebody’s sex toy?”

“It gets even better,” Dorian told his brother. “She’s been fluttering around Brady Ryder.”

“Jesus, Celia,” Morgan’s voice went from irritation to fury. “Don’t you have any sense?”

“Oh. My. God.” Celia’s grey eyes raked over her brothers with equal condemnation. “First of all,” she shot Dorian a venomous look. “I don’t flutter. Second, if I did, it’s none of your business who I’d flutter around. Finally,” she stood and leaned toward them, planting her fists on the table. “Dorian Jenner, you are the world’s biggest hypocrite.”

“What the fuck?”

“If my going to Velvet Ice is such a bad thing, then why is it okay for you to go?” Before he could think of a good answer, she continued. “And, even if there was some reason, like you’ve got danglies and I don’t, then why is it so wrong and bad for me to go, but its okay for Cass?” Dorian opened his mouth, but nothing came out.

“Right,” Celia mocked. “You have no answer to that, do you?”

“Ce,” Morgan was clearly striving for a calm, soothing tone. From the look on her face, Celia wasn’t buying it. “You know the kind of women who go to that place. That’s not you.”

Celia let out a small shriek. “You don’t even begin to know what’s me! You don’t want to know.”

“Celia,” Dorian was tired of the conversation. He wanted Cassidy in his arms, and the peace of knowing his sister wasn’t putting herself in a situation where her heart or her body could be hurt. “You’re over twenty-one, so I can’t forbid you to go to Velvet Ice. But you’re not a member, and Ryder’s made it more than clear you’re not welcome there, so I damned well can forbid you to go on the second and third floors. You know the things that go on up there, and I won’t have any of that touch you.”

Celia sat back down and gave both men a disbelieving look. Turning to Morgan she said, “I know what kind of women go there.” Turning to Dorian she continued, “I know what goes on there.”

Reaching up, she tugged at the hair on either side of her face and yelled, “Women like Kendra go there. Hell, Dorian, Cass goes there. And, yeah, I have an idea of what goes on there. And those are the things you’re doing with Cass. So, if you think going there is going to corrupt me or cause people to look at me badly, what does that mean you think about Kendra and Cass?”

*

Cass stood, frozen in the doorway just out of sight of Dorian and his siblings. She’d hesitated to come back out because they were obviously having a heated conversation, and she didn’t want Katie to be upset by the yelling. But what had held her there was the topic of their argument.

Velvet Ice. The kind of women who went to Velvet Ice. The things those women did.

Clearly, Morgan didn't want his sister involved in the BDSM lifestyle. Cass didn't know him well enough to be deeply hurt by his disapproval, though it reinforced her insecurities. No, what devastated her was Dorian's response to Celia's interest in the club.

He didn't want the lifestyle to touch her? The lifestyle he'd been slowly seducing Cass to accept, not only in the bedroom, but in all aspects of her life?

She waited for his response, for him to say something that would explain his reaction. She believed his emotions toward her were sincere, how could she not? But added to the danger of his job and her own inhibitions, his condemnation of his sister for wanting to experience the things Cass had reveled in was just too much for her to process.

When the silence stretched on Cass pulled herself together, hitched Katie higher on her hip, and stepped out of the house. Three pairs of eyes snapped guiltily to her face, which she tried hard to keep blank and pleasant.

"We weren't talking about you," Celia blurted out, and both men turned to glare at her. "I mean, hey," the younger woman grinned wryly, "we missed you, and the button-nose here." She reached out to tweak Katie's nose, and the little girl giggled happily.

"I really appreciate your hospitality." Cass was proud of how level the words sounded. Almost friendly, even. "But it's time for the button-nose's nap." She ignored Katie's whine of disagreement and turned to Dorian. "Will you take us home so I can put her down?"

"Oh, she can nap here," Celia rushed to assure her. "Morgan's got two extra bedrooms, and I'm sure Princess Button-Nose is welcome to use one of them." She gave Morgan a spectacularly un-subtle jab and he quickly agreed.

"Katie's more than welcome to nap here. And we'd all like for you to stay."

God, they were all looking at her, and from the expressions on Celia and Morgan's faces, they knew she'd overheard their opinion of *women like her*. Dorian's eyes were opaque, impossible to read. Cass knew she had to get out of there, get home, and get away from Dorian before she lost her slippery grip on her composure.

"I appreciate it, but Katie really ought to be in her own bed." Dorian still hadn't spoken, hadn't done anything but stare at her with those inscrutable eyes. "Will you drive us home?" Because, dammit, she needed to be there *now*.

"If that's what you really want, baby," he finally answered.

"That's what I really want," she confirmed.

*

Dorian waited until Cassidy went to buckle Katie into her toddler seat to spin and face his brother and sister.

"What the fuck?" He turned to Morgan. "You know what kinds of women go there? Jesus, Morgan, *my* woman goes there!" He rounded on Celia next. "And what were you thinking to ask what I think of Cassidy? I love her. I respect her. I want to make her every dream come true. Jesus," he repeated, disgusted.

"Dorian, I'm so sorry," Celia began. "I had no idea she'd hear any of that. But I had to try and make you understand that there's nothing wrong with what I want and need. I thought if you realized what I want is no different than what Cass wants, you'd finally understand."

"What you want is completely different," Dorian answered furiously. "You want

Brady Ryder. He's nobody's Master, and he's the most fucked-up human being I've ever met." He wasn't being fair, and he knew it, but the blank look in Cassidy's eyes hadn't fooled him for one second. He was going to lose her, and he needed someone to blame. He turned to his brother. Someone other than himself.

"Your little comments about my lifestyle are going to stop. Now. It was one thing when you were just riding my ass, but today you hurt Cassidy."

"*I hurt Cassidy?*" Morgan's voice dropped dangerously. "I seem to recall *you* being the one to imply the things that happen at that dirty little club of yours are too perverse to expose our sister to." Dorian snarled and stepped forward, ready to break his big-brother's jaw. Anything to stop him from speaking truths Dorian didn't want to hear.

Celia, always the first to extend an olive branch, stepped between them.

"Cass and Katie are waiting in the car," she reminded Dorian. "Maybe you can fix some of the damage on the way home." Dorian gritted his teeth and forced his rage down to manageable levels.

"Just stay away from me, Morgan," he gritted out. "Keep away from me, and from Cassidy, and keep your dumb-ass comments to yourself."

"Oh, no problem there, bro," Morgan retorted. "But it's not *my* dumb-ass comments that did the damage here."

Chapter Ten

Cass sat with her hands folded tightly in her lap. She couldn't even look in Dorian's direction. The conversation between the Jenner siblings played over and over in her mind. *You know what kind of women go there.*

Morgan's opinion she could understand. While he was every bit of an alpha as his younger brother, Dorian had told her he didn't indulge in the BDSM lifestyle. He didn't have a clear perspective of what she shared with Dorian. It made sense that he didn't want Celia anywhere near the club. Especially if she were interested in Brady Ryder. Cass had only seen him in passing, but he was one scary man, and way too intense for the young woman.

No, Dorian's end of the conversation was the problem. When she heard him tell Celia he didn't want *what happens on the third floor* to touch her, Cass had felt like he'd stabbed her. She was still so confused about what being his submissive meant for her everyday life; to hear him condemn his sister for wanting the same thing only compounded her confusion.

He was a Dom. He dated submissives. So how could there be something wrong with *women like her?*

A hard kernel of hurt formed in her heart, but she quickly suppressed it. Easier to be angry; angry at herself for falling so hard for this man who seemed designed to hurt her. Angry at Dorian for not defending what they did together, for not defending *her*. Angry because the Jenners' conversation made her feel like some desperate, defective female grasping for love any way she could get it.

He'd almost convinced her when they'd made love in Marcus' office. No, she corrected herself, when they'd *fucked*. She'd believed she'd found her soul mate, the part of her that was missing. Now she felt like a fool. There would always be whispers among those who didn't approve of her lifestyle. If Dorian's own family couldn't accept it, how could she expect strangers to do so?

She wouldn't put her daughter through rumors, through any kind of scandal that could cause her pain.

Dorian's hand covered her own; long, hard fingers wrapped around her more delicate hand. She didn't move, didn't even try to draw her gaze from the car window. She no longer felt the heat of Dorian's touch, the warmth that had always filled her heart. No, once again she felt cold inside; the familiar freeze was slowly taking over.

*

Dorian could literally feel the wall of ice Cassidy was constructing between them and, as he so often did with this woman, he felt powerless to stop it. All he knew was he had to do something, and he'd better do it fast, or he'd lose Cassidy forever, and that was not an option.

"My brother is the world's biggest asshole."

She never looked at him, just stared out the window, her hand small and cold under his. Katie babbled in the backseat, and Dorian bit back a curse. There was no way to talk to her in the car. He held her hand tighter, as if by holding her hand he could hold her heart.

The day had started out so well, dammit. Not only had Dorian genuinely wanted to spend time with Cassidy and getting to know Katie, but he had wanted to show her how well he could fit into their life. He'd needed to show her that, while their sex life might not always be conventional, their relationship was.

Dorian wanted to prove to Cass that she and her daughter's happiness were first in his heart. She may be his submissive, but she didn't have to change who she was, her opinions, her love of her daughter and family. There was a learning curve here for him, too. He'd never wanted a relationship to move outside of the bedroom, or club, before. With Cassidy, he craved her in every part of his life, so he'd spent a lot of time thinking about how that would work.

He wanted a submissive, not a slave. He wanted a woman who knew that her happiness and wellbeing was his only priority, and who trusted him to take care of her. As archaic and politically incorrect as it sounded, he wanted to be the man and to have her accept his word because she knew his ultimate goal was her happiness.

He did not want a doormat. He didn't expect her to ask permission to leave the room, or what she should eat, or think. He supposed he was contradicting himself, but he believed she could retain her independence and strength, while still giving over to him. After all, he didn't want to force her into anything. He wanted her to choose it, choose him, because she couldn't live without it.

They were going to work this out tonight one way or the other. He had to make her understand that she was the world to him. That he could protect her from the jerks of the world. And Morgan was damn well going to apologize to Cassidy or, God help him, Dorian was going to kill him.

Now, as he felt her still, cold hand within his, he knew he needed to do something to show her he meant what he said. They'd spent an almost normal day together, now they needed to spend a normal evening together. Hell, he'd give her all the fucking *normal* she could stand.

He pulled up in front of her apartment. Without a word, he got out of the car, walked around to the back door, and opened it up. He carefully removed a now sleeping Katie from her car seat. Holding the baby in one arm, he deftly removed the car seat and began walking to the apartment door.

He turned to see Cassidy still standing by the car, her mouth hanging open. "Come on, baby. I think she may be more comfortable in her own bed."

She blinked, and slipped in front of him, fumbling in her purse. He noticed the slight tremor in her fingers as she pulled out her key and unlocked the front door.

Dorian followed her inside. Setting the car seat down by the door, he carried Katie to her room. He gently laid her down in her crib, brushing the hair from her eyes. She popped her thumb in her mouth and turned to her side, never making a noise.

Dorian watched the toddler with a kind of wonder. He'd never really considered having kids. There was no way he could have anticipated the rush of warmth he felt at the sound of Katie's soft, snuffly breathing, or the pride and pleasure when she held out her chubby arms to him. She looked at him with such trust and complete faith, that he felt exalted and humbled all at the same time. He only wished her mother could be so accepting.

With a sigh, Dorian flicked on the baby monitor, which was perched on a small table next to Katie's crib, and left the room, shutting the door quietly behind himself.

He found Cassidy in the kitchen, leaning against the counter. Her arms were folded over her chest, and a frown creased her normally smooth brow.

He moved to stand on front of her. Grasping her hands lightly, he brought them to his waist and held them there. He leaned down placing his forehead against hers.

"Cassidy, baby, I know you're hurt by what you heard. I can only say that I am sorry. Morgan loves to give me shit about my sex life. Hell, it's a comedy bit we do. He loves getting a rise out of me, and I know he's full of shit. There's never been a reason for me to stop him before now, because there's never been a woman that meant more to me than some fun and games. He's an ass, but once he gets it through his head that you're special, he'll back off."

He slid his hands up her arms, bringing his hands up to wrap around her neck. He stroked his thumbs lightly over her throat, and was encouraged when her pulse jumped.

"Morgan isn't into the lifestyle himself, but he doesn't think it's bad or wrong. His bitch isn't with the lifestyle. He's worried about Celia. She's been chasing after Brady Ryder for years now, and the idea of her catching him makes Morgan's blood run cold." Dorian huffed out a hard laugh. "Hell, it makes *my* blood run cold."

"I'm not upset about what Morgan said," Cassidy answered, refusing to meet his eyes.

"Celia was just trying to prove a point," he began again. Cassidy shook her head and pulled away from him.

"I'm not upset about that, either." Now she did meet his eyes, and he almost wished she hadn't. There was confusion there, and anger, but it was the disappointment that broke his heart.

"You've been so patient with me, seducing me into this lifestyle, convincing me that there's nothing bad or wrong about what we do together..." She crossed her arms over her chest. Dorian recognized the self-protective posture, and got a bad feeling about where this was heading. "But then you condemn your sister for wanting the same things." Her blue eyes cut into him like a laser beam. "I need you to explain to me how something that's so wrong for your sister is right for me, because right now I'm feeling like everything I thought we were building is just another lie."

"*Nothing* between us is a lie, baby." He cupped her face in his hands. Her skin beneath his touch was like satin, everything about her so soft that he wanted to wrap himself in her warmth and never leave. "There's nothing bad, nothing wrong or perverted about what we do together." He lowered his forehead to rest against hers again. "You are the purest, most beautiful thing I've ever touched, and what we do together is the most profound thing I've ever experienced."

Her soft sigh landed on his chin. "I don't understand, Dorian. I know how I feel when I'm with you. I know that what we have feels incredible, it feels right. What I don't get is why it's okay for me to be your submissive, but it's not okay for Celia to want Brady."

Dorian wrapped his hand around Cass' nape and stroked the bare skin there. This time it was his turn to sigh. "Cassidy, I don't have a problem with Celia's private life and how she chooses to live it." He paused, considering. "Okay, yeah I have a problem, but only because she's my baby sister and should not *ever* have sex." He gave her a crooked smile when she rolled her eyes. "Brady Ryder is another matter all together. He's about the most fucked-up individual I've ever met, and I don't want my baby sister anywhere

near him.”

Cass pulled back her baby blues and met his eyes steadily. “So, if your sister went to one of the rooms on the third floor with someone other than him, you wouldn’t have a problem?”

“Oh, fuck no, I’m not saying that. Remember? No sex for Celia. *Ever*.” Dorian’s thumb smoothed over the crease between her brows, which deepened with every word he spoke. “But that’s only because she’s *my baby sister*. There isn’t a brother alive that wants to know about his baby sister’s sex life.” Dorian forced a laugh, trying to lighten the mood. “Can you understand a brother’s insane need to keep his sister in line?”

Her hands relaxed on his waist, squeezing lightly, and some of the chaos in her eyes calmed. A good sign. “I can understand that Celia is a very smart, independent woman who isn’t likely to allow her brothers to interfere in her love life.”

Dorian shuddered at the words *love life* being applied to his little sister. Adding Brady Ryder to the picture just made it worse.

Forcefully pushing the image of Celia with Brady out of his mind, he stepped back from Cassidy and laced his fingers with hers, bringing each one up to his lips for a kiss.

“So, here’s the thing,” he said firmly. “What you heard had nothing to do with you, and nothing to do with the lifestyle, either, for that matter. It was about a brother’s need to protect his sister from a bad situation.”

“You mean a brother’s need to control his sister?” she asked sweetly.

He gave her a mock scowl and forged on, thrilled that she was sniping back, because it meant that damnable ice was thawing.

“Can you accept that, baby? Can you believe that I’d never condemn you for what we do together? Have faith that I’d never subject you to people who would?”

She sighed. “We have so much stacked against us, Dorian.” He tensed, waiting for her next words. “I’m trying,” she finally whispered. “I want you so much, and I’m trying to get beyond all the obstacles.” She tipped her head down, resting her forehead directly over his heart.

“We can make this work, baby,” he murmured into her silky hair. “If we’re patient with each other, I know we can make this work.”

She sighed again and wrapped her arms around him, pressing so close it almost seemed she was trying to crawl into his skin. And, God, he wanted her there.

“Okay.” Her voice was low and tentative. “Let’s be patient and try.”

He wanted to sing the Hallelujah Chorus, wanted to do a touchdown dance. He contented himself with pulling her even tighter against him.

“How about I run and get all of us something for dinner? We can relax and take it easy tonight.”

She looked up and smiled. Her nerves were still showing a bit, her eyes a little uncertain, but Dorian thought the crisis was over.

“Sounds good,” she murmured. “I could go for some Italian.”

“Okay, baby. I’ll be back in a bit.”

Chapter Eleven

Cass stood watching her baby sleep, and thought about the twists and turns her life was taking.

She'd just wanted to feel alive again. To feel a trickle of warmth in the cold numbness her life had become. She hadn't intended for Master to become a part of her everyday life. She certainly hadn't intended to fall in love with him.

And she *was* in love with him. She didn't want to be, had fought it every step of the way. She had to be honest, though, at least with herself. She was in love with Dorian Jenner.

The things that terrified her about him were the things that made him so alluring. His job. Just the thought of it was enough to send her into an anxiety attack. But it was one of the things that made her respect him so much. He was an honorable man, willing to do the difficult things to make the world a better place.

His forceful, Dominant personality. The idea of people's reactions to their private life gave her hives. But his rock-solid confidence made her feel safe, protected. Heck, it made her hot. Cass was no shrinking violet, and she knew that she'd never be satisfied with vanilla sex again. She craved his Domination with every cell of her being.

She felt suspended on the horns of a dilemma. When she was with him, everything made sense. When they were apart, her doubts and fears crept back in, clouding her mind and emotions.

Cass stroked a gentle finger down Katie's velvety cheek. He could be so good for them. And she was confident enough to believe they could be good for him, too.

The outside door opened and closed. She smiled at his quietly called, "Honey, I'm home." She'd made him promises. She'd promised not to run. She'd promised to give this thing between them a try.

Taking a deep breath, Cass stepped out of Katie's room. She met Dorian in the kitchen with a smile.

"So," she teased, going on tip-toe to nip at his bottom lip. "What's for dinner?"

* * * *

Cassidy followed Dorian into her bedroom, waiting nervously for his reaction to her most private space. He smiled at all the personal touches, pictures of her family, dried roses from her prom corsage, the little things that made up her past.

The evening had been a revelation. Dorian had brought lasagna and garlic bread from the little Italian restaurant just down the road. He'd served Cass and Katie with a flourish, and had even managed to coax the toddler into eating some salad. Later, they'd walked to a neighborhood park. He'd tirelessly pushed Katie on the swings, and had joined her and Cass on the teeter-totter with a smile.

Katie was clearly falling just as much in love with the man as Cassidy already was, and Cass didn't know whether to be thrilled or terrified about it.

Dorian walked her over to the bedside and whispered, "Don't move." The sound of his voice was like a cool breath along her skin.

He reached into the small canvas bag that he'd brought back with him when he went for dinner. She could only imagine what he had in there, and she felt a shiver of anticipation when he drew out a long silk scarf and a pair of Velcro cuffs.

"Strip for me, Cassidy. Slowly." He added as he leaned back against the wall, crossing his ankles in front of himself.

Cass knew her smile was wicked as she answered, "Yes, Master." Dorian's was wicked, too, when he nodded for her to start. She popped the top button of her pink cotton blouse, licking her lips as she reached for the second. His eyes never left her face until she had unfastened all the buttons. She let the shirt slide slowly down her arms and fall to the floor.

She paused to let his eyes roam over her, taking in the pink and peach floral lace of her bra, and the way the colors contrasted with her ivory skin. Then she used her thumb and forefinger to pluck open the front clasp. Her breasts sprang free, seeming to swell with arousal. Her nipples stood out proudly; he might as well have been sucking on them already, they were so taut.

She shimmied out of her jeans and panties in one slow move, wriggling them over her hips, down her calves and finally kicking them off. She let her hands fall to her sides and waited for his next instructions. The anticipation was killing her, while he seemed perfectly calm as he looked her body up and down. She might have thought he was unaffected if she hadn't seen the growing bulge between his brawny thighs.

"Touch your nipples for me, Cassidy. I want to see how you arouse yourself." His voice was low, reminding Cass of their many phone conversations. He'd talked her through countless orgasms, but she'd never gotten herself off in front of a man before Master. The idea was more intoxicating than she'd ever imagined.

She dragged her nails along the lines of her collarbones, leaving pink trails down the upper slopes of her breasts, which she cupped in her hands. She brushed her thumbs across the tips of her nipples, and then let the pink buds peek out between her spread fingers. She pinched them lightly, pulling at the nubs until they stood dramatically out, begging for attention.

Her pussy felt swollen and heavy and wet. Her thighs trembled slightly when Dorian's cock gave a hard, visible throb against the front of his jeans.

"Sit on the bed and spread your thighs wide for me. I want you to show me how wet you are for me." Cass didn't hesitate. She was in need of relief, she ached to be touched. She sat on the bed and scooted back until she could rest her heels on the edge of the bed.

"That's good, baby. Now let your legs fall open for me. Show me how swollen your little clit is." *Damn*, she thought. *His commands felt like smooth velvet sliding down her body, causing goose bumps to erupt all over her skin.*

Her first two fingers dipped between her lower lips and were immediately coated with a thick glaze of moisture. She circled them around her clit teasingly, though she wasn't sure which of them was being teased more, and moved her other hand down to her entrance.

"Good girl. Now show me how you fuck yourself." It never failed; every time Dorian's voice went all deep and guttural, every time he used this rough, coarse language, it raised the temperature in the room. Maybe it was the knowledge that he was just as turned on by her as she was by him. All she knew for sure was that with each explicit word she got hotter, wetter.

Cass obeyed and watched in fascination the changes coming over her Master. His breathing grew heavier with each thrust of her fingers. The wet sounds of her sex filled the space between them, and with each soft, sexy sound he dragged his palm over the erection raging behind his jeans.

She hitched her hips up to meet her fingers, completely caught up in his reaction to her. Her pussy was greedy for orgasm, and when he groaned in appreciation, it almost finished her... God, she'd never felt so powerful in her life. Her actions were causing her Master to come apart right before her eyes. She cried out softly as she felt the first tremors of orgasm flutter in her womb.

"Stop!" The word was a vicious hiss as Dorian moved to the side of the bed. Cass immediately stilled her fingers, and sobbed as her orgasm retreated while her arousal ramped up even higher.

"Scoot up to the headboard, Cassidy. Arms out." Desperate for him, Cass rushed to do as he commanded. To her great relief, he was naked and between her thighs before she could even lay her head on the pillow.

He put the silk scarves through a slat in the head board before wrapping the cuffs around her wrists and tying them to the scarf.

*

Dorian grabbed Cassidy by the hips, squeezing them, trying to gain some control back. She had looked so damn beautiful with her hands all over herself, and when he'd seen the flush of her oncoming orgasm, he'd known he was a fucking goner.

All day the pressure had been building in Dorian. With each emotional peak and valley, he'd felt himself slide that much closer to detonation. Now, he knew he was perilously close to being out of control. He didn't trust himself to speak, instead he undid one of the cuffs and, clasping Cassidy's hand with his own he re-cuffed it, binding them together. He slid his free hand up under her shoulder blade to cup the back of her neck.

He lowered himself to her, breathing her breath, her sweet mouth a scant inch from his own. Dorian closed his eyes, the intensity of the moment almost more than he could bear.

"You are *mine*, Cassidy Lassiter," he whispered, and crushed his lips to hers. She opened for him immediately, tangling her tongue with his as he kissed her thoroughly, exploring the moist recesses of her mouth. Her kiss sizzled clear down to his toes, and every inch in between screamed out for her.

"Wrap your legs around me, baby." The rough command tore from his throat. Dorian was desperate to extinguish the fire Cassidy's sweet responsiveness ignited in his blood. Her body, her love, was like an ocean, clear and fathomless. Dorian wanted to drown within her depths, let her wash away the hard edges of his life with her gentle touch.

Was this love? This desperation to be as close as humanly possible to another? This need to know every thought in her head, and to share every thought in his? He'd never felt anything to compare to his craving for Cassidy—for all of Cassidy, body, brain, heart and soul. If this wasn't love, Dorian didn't know what was.

He set his cock at her opening and prodded gently. She immediately pulled her legs up higher, opening herself wider. Dorian took her slowly, enjoying every slow, scalding inch his cock moved inside of her. Their joined hands clasped tight, fingers tangled in a human love knot. Her sigh harmonized with his deep moan when he finally hilted, so deep inside of her they were one body.

He stroked his thumb along the curve of her ear, and her crystalline blue eyes met his. The trust in them humbled him like nothing ever had.

"I love you, Cassidy," he whispered against her lips, words he'd never given another woman.

He drew his hips back and thrust into her more deeply, catching her sigh with his kiss. He thrust again, deeper still, and again, rotating his hips in a smooth circular motion that he knew would grind his pubic bone over her sensitive little clit with every pass. She arched into his thrusts and her hand tightened on his. His body took over, and he picked up speed, pumping into her sweet channel.

"Damn, Cassidy," he moaned as she tightened inside, hugging his cock with her slick walls. "Keep doing that, baby." Christ, but nothing had ever felt so fucking *right*. This was what Dorian had always dreamed of: a wonderful, kind, loving woman who wanted him as he was. A woman who accepted him as a Dom, and gloried in the power to be found in her own submissive nature, and who wanted to share that life with him.

His pelvis rubbed along hers, grinding into her, and he felt the small spasms in her body that told him she was about to come.

"Master, I need to come," she begged him, her tiny hand trying to crush his much larger one.

"Then come with me, Cassidy. Give me all of you." His mouth crushed hers just as her body tightened and shook. Her scream poured down his throat and Dorian took it in, swallowing her every whimper.

Dorian tasted salt, and lifted his mouth from hers, tenderly licking the tears from her cheeks. He freed his hand and both of hers, then cupped her cheek in his palm and kissed her eyelids.

"Okay, baby?" He knew he hadn't hurt her physically, but her emotions had been every bit as chaotic today as his had been, and he knew it would be all too easy to overwhelm her.

Her lips twitched and a small giggle escaped.

"If an overcooked linguini noodle is okay, then yeah," she snickered, "I'm okay." She reached up and threaded her freed hands through his hair, pulling his lips to hers. "I'm more than okay, Dorian," she smiled against his mouth, still laughing softly. He joined her laughter as he flipped to his side and gathered her in his arms.

Chapter Twelve

Dorian felt the skin prickle on the back of his neck. Everything about this meet felt wrong, from the cunning look on Carlos' suave face as he sat across from Dorian in the manager's office at the Convention Center construction site, to the tension simmering between Dorian and Morgan, who was monitoring the action from inside a utility van on the site.

This Sunday meeting was supposed to be a formality. Dorian had spent the better part of a year infiltrating Carlos Ortega's organization, working his way up the food chain. He didn't actually expect the man to say anything terribly incriminating at this first meeting. If he had, he'd have arranged for more back up than his pissed-off brother and the sound tech assigned to the case. No, this meeting was all about establishing who had the bigger dick, who was going to have the power in their "working relationship."

Taking a breath, he forced himself to focus. No doubt his heebie-jeebies were a product of the animosity still brewing between himself and his brother. They'd worked together dozens of times, and Dorian was used to the way they could almost read each other's minds. Now, the echoes of their fight lingered between them, blocking out the uncanny communication that had always marked their work together.

Dorian sighed. The fact was, he owed his brother an apology. It wasn't Morgan's words that had hurt Cassidy. I was his own. The problem with apologizing, though, was that he'd have to admit to his big brother that he'd been wrong, which meant he'd never hear the end of Morgan's "I told you so's."

"So, Mr. Jones," Carlos' voice abruptly yanked him back to the present, and Dorian cursed himself for letting his attention wander. "You have managed remarkably well to keep under the radar of not only the Worthington siblings," he spit the name out like a curse, and Dorian bit back a smile, "but also of your employer, Mr. Renatto." The drug dealer raised an eyebrow and leaned forward confidingly. "How have you accomplished that, Mr. Jones? I know how ... attentive Mr. Renatto is to every detail of his jobsites, yet you seem to move my product freely and without fear of interference."

Because I'm moving it straight to the evidence lock-up, Dorian thought with grim amusement, but he answered solemnly. "Renatto and I go way back. He trusts me." He added a cocky grin and a dollop of arrogance he knew Carlos would understand. "Besides, I'm in charge of the interiors. No one knows all the hidey-holes in this building better than I do."

"You seem to have become quite an expert on the inside of the Worthington building, as well," Carlos mused, an expression of deep consideration on his face. Dorian felt the hair on the back of his neck stir again. He gave Carlos a carefully bland look, and quirked a brow as the slick European continued. "You visit several times a week, I understand."

Shit. Clearly he'd been a little too impressed with himself to realize Carlos might still be having him watched. The slime-ball obviously had some sort of intel coming in. Dorian needed to figure out how much.

"I told you," he said, "Renatto and I are friends. Sometimes we hang out. And since he married the ice princess, that means hanging at the WG."

“It would seem that Renatto isn’t the only one courting a lady at the Worthington Group, however.” Carlos’ smile slid from slick to shark-like. “My friend, your Mrs. Lassiter is quite the charmer.” With an almost lazy wave of his hand, Carlos gestured one of his ubiquitous bodyguards closer. The cool kiss of the muzzle at the back of his neck barely registered through the rushing in his ears as Carlos continued. “She is the sister of Worthington’s wife, no? I recall that the lovely Carrie is quite the spitfire. Perhaps I should see if the sister is, as well...”

Dorian saw red, at the same time he felt the entire operation collapsing like a house of cards. He knew Morgan was listening, knew his brother would already have called for the cavalry. Dorian’s only job was to try and salvage as much of the operation as possible without getting himself, or anyone else, killed.

“Stay away from her, Carlos,” he gritted out as the drug dealer smiled smugly. “She has nothing to do with our business and, as you said, she’s Carrie Worthington’s sister. If you touch her, you’re begging for Marcus Worthington’s undivided attention.”

“Ah, yes. A very nice recovery, Mr. Jones.” Carlos nodded, and the goon behind Dorian flicked the safety off his weapon with a soft click. “Or, perhaps I should call you Detective Jenner.”

Dorian carefully kept his face blank, even as his mind whirled frantically, trying to find some way out of the cluster-fuck his investigation had become in the space of a few short minutes.

“If you know who I am,” he told the drug dealer, who was all but rubbing his hands together in glee over having outsmarted him, “then you know if anything happens to me, you’ll be the first suspect.”

“That’s what makes this all so beautiful, Detective Jenner.” Carlos rose and exited the office, which was housed in a large, portable trailer. His goon gave Dorian a good shove down the steps before following, gun at the ready.

“You see, while you have been busy trying to gain my trust, I have been busy moving my interests North.” Carlos smiled widely. “By the time your body is discovered, I will be well into Canada, and Carlos Ortega will be as much of a ghost as Dorian Jenner.”

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“Dammit!” Morgan lunged out of the truck and hit the ground running, knowing he was already too late. Without breaking stride, he hit the speed dial on his cell phone. The minute his Lieutenant answered he began rapping out the situation.

“Do not engage, Jenner.” Yeah, Morgan thought. Like that was gonna happen. “I’m serious.” Lieutenant Cotter knew him too well. “Unless shots are fired, I want you to stay out of sight until back up gets there. We’ve got two squad cars en route. Just hold tight.”

He didn’t need the fucking squad cars. Rico was in the van, and would be crawling up his ass any minute. He’d worked with the tech expert for even longer than he’d worked with Dorian, and Rico could read Morgan’s mind almost as easily as his brother could.

Morgan skidded to a stop at the office trailer, flattening himself against the vinyl siding and risking a peek around the corner. Carlos, the smug bastard, was leading the way into the unfinished building. Dorian followed more slowly, being prodded along by a large, square man with no neck and a big gun.

Damn. Morgan waited until they entered the building, and then silently slipped in

behind them. He could hear the silky tones of Carlos' voice, and Dorian's deeper rumble, but he couldn't make out what they were saying. He needed to get closer.

Slinking around corners, weapon at the ready, Morgan worked his way deeper into the building. With every twist and turn he became more frustrated. More pissed. He knew his partner would come in after them, but God knew how long it would take Rico to find them and, as he caught a glimpse of Dorian standing with his arms raised, hands clasped behind his neck in front of Carlos' goon, Morgan knew sooner was much better than later.

Chapter Thirteen

Dorian caught the glimmer of light on metal, and knew Morgan was nearby. He also knew his brother had taken a calculated risk, deliberately letting Dorian see him and betting Carlos and his goon were too busy patting themselves on the back to notice.

Shit. He knew he didn't have a snowball's chance of getting out of this mess on his own, but he also didn't want his brother, asshole that he may be, in harm's way.

"Look," he finally said in a bored voice. "I get it. You've totally outsmarted me and the entire Detroit Police Department. Okay. But if you're gonna kill me, I'd really rather you just have Animal here," he risked jerking a shoulder toward the goon behind him, "shoot me rather than talking me to death."

Carlos' smile congealed and blood filled his face. "As you wish, my friend," he spit out. He turned to leave, but paused halfway across the room and looked back. "You should really be more careful whom you trust, Detective Jenner. Consider where I get my information..."

Before the drug dealer could finish his sentence, a shot splintered the near silence of the half-finished building. Carlos' eyes widened in disbelief as a brilliant red carnation of blood bloomed on the left breast of his white linen suit.

Dorian was moving as Carlos hit his knees, ducking away from the weapon at his back, and dodging for cover. The drug dealer had been about to tell him something, and Dorian had a bad feeling about what it was. In his peripheral vision he could see Morgan at the man's side, and he knew his brother would get the goods.

Or not.

Carlos' head exploded in a mess of red and gray splatters. Morgan rose, turning toward the far doorway where, *son of a bitch*, Rico stood holding his weapon pointed directly at Dorian's brother. The muzzle flashed, and Morgan went down with a scream as his knee seemed to disintegrate in a splash of blood. Another flash and blood bloomed high on Morgan's right shoulder.

With a roar, Dorian changed course, heading for his brother. The goon was hot on his heels, and Dorian heard a surprisingly quiet tapping sound an instant before pain streaked down his left arm. Unlike Rico, that slimy rat bastard, the goon had silenced his weapon.

Clasping his hand over the gunshot wound, he ducked and slid to his knees by his brother, wrapped an arm around Morgan's chest, and dragged him through the doorway, desperate to get him under some sort of cover.

Eyes roaming the room they'd just left and the hall around them, Dorian reached down with his injured arm and felt for Morgan's pulse. It was there. Weak and thready, but there. With his good hand, he grabbed his brother's weapon and checked the safety, then dug out his cell to call in an officer down. He needed to get them the fuck out of there. He needed to find and incapacitate the goon, who'd found cover and was nowhere to be seen, and he really needed to kill that fucking traitor Rico.

As if the thought had conjured him, the corrupt cop appeared at the end of the hallway, weapon pointed directly at Dorian's forehead.

"He fucking trusted you," he snarled at the sound tech. "You were his friend."

“I couldn’t afford to be his friend,” Rico replied. “Not and pay off Melissa.” Dorian knew he was talking about the alimony he paid his ex-wife. “And, fuck, Jenner, that doesn’t even begin to take the money I lost at Greektown.” When Rico mentioned the casino, suddenly the picture became much clearer.

“So my brother’s life was worth less than your gambling debts?” Morgan’s heart was still beating, but he was losing blood fast and Dorian didn’t know when he could expect backup and the assortment of medical personnel that always responded to calls of officer down.

“They were some pretty impressive debts,” Rico answered negligently.

Footsteps echoed down the hall. Dorian and Rico both tensed up, though for different reasons.

“Time to go,” Rico said, smiling. “If you hold real still, I’ll make this quick.” His finger tightened on the trigger, and Dorian lunged to the side. Rico’s bullet tore through the meat of his left shoulder, just above where the goon’s bullet had punched through his bicep. As the corrupt cop pounded down the hall, moving away from the uniforms and medics suddenly flooding the hallway, Dorian knew he’d gotten lucky. The asshole had been arrogant or just plain stupid enough to point the damned gun at his head. Any fool knew that, unless you were a fucking sniper, going for a head shot almost guaranteed your target was gonna survive.

An EMT came to his knees beside him, and Dorian turned his attention back to his brother. No fucking way he was letting him die while they were in the middle of a fight. The bastard would probably haunt him

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Cassidy stepped from the shower and smoothed cocoa butter oil over her entire body before donning a thick terry cloth robe. She wasn’t seeing Dorian tonight, a first since the evening of the Jenner family barbeque two weeks previous. He was working late, and while Cass had expected to enjoy the downtime, she found herself at loose ends and worrying about what might be going on with him at any given moment.

Dorian. Her Master. She smiled as her thoughts drifted toward the man she’d fallen in love with. He knew her inside and out. Dorian had broken through Cassidy’s wall of self preservation and had done what no other lover ever had; he had taken hold of her very soul.

Still smiling, she tiptoed into Katie’s room. Her baby girl was growing by leaps and bounds. Cass felt equal parts awe and terror as she watched her daughter; Katie’s legs were getting longer, much of the baby-fat was stretching out as the little girl grew. Yet, when she looked into Katie’s face, she could still see the newborn. The scrunched up nose was the same, and so were the wide hazel eyes. Cass imagined that when Katie was a mother herself, Cass would still see the ghost of the baby she’d loved so fiercely in her daughter’s face.

Cass gently brushed Katie’s dark, silky hair from her face. Katie’s happiness was Cass’s first priority, and if Dorian hadn’t taken to the little girl, Cass knew their relationship would have been doomed from the start. Instead, the opposite was happening. Dorian handled Katie like a pro. He clearly loved spending time with her, toted her around on his shoulders constantly, and never seemed happier than when he was making the little girl giggle uncontrollably.

He behaved like a father would, playing with her and rocking her to sleep. At first it'd been almost too much for Cass to bear. Her heart ached for Katie. Her daughter would never know her real father, and while Cass knew her marriage to Kevin would never have lasted, she also knew deep down he would have been a good father. Dorian would never take Kevin's place, but Cass was beginning to believe that the place he was carving out for himself in their little family was just as crucial to her and Katie, both.

They'd spent over a year flirting. They'd spent months online learning each other at the most intimate level. They'd spent the last several weeks figuring out how to make their relationship work in real life, and now Cass was absolutely sure that Dorian was the right man for both of them. And if she spent a few sleepless nights wondering if he was safe, or if she felt a shiver of apprehension from time to time as she sat at her desk, well she'd just have to learn to deal with it.

Leaving her sleeping girl, she went into the living room. She grabbed a book from the coffee table and lay back on the couch.

The shrill ring of the phone ripped her out of Joey N. Hill's latest, and she blinked to bring herself back to reality before she reached over and grabbed the phone. The caller id showed *Det Rcv Hosp*, and Cass felt a lump form in her stomach.

"Hello?"

"Cassidy? Oh, Cass!" She frowned as she tried to recognize the hysterical voice on the other end.

"It's Celia." The lump in her stomach grew. "Cass, Dorian and Morgan have been shot." Everything in Cass froze as Celia's tear-filled voice finally penetrated her brain. *Dorian...shot.*

"They won't say if Morgan..." the younger woman's voice broke, and she took an audible breath. "Oh God... Cass, they don't know if Morgan's going to live." Cass couldn't move, couldn't speak, could barely breathe. All she could do was listen to Celia weeping on the line, and hear those words again and again. *Dorian ... shot.*

She remembered as if it were yesterday and not three years ago. The Marine Chaplain coming to her door. She didn't know how long she stood there, paralyzed, before a deep male voice filled the line.

"Are you still there, Cass?" Marcus.

"I—I—" the words didn't want to come out. "Yeah, I'm here."

"Dorian is going to be okay." With those gruffly spoken words the air whooshed back into Cass's lungs, only to be sucked out again as he continued, "Morgan we aren't sure about." She must have waited too long to respond, because he abruptly snapped, "Dammit woman, are you there?"

His question ripped Cassidy out of her stupor. "Yes... Yes, I'm here." Was that really her voice? She sounded thready and it was still so hard to breathe. *Dorian was shot...* and Morgan too.

"Carrie's on the way to your apartment, Cass. She didn't think Katie should be dragged out of bed in the middle of the night." Her brother-in-law might as well have been speaking in Farsi, because Cass was having trouble comprehending a word he said. "Can you get yourself here, or should I send a car?" Get herself there? Go see Dorian, shot and bleeding?

She was saved from answering by a soft but urgent knock on the door. "I have to go, Marcus." Her voice still sounded strange. Like it was coming from underwater. "There's

someone at the door..."

"That'll be Carrie," he answered, then paused. "Cassidy, are you all right?" The concern in his voice almost broke through her shock. The knocking came again.

"I've got to get the door. Thank you for calling."

She hung up the phone and remained still for what seemed like hours. Dorian was shot. That phone call could just as easily have been Celia telling her that Dorian was *dead*.

Cass tasted salt, and realized that tears had been streaking down her face almost since she'd answered the phone. The knocking on the door grew louder. She walked over in a daze. Her chest ached; she still hadn't drawn a deep breath. How silly her fears about people's reactions to their love life seemed now. Dorian had been shot; who cared what his brother or anyone else thought about what they did in private?

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Carrie pushed her way into the apartment the minute she heard the latch click. She took one look at Cass and yanked her baby sister into her arms.

Cass was as white as a sheet, her eyes stark with shock. The tears streaking her cheeks reminded Carrie vividly of the way her sister had reacted to the news of her husband's death.

"I can't believe you've been dating Dorian Jenner for months and didn't tell me!" Carrie pulled back enough to look Cass in the face. "I had to find out from Marcus when the police called to tell him about the incident at the site."

"I didn't..." Cass blinked a couple of times and pulled out of Carrie's arms. "We weren't actually dating..." she trailed off. Carrie didn't like how she looked. Her eyes were dilated, and a fine sweat glimmered on her pale brow. "How did Marcus know...?" Carrie didn't like how she sounded either, for that matter, thready and vague.

"The Lieutenant who called Marcus said Dorian was asking for you. I'm going to stay with Katie while you're at the hospital."

Cass was shaking her head, backing away with a look of almost panic in her eyes. Carrie suppressed a frown. This was very bad, she realized. Worse than when Kevin died.

"Okay," she said firmly, figuring that in her shocky state Cass might follow directions if someone else took charge. "Here's what we'll do. You are going to get dressed because, at the very least Marcus is going to end up here tonight, and he doesn't need to see anyone but me in a bathrobe." She gave Cass a little shove toward the bedroom. "While you do that, I'm going to fix us both a drink, and then we're going to have a long talk so you can tell me just when this whole relationship came about, and just when you planned to let me in on the big secret."

Carrie waited until Cass was safely in her bedroom before pulling out her cell phone. As she expected, Marcus answered on the first ring.

"Is she on her way?" His deep voice never failed to send shivers down her spine, even on a night like tonight.

"No, and I don't think she will be anytime soon. Marcus, she's a mess. I don't think she's capable of driving, even if she were emotionally prepared to go."

"Emotionally prepared?" Carrie smiled at the disbelief in her husband's voice. He'd struggled so to accept his own emotions; it was no surprise he still had a hard time acknowledging the emotions of others. "What's to prepare for? She and Dorian have enough of a relationship that he's asking for her, so she needs to get her ass here."

Carrie shook her head fondly. "Honey, we can't all be strong all the time. Heck, I'd think you know that better than anyone else." She laughed as he snorted derisively.

"Look, I'm on my way. Get her ready. I'll drive her here myself." There was a pause, then, "I love you, Carrie-mine."

Carrie just shook her head again with a sigh as she headed to the kitchen. She estimated she had about half an hour to prepare Cassidy before Marcus came storming the gates and dragged her off whether she was ready or not.

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She should be on her way to the hospital. She should be there for Dorian and his family, but her feet refused to budge. Cass didn't think she could do it. How could she bear to see him lying there, broken and bloody?

She pulled on a pair of sweats and a warm sweatshirt, and headed into the living room. She felt like she was moving through molasses. The air was too thick to breathe, and she was having trouble holding on to her thoughts.

Carrie didn't say a word as she motioned for Cass to join her on the couch. Her older sister had two wineglasses and a bottle of red arranged on the coffee table, and Cass sank gratefully onto the cushion next to her while she poured. Carrie slid a glass in front of her and Cass gladly grabbed it and took a big drink. She almost choked as the familiar, overly sweet, cheap wine slid down her throat.

Carrie giggled at Cass's reaction and turned the wine bottle so she could read the label. "I keep this around for real emergencies."

Cass shook her head, "I didn't even think they made this stuff anymore." It was the same wine they had managed to cage as teenagers when neither they nor their friends had a clue what good wine was. They'd only known that they could afford it, and it had gotten them good and drunk on more than one occasion.

"They do. I ran across it right after I married Marcus, and I couldn't resist picking up a couple bottles." She grinned. "He claims I'm an insult to wine drinkers everywhere, but I made a deal with him: anytime I get tipsy on my cheap wine, he gets to have his way with me."

Cass attempted a smile, though she could tell from Carrie's reaction it fell more than a bit flat.

"So," Carrie settled in facing her on the couch. "Spill. I want all the nasty little details of this secret affair."

Cass shrugged and stood to wander around the room. "I don't know where to start. It wasn't supposed to be a relationship at all. I met this guy online," she waved away Carrie's protest impatiently. "It was only supposed to be an online thing. I had no intention of getting involved with someone in real life, and I had no idea it was Dorian I was communicating with until the second time we met."

"The second time?" Carrie raised an expressive brow, and Cass felt herself blush.

"Um, yeah. He was wearing a mask the first time."

"Oh my God!" Carrie's laughter filled the room. "Although, knowing Dorian as I do, that shouldn't surprise me."

Cass frowned. "Yeah, that's one of the problems," she muttered.

"What," Carrie questioned. "That he wore a mask?"

"No, that everyone knows *why* he wore a mask." Cass flopped back down on the couch and poured another glass of wine. "How do you stand it, Carrie? Knowing that

people are speculating about your sex life?"

"I don't really think about it." Carrie laid a hand on hers, and Cass realized just how cold she was. "It's not just that it's no one's business, which it isn't." She gave Cass a pointed look, and Cass felt herself flush anew. "It's that when I'm with him, I feel like I'm being completely true to myself for the first time in my life. There's no shame, no embarrassment, and without shame and embarrassment, what does anyone else's opinion matter?"

"What about when you have kids?" Cass couldn't bear the idea of Katie being affected by her and Dorian's sexual preferences.

Carrie laughed again. "Oh, I pity the man or woman who tries to use our sex life against our child."

"Marcus is definitely ruthless," Cass agreed.

Carrie laughed harder. "Sweetie, there wouldn't be enough left when I got through with them for Marcus to do a blessed thing more to them."

The sisters shared a look of understanding and clinked glasses.

"That's not the main problem, though," Carrie ventured after a moment. "Is it?"

"I should be at the hospital, I realize this, but Carrie, I'm terrified." She wrapped her arms around herself. "He was *shot*."

"Yes, and you're scared. But, Cass, he's going to be all right." Carrie's attempt at reassurance didn't make Cass feel any better.

"This time... *This time* he's going to be all right, but what about next time?" The image of that Marine Chaplain had morphed into the image of the Police Chaplain; the words "Detective Jenner is dead," echoed in her brain and refused to fade.

"You can't live your life according to what *may happen* to Dorian at work. He could be a stockbroker on Wall Street and get hit by a car."

Cass rolled her eyes at her big sister. "But chances are, if he was a stockbroker on Wall Street people wouldn't be *shooting* at him. His *job* puts him in harm's way every single day." Her sister was not going to pull that old standby on her. "There's a difference between *your time to go* and having a job that might hasten your death. Besides, I have Katie to think about. She comes first. How can I let her fall in love with a man who could end up dead any given day? It would break her heart." There was no way Carrie could argue that point.

"Are you sure it's just Katie's heart you worried about? Cass, I love you. I really, really do. It's because I love you that I can't sit back and watch you hide behind your fear." Carrie took both Cass's hands in her own and met her eyes soberly. "You can be afraid for the rest of your life if you want, but don't use your daughter as an excuse. The only thing you're going to teach her is how to hide from life because of what *might* happen, and how to allow fear to control her." Carrie sat back, shooting Cass a look of disgust. "If I had been afraid I wouldn't be married to the love of my life now."

"I wish I could be like you, Carrie. I just don't have it in me anymore." Cass stood and turned her back on her sister's encouraging eyes. "I guess my courage died with Kevin," she murmured, her throat tight with the threat of more tears.

* * * *

She was in Katie's room again, watching her daughter sleep peacefully, when Marcus arrived. She felt his presence behind her before she turned around and sighed in

resignation. One more thing she didn't need to deal with right now.

After one last, wistful look at her daughter, Cass turned and followed Marcus to the living room. She raised an eyebrow when he wordlessly held out her coat, and shook her head before sinking onto the couch.

"Come on, little sister." Marcus' voice was unusually gentle, and Cass imagined Carrie must have warned him to be nice. "Dorian needs to get his mind off Morgan's condition, and staring at you will be a hell of a lot more distracting than staring at all the tubes and machines he's hooked up to."

Cass felt the blood drain from her face. Tubes and machines?

"Oh, God." She murmured faintly...

Carrie sat down next to her and wrapped an arm around her shoulders. "He's going to be fine, remember?" She gave her husband a hard glance. "He's going to be fine."

Marcus cleared his throat and looked uncomfortable. In any other situation it would have been funny. The Worthington Group was like a little kingdom, and Marcus was the undisputed king of all he surveyed. Seeing him at a loss was virtually unheard of.

"Of course he's going to be fine," he finally said in a firm, don't-even-bother-to-argue tone of voice. "And he'll be fine a lot sooner with you there."

Cass took a breath and attempted to collect herself. "How's Morgan?" It sounded like Morgan was much more severely injured than Dorian, and she knew Dorian must be devastated.

"He was still in surgery when I left the hospital." Marcus sat down on her other side, so that she felt completely surrounded by warmth and support. She had no doubt he did it on purpose. It was the sort of thing a Dom would do, seeing to the comfort of his submissive, and while Marcus wasn't Cass's Master, it would be second nature for him to automatically try to comfort and protect her.

"The doctors were worried about the bullet that hit him in the chest, but even after they take care of that, apparently his leg's pretty messed up, too."

"Come on, sis," Carrie said, standing and pulling Cass to her feet as well. "Whether or not you believe you can maintain a relationship with a man in his line of work, Dorian needs you now and you need to go to him."

"What do you mean, not maintain a relationship?" Marcus scowled first at his wife, then at Cassidy. "He's your Master. You don't walk away from that."

Cass's eyes went wide, and she opened and closed her mouth a couple of times before she could manage to speak. "*What* did you just say?"

"I said," Marcus repeated in a firm, unyielding voice, "your Master needs you, so you'll get your ass to the hospital."

Cass had assumed that having someone put the nature of her relationship with Dorian out in the open would embarrass her. She'd been wrong. Hearing Marcus refer to Dorian's claim on her didn't embarrass her; it pissed her off.

Carrie must have seen the storm coming; she'd faced an enraged Cassidy enough times to recognize the signs. At any rate, she stepped in between Cass and Marcus and laid a hand on her husband's chest.

"This is not the time," she told him, smiling sweetly into his silver eyes, "and you do *not* want to go there."

"Dorian needs—" he began again, and Carrie interrupted him.

"Baby, would you ever allow another Master to command me without your

consent?" He growled a little, and Cass wasn't sure if it was in irritation at her, or at the idea of another Dom mastering his wife. Carrie continued. "Right. I didn't think so. Well, you don't get to command Cass, either." She sent Cass a sympathetic look. "Particularly not now, when emotions are so high." Carrie stepped back and grabbed Cass's jacket from the arm of the couch. "Besides," she went on as she deftly maneuvered Cass into the jacket. "You don't have to get all pushy. She's ready to go."

Marcus smiled bemusedly, and Cass shot her sister a truly evil look. Carrie just laughed at her. "Yeah, I've learned a lot about getting your own way dealing with that one." She gave her husband a look of exasperated amusement.

"Come on, then, little sister." Marcus laid a hand on Cass's shoulder. "Let's go give your man some peace of mind."

Chapter Fourteen

The room was dim, but not truly dark. Cass supposed it couldn't be truly dark, or the nurses wouldn't be able to do their thing every hour.

She stood frozen in the doorway, Marcus an imposing presence behind her. She hated feeling this way, surrounded by her fear like a fly stuck in amber. She'd never considered herself a coward, or a weak person, but it seemed like since she'd known Dorian—or at least since she'd known him as her Master—all she'd done was cower, hide and angst.

Now she found herself immobile, unable to take the steps that would bring her to her lover's side. Dorian's appearance wasn't reassuring. He was painfully still. His lashes made dramatic black crescents on his sharp cheekbones, highlighting the dark circles under his eyes. The dark shadow of his beard emphasized the sick pallor of his skin. There was a thick pad on his left shoulder, and that arm was immobilized not only by a sling, but by a strap that wrapped around his chest.

Celia curled in the single bedside chair, one hand on Dorian's uninjured arm, fast asleep.

Marcus laid a hand on her shoulder and gently urged her into the room. As annoying as his bossy demeanor was, she was grateful for the nudge. She was afraid that on her own she would have lingered in the doorway all night.

Dorian's eyes slid opened as she arrived at the side of the bed. The normally sharp brown gaze was sleepy and glazed; utterly unlike the Master she'd come to know and love.

"Hey, baby." His voice was raspy, the words slurred. It was the most beautiful sound she'd ever heard.

Celia's eyes snapped open when he spoke, and she jerked into an upright position in her chair.

"Dorian, what's wrong? Are you okay?" Her eyes were red and raw looking, and it was obvious she'd been crying.

"S fine, Ce," Dorian mumbled. "Go 'way."

Celia looked like she wanted to protest, and Cass couldn't decide whether that was a good thing or not. She still didn't feel quite ready to face Dorian on her own.

Marcus took the decision out of her hands when he stepped forward and helped Celia from her chair.

"Come on, Ce," Marcus was at his irresistible best as he guided Celia from the room, leaving Cass alone with her wounded Master.

"C'mere, baby," Dorian rasped, holding out his hand. Cass gingerly took it and sat in Celia's abandoned chair.

"Hey," she whispered. She still couldn't draw enough breath to speak normally. "How are you doing?" She shook her head, disgusted. "Okay, stupid question. You feel like shit. I mean..."

"I'm okay, baby," he interrupted, squeezing her hand. "My shoulder hurts like hell, and I feel like my head's about to float off my neck, but I'm okay."

He was looking and sounding more like himself with each word, and Cass drew her

first full breath since answering the phone.

She sat, silently holding his hand and thinking of all the things she should say to him. She should ask about his brother, ask what happened, she should ask what he needed from her; but she didn't ask any of those things. She couldn't. Even thinking about Morgan, or about what had happened, brought back that icy terror that had gripped her with the words Dorian was shot.

So she just held his hand and prayed.

He slipped in and out of consciousness, periodically tightening his grip on her hand and looking around in confusion as if surprised to find himself where he was. Celia returned after an hour or so, alone. She came bearing coffee and a vending machine sandwich, neither of which Cass could bear to touch, and the news that Marcus would come back for her when she was ready to go home.

That last made Cass smile, but not with amusement. She was ready to go home *now*. She couldn't stand being here, seeing Dorian hooked up to an I.V., pale and stricken. It was too easy to imagine him still and cold, dead and lost to her forever.

Sometime in the wee hours of the morning a nurse came in to tell them that Morgan had survived his surgery and was in recovery. He was "stable," and they were "guardedly optimistic" about his chances for survival, but no one would comment on the condition of his leg.

Dorian, who'd roused himself enough to question the surgeon, held a weeping Celia in his good arm, but the lines of strain on his face showed the pain it caused him. Cass had moved to the back of the room during the surgeon's visit, partly to give Dorian and Celia some privacy, but mostly because she couldn't stand to hear the extent of Morgan's injuries, not knowing how easily it could have been Dorian.

She couldn't do this. She'd known it before they'd become involved, before she ever knew Dorian as anything more than the amusing, flirtatious cop who was working with Marcus. For a little while she'd managed to convince herself she could handle the danger he was in on a daily basis. Now she knew better.

She waited for Dorian to go back to sleep, waited for Celia to go to the restroom, and then slipped out of the room. She waited outside for a cab, and called Carrie during the drive home. By the time the worried cabbie deposited her outside her complex, Cass had composed herself enough to deal with her domineering brother-in-law.

It took a while, and numerous promises to call, to check in, to let them know what they could do for her, but she'd finally managed to send Carrie and Marcus packing. She looked at the clock through blurry eyes. Five a.m. Katie would sleep for at least another two hours. Moving carefully and quietly, she gathered her sleeping baby up out of her crib and carried her in to her own bedroom. Curling herself around her daughter, Cass buried her face in Katie's silky hair and cried herself to sleep.

* * * *

Everyone was very... nice. The nurses were friendly and encouraging. The doctor was accessible and informative. His Lieutenant was righteously pissed on his behalf, and even the Internal Affairs investigator had acted like a human being. But his shoulder hurt like a bitch, and the sling was uncomfortable. Celia's fussing was about to give him a rash, and neither of them had been able to find out exactly what was going on with Morgan. The friendly nurses had only been able to tell him that his brother was out of

surgery and was stable.

What Dorian wanted, no what he needed, was to see his brother and then go home to Cassidy. He needed to sleep next to her tonight. She would keep the nightmares at bay. Her scent would soothe him and her touch would help ease the guilt running through him over not protecting Morgan better.

He wondered exactly when he'd started thinking of Cassidy's place as home. Okay, it wasn't Cassidy's apartment so much as Cassidy herself. Wherever she was, was where he wanted to be. She and Katie were his family now, every bit as much as Morgan and Ce, and he needed them like he needed to breathe.

He was very much afraid, however, that going home to Cassidy was not an option, that it might not ever be an option again.

She'd come to him the night he'd been shot, had sat next to him for hours in silence, holding his hand as tears streaked slowly down her pale cheeks. She hadn't said much, and he'd been too doped up to try and comfort her. She'd slipped away while he was sleeping, and he'd awoken to the realization she might be gone for good. He might have lost her.

The knowledge that if he went to her, if he tried to hold her like he needed to, he would be unwelcome, was like acid on an open wound.

He wasn't sure if he'd had too much pain medication or not enough, but his eyes stung suspiciously as he thought of his sexy little sub. The door opened, and his breath caught in anticipation before whooshing out in disappointment when Marcus Worthington strode through.

Dread washed through Dorian. "She isn't coming back, is she?" His voice was hoarse and he prayed he wouldn't shed any tears.

Marcus sat in the only chair in the room. "No, she isn't."

Dorian ran a hand through his hair as his chest tightened painfully.

"She's scared as hell, Jenner. Her biggest fear is the next man in her life might get killed like her husband did. You were pretty out of it when she was here, and it was like her worst nightmare coming to life."

Dorian understood. He knew how fragile Cassidy's heart was. But she was his, and she was rejecting him and everything they were building together. Again. He was hurting inside and out, and he needed his fucking woman. "Dammit, I can't help it that her husband was killed. I'm not him."

"No, but you are an undercover cop and it's a dangerous job." Marcus leaned forward in his chair and clasped his hands between his knees. "Carrie thinks she's reacting so strongly because you mean so much more to her than her husband ever did. Maybe if you wait and talk to her after she's calmed down a bit..."

"Marcus, I *have* waited. I have been as patient with her as I know how to be. I'm done with begging her to accept me. I could convince her to try again until the end of the world, but until she makes the choice between love and fear, every time there's a challenge she'll run again."

He saw the understanding in Marcus' eyes; the knowledge that the sub held the true power in any D/s relationship. Dorian knew that if Carrie left Marcus, it would destroy the man; and he knew just as surely that if Carrie simply couldn't handle their relationship, Marcus would allow himself to be destroyed before trying to pressure her into something she wasn't emotionally ready for. He shook his head.

“The really beautiful thing is that I’m leaving Vice. The transfer to Homicide came through two days ago.” His laugh was bitter, and the compassion in Marcus’ eyes just pissed him off more. “I didn’t tell her I’d applied for it because I didn’t want to get her hopes up. Then I didn’t have the chance after all the shit came down at the site.”

Marcus nodded in understanding. “It wouldn’t really have mattered though, would it?”

“Nope. The job stirred things up, but in the end it’s Cassidy’s fear standing in our way, and no matter what job I have, that issue will still come back to bite us in the ass.”

“I’m sorry, man. If there’s anything I can do for you, let me know.”

Dorian nodded, but he knew he wouldn’t be making that call. What he really needed wasn’t something even the mighty Marcus Worthington could supply. What he needed was the soft body of his woman next to him. What he had was a shoulder that felt like it was on fire, a brother who might not live through the night, and a heart that felt like it had shattered into a million pieces.

* * * *

Cass was running the vacuum for the third time that morning, chasing imaginary dust bunnies around the room, when the doorbell rang. She turned the machine off with a sense of relief, pitifully glad to have something new to distract her from her thoughts.

Carrie had kept her updated for the first week, letting her know when Dorian was released from the hospital, and that Morgan, whose wounds had been far more serious, was on the road to recovery, too. After that, the flow of information on the Jenner family dried up.

With the case at an end, Dorian had no reason to visit the Worthington offices. That didn’t stop Cass’ breath from catching every time the elevator at the end of the hallway pinged. She wouldn’t admit, even to herself, how deflated she was every time the doors opened and Dorian didn’t come striding out.

Marcus’ long, disappointed looks didn’t help, either. She knew her brother-in-law was friends with Dorian, and she knew he disapproved of her determination to cut the man out of her life. Although he never brought it up, every time Cass looked into Marcus’ eyes she could hear him saying, “Your Master needs you,” and could feel her own panicked denial.

Cass shook her head at herself. She’d become a giant mass of conflict and angst, and she hated it. She hated spending every day wondering how Dorian’s wound was healing, wondering how Morgan’s recovery was going, wondering how much the entire Jenner family hated her for abandoning Dorian when he needed her most.

Even worse, though, were the nights. Night after night Cass would wake, tangled in the sheets, face damp with tears and sweat, and the echo of her Master’s voice in her ears. “*Come for me, baby.*” The need twisted inside her, tighter every night because she *couldn’t* come. Not without him.

The doorbell buzzed again, startling her out of her reverie, and she headed gratefully for the door. She swung it open and before she could process what she was seeing a dark-haired, gray-eyed tornado swept into the room.

“Good, you’re home,” Celia gave her a quick hug and stepped back to examine her. “Oh, sweetie, you look like hell.” Cass knew she was gaping, but Celia didn’t give her a chance to speak, which was probably okay, because Cass had no idea what she’d say to

the other woman.

"I guess that's to be expected, though," Celia continued, moving farther into the room. "Dorian looks even worse. Like his best friend, his dog, and his best friend's dog all died."

Now Celia did pause, looking at her expectantly. Thankfully Katie chose that moment to toddle out of her bedroom, because Cass was still stunned silent.

"O-M-G!" Celia gave a musical laugh and swept the tiny girl off her feet. Katie chortled gleefully when Celia rubbed their noses together. "This can't possibly be my Button," she teased. "My Button is a little bitty thing, not a big girl like you!"

"Bee gull," Katie agreed, and planted a wet, smacking kiss on Celia's cheek.

"Very big girl," Celia agreed, plopping down on the couch with Katie firmly on her lap.

"Why are you here?" She hadn't meant to sound so blunt but, God. Dorian's sister was here in her living room after weeks with no contact. She wanted to grab Celia, make her describe every detail of his injury; pick her brain for every scrap of information she could get.

"I'm here give you a ride, silly." Celia gave her a sunny smile, but Cass saw shadows shifting in her eyes. She patted the cushion next to her and Cass obediently sat, feeling utterly bulldozed and confused. "Look," Celia's voice stayed upbeat as Katie played with her necklace, but her expression was deadly serious. "I realize you and Dorian have issues to work out, and I don't for one second minimize your fears. God," she shook her hair back and a look of pure anguish passed over her features. "I worry myself sick about both my brothers on a daily basis. Having them *both* shot was pretty much my worst nightmare come true." Celia closed her eyes for a moment, then smiled as Katie patted her cheeks and leaned up to rub noses again.

"What I'm trying to say," she continued, "is that if you let your fears control you, you'll miss out on so much. You have a family just dying to love you and Princess Button here, and you have a really good man who's eating his heart out over you."

"He hasn't called." The minute the words left her mouth, Cass wanted to take them back.

"Well, duh," Celia laughed at her. "Sweetie, you sent a pretty strong message when you refused to go back to the hospital. Maybe just this once he needs *you* to do the calling."

"I'm not strong enough." It was bad enough to admit it to herself; Cass burned with shame admitting it to Dorian's sister. "I couldn't even handle him being injured." She shook her head in self-disgust. "I couldn't even manage to ask about Morgan. How is he?"

Celia smiled. "Pissed off, in pain." Her nose crinkled with laughter. "He's absolutely determined to be walking on his own by summer."

"I'm sure he will," Cass returned the younger woman's smile with a wry one of her own. "He strikes me as a very determined man."

Celia laughed out loud. "Oh, he is!"

"What would I do if Dorian were crippled or, God forbid, killed?" Cass sobered abruptly. "I don't think I'd survive it." Katie crawled more fully into her lap and reached up to pat her damp cheeks. "What would it do to Katie?"

Celia gave her a sympathetic smile. "Cassidy, sweetie, you barely look like you're

surviving now.” The young woman became completely serious. “How is what you’re doing now different from if something tragic happened? You’re still alone.” Those silver eyes pierced hers with their intensity. “And will it hurt any less if something happens and you’ve sent him away? Or will it hurt more, knowing you could have had months or years together?” Her eyes went distant and sad, and for a moment she seemed to be talking about much more than Cass and Dorian. “Cass, you can’t let fear and regret dictate your life. It will do nothing but poison you, eat away at you from the inside out.”

“Celia, he must be so angry with me. So hurt.” Cass couldn’t bear to see the anger and disappointment in Dorian’s eyes. In her Master’s eyes. Worse, what if she’d finally pushed him past his limit and all she found there was rejection?

“He is angry,” Celia agreed, doing nothing to comfort her. “And he’s very hurt.” Cass’s heart sank, but Celia smiled evilly. “I’ve never seen him angry or hurt over a woman before, Cassidy, because he’s never cared enough about one to be hurt.”

“What if he can’t forgive me?” The words reverberated through her soul. They were at the root of her conflict, her confusion. What if she went to him, offered him everything, and he sent her away? Celia wrapped an arm around her and pulled Cass close. Katie scooted over so she was draped across both women’s laps, wallowing in the easy affection she expected from everyone she met.

“Oh, sweetie, he’s already forgiven you. He had to. He loves you. He understands why you made the choice you did. He doesn’t like it, but he understands. He’s grieving now, because he doesn’t believe you want him enough to take the risk. And it looks like you’re grieving, too.” Celia reached up and wiped away tears that Cass hadn’t even realized she was crying.

“God, Celia,” Cass forced the words past the lump in her throat. “What am I going to do?”

Celia gave another, even more evil grin. “I’ll tell you exactly what you’re going to do...”

Chapter Fifteen

Dorian threw the door open to the Detroit PD substation and walked straight up to the officer on duty sitting behind a desk. "Where is she, Duncan?"

The young cop grinned. "They put her in the tank. She was pretty drunk."

Dorian took a deep, calming breath. He was going to kill his baby sister. Getting pulled over for drunk driving was beyond stupid.

Duncan tossed Dorian the keys. "You can go get her if you want."

"She's not getting out tonight. I'm going to scare the hell out of her then let her sleep it off inside the cell."

The other cop gave a sly grin and shook his head. "Suit yourself, Jenner. Shift change is in an hour."

Dorian stomped through the double doors and unlocked the first padlock. What he had to say to his baby sister wouldn't take longer the ten minutes. Of all the boneheaded things for her to do. He didn't understand it; Ce was normally the most levelheaded female he knew.

Of course her fascination with Brady Ryder should have been his first sign she was having trouble. He rounded the corner to the cell area and froze.

He closed his eyes and opened them to make sure that he wasn't imagining things. He wasn't. Standing against one of the cell walls was his baby. Lust, hot and heavy, coursed through him as he stared at Cass' body stretched and waiting for him.

She was a vision in white; a debauched angel just waiting for his touch. Her delicate hands were secured above her head, cuffed through the bars. She wore a pair of insanely high silver stilettos. White lace stockings encased her shapely legs, and were hooked to matching garters which framed her tiny white lace panties. The way her breasts trembled, nearly tumbling out of her satiny corset made Dorian dizzy with lust. Fuck, he wanted to howl like a randy wolf on the prowl.

He wanted to run to her, to spank that gorgeous ass until it was red and she was squirming with arousal. Then he wanted to sink into her until they didn't know where she began and he ended. But he didn't do either of those things. His anger had waned over the past weeks but the hurt still burned. She'd made him promises, and she hadn't kept them. He didn't know how to trust her this time.

"Master?" her voice washed over him like rain on a hot evening, soothing his battered heart.

"Cassidy, what are you doing?" The question came out softly. He almost believed this was a dream, if he spoke too loudly, he'd awaken alone. Again.

"I needed to see you, but after all this time I wasn't sure how to." Her speech wavered as he watched her impassively.

"You're sending quite a message, presenting yourself to me like this." It was a vicious internal struggle, but he kept his face emotionless. "What are you trying to say, Cassidy?"

Her breath hitched, and she hesitantly mumbled, "I miss you, Dorian. I miss what we have together."

Dorian stepped into the open cell. Bright tears glistened in her eyes when he

approached her.

With a less-than-steady hand he caresses her cheek. "You hurt me."

"I know."

"You abandoned me, Cassidy."

His heart ached as she dropped her eyes, her shame evident in the rosy color covering her chest and neck. He leaned forward, wrapping his fingers around the bars on either side of her.

"Look at me, Cassidy," he demanded. She raised her beautiful eyes to him. He traced the path her tears had taken down her cheek, with his finger. "I know why you're scared, baby. I get it. My job can be dangerous."

She nodded her head, and he continued, "Cassidy. do you trust me?"

"What?" her nose scrunched up.

"Do you trust me?"

"Yes, Dorian. I trust you." His breath escaped in a relieved rush when she answered quickly.

"Then trust that I would never do anything reckless on purpose."

His finger trailed down her cheek and he cupped her chin. "I am your Master, Cassidy, but only if you give yourself to me. Can you live with my job? With the uncertainty?" She opened her mouth to speak, but he quieted her with a single finger to her lips. "Think hard about this, Cassidy. I need to be able to trust you just as much as you need to know you can trust me. You've run every time we've been challenged. I won't chase you if you decide to run again. I want us to be a family; you, me and Katie. This isn't a game I'm playing, baby. This is forever."

He stepped back, dropping his hands from her face. "What's it going to be, Cassidy?"

*

Cassidy tried desperately to stave off additional tears. Dorian's speech was matter-of-fact, he'd stated what he wanted and wasn't going to try and woo her into compliance. He was leaving the entire future of their relationship to her.

The only answer she could give him was the truth.

"The idea of losing you terrifies me, but a very smart friend pointed out that I wouldn't be any less wrecked if something happened and I'd sent you away. I finally realized I wasn't saving myself from some possible future pain, I was actually guaranteeing we'd both suffer." She paused to gather her thoughts and her composure. "I love you, as Dorian *and* as Master, and I want you in my bed and in my life." Her lips trembled but a light sparked in the dark depths of his eyes, bringing a smile to her face. He leaned forward, braced on the bars to either side of her so that their bodies would not touch, and kissed her lightly on the lips. He rubbed his mouth across hers, driving her mad with the need for more. She wanted him to be harder, rougher, but he refused.

He pulled back, replacing his lips with his fingers. She closed her eyes when he stroked lightly over her bottom lip, then skated down to make contact with her collarbone. He traced lightly over the tops of her breasts, his thumbs skimming her nipples. His barely-there touch after weeks of deprivation drove her insane with unfulfilled lust and bone-wrenching need.

God, but she had missed the way he looked at her, like she was his entire world; the way he just knew how she needed to be touched.

He lifted her breasts from the cups of her corset; it was a move she knew he enjoyed. He moved his head down to catch a tight, red nipple in his mouth, and she gasped at the rush of sensation. He sucked hard and bit at it with barely leashed ferocity before releasing and moving on to the other. The cool air in the cell brushed over her, puckering it further.

She ached for him with every fiber of her being. His light touches and teasing mouth just made her want him more.

"Master, I need to feel you," she whimpered.

"Baby, you want me to touch you here?" he asked, his fingers sliding inside of her soaked panties, running along her bare slit, dipping inside only long enough to tease her into frenzy.

"You've been a bad girl, Cassidy," he whispered as he went to his knees. "Bad girls don't get to come." He licked the front of her panties, tugging the wet lace with his teeth, then dragged his tongue down her thigh before coming back up the other thigh. He blew hot breath across her pussy through the silk and lace.

He pulled her undies down slowly past her knees and helped them off her feet. He pocketed them.

"Spread that pretty pussy for me now." Cassidy moved her legs as far apart as she could without falling off of the ridiculous heels Celia talked her into.

Again, heated breath dusted over her now-naked pussy. Dorian slid his tongue down the strictly trimmed edge of her thatch and then along each bare outer lip, licking up every drop of juice that escaped from within. He pulled her sensitive lips into his mouth one at a time, sucking gently, and then somehow managed to suck both into his mouth at once, causing Cass to feel almost faint. When her knees threatened to give way, he grasped each thigh and held her up.

Cass was teetering on the precipice of orgasm. He bit down on her inner lips; it was a soft bite, but it sent her toward oblivion. Just as the orgasm was about to crash over her, Dorian pulled away. Frustrated, she moaned her dismay, which brought a laugh from Dorian.

"You didn't think I would allow you the pleasure of coming so quickly, now did you?" He teased her with a light nip at her clit and she jerked at the whip of sensation. "You've earned quite the punishment, baby."

Her breath tore raggedly in her throat as she answered. "Master, I just need you so much." She was determined not to cry, determined to be strong.

"Look at me, baby." The command was sharp and she followed his orders unthinkingly. "Stop. Holding. Back." Each word was like a blow, and she suddenly realized her determination to control herself was actually a form of disobedience. Her breath caught, and she gave in to him completely. The tears that washed down her cheeks seemed to cleanse her. With each drop she felt her pain and resistance fade away.

Dorian laid his cheek against hers, smiling gently. "Thank you, baby," he whispered against her throat, and the heat of his breath shuddered through her. He moved closer, pressing full-length against her, finally giving her the contact she needed. She cried harder; arousal, relief and love drowning her in an overwhelming flood.

She couldn't have said how long she cried, how long he held her. But when she finally quieted, he brushed the hair away from her wet cheeks and stepped back.

"Eyes on me, baby." His voice snapped with command, his eyes flashed with power.

He had moved a few feet away from her. Once he was sure he had her full attention, his hand dropped to his zipper and pulled it down. Slowly. Cass licked her lips in anticipation; her mouth watered at the memory of his cock moving in and out of her mouth. The image was so vivid she could practically taste his salty, slightly bitter flavor already.

He reached in his jeans and brought his hard length out, one hand stroking from root to crown, the other cupping his tight balls. "I've had to do this every night for the last few weeks, baby. Do you have any idea how completely unsatisfying it's been, jerking off alone? Not able to touch you, to spank you, to take you any and every way possible?"

Cass was dumbstruck by his sheer desire, and it humbled her. Her amazement must have shown on her face, because he made a frustrated noise and growled, "Fuck, woman, don't you know by now that *you* hold all the power here?" He squeezed the head of his cock, rotating his palm over the tip, then let his hand slowly ride the length back down. Cass couldn't take her eyes off of him. The sight of him working his cock was beautiful, heady and intoxicating.

He watched her with hooded eyes, and Cass decided to take advantage of his state of arousal. Her lips pouted and she pushed her exposed breasts to him, "I've missed you so much, Master. I can't come without you, you know. All I can do is dream about the way you lick me, the way you paddle my ass. The way you fuck me until I can't move."

A moan rumbled in his chest, and Cass knew that fulfillment was finally, *finally* just seconds away.

She kicked off the high heels and bent her knees as much as she could in her bound position, exposing the glossy evidence of her arousal to his hungry gaze.

*

Dorian couldn't wait one minute longer; he had to be inside her *now*. He took two long strides, and grabbed one of her legs and lifted it high on his hip. One hand grasped her ass; the other guided his dick into her sweet, hot sheath. He thrust home in one fluid movement and grabbed her other thigh, lifting her off the ground. He tunneled slowly, deeply within her, reveling in every inch he pushed. He was home; home in a way he'd never known existed. He buried his face in her neck and sucked hard. She was his, dammit, and he was marking her for all to see.

Dorian rotated his hips in small circles, grinding his pelvis against hers. Their coupling was fast and furious, but he didn't think she minded. Her breath was coming in sobs and her pussy rippled along the length of his dick with each rough motion.

She felt so fucking good, so fucking right, and he knew this is where he was meant to be: inside of her, beside her, sharing a life with her.

He ground harder against her, his thrusts growing fast and choppy as he felt his orgasm build.

"Come for me, baby," he shouted, unable to control himself. Cass's back arched and her legs tightened, her heels digging into his ass. Her pussy clenched around him, tighter than a fist and hotter than the fires of Hell itself. Dorian buried his head between her throat and shoulder and let himself go, filling her with his essence, marking her inside and out.

"Mine," he murmured against her soft throat, still hugged tight in the liquid clasp of her body, in no hurry to come down from the high of her loving. "All mine."

"Yours," she whispered against his hair. He could hear the smile in her voice and

raised his head, wanting to see it, too. Her eyes twinkled as she added, “And you are all mine,” before catching his lower lip in her teeth for a stinging nip.

Dorian grinned against her mouth. “Fuck, yeah, baby. I’m all yours.”

The End

About the Author:

Violet Summers is a married mother of three beautiful children, including one set of twins, one rambunctious puppy, and one husband, except when she’s a single mom of one spoiled teenaged God-child and three spoiled kitties. Both of Violet’s personalities are very busy!

No, Violet has not suffered a psychotic break yet (though she may after dealing with creating web pages and MySpace accounts). Violet is actually the writing team of Sierra Summers and Violet Johnson.

Both women read voraciously, and in a multitude of genres. Sierra classifies them as “readers, as opposed to readers of romance. This means when we write, we’re as concerned with the story as we are with the sex.” That said, Sierra has been known to boycott books where the characters haven’t “done the deed,” by page 125.

Sierra and VeeJay live in Southeast Michigan, and the spice of the Metro-Detroit area often flavors their work. “Why look for a more glamorous setting,” VeeJay asks, “when we’ve got the beautiful, re-vitalized Downtown area to draw from?”

Violet Summers writes in a variety of genres, from contemporary to paranormal; from soft BDSM to fantasy. The two things all her stories have in common is their deep emotional and their scorching erotic love scenes.

Sierra and VeeJay love to hear from their readers. You can contact them at VioletSummers@yahoo.com

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