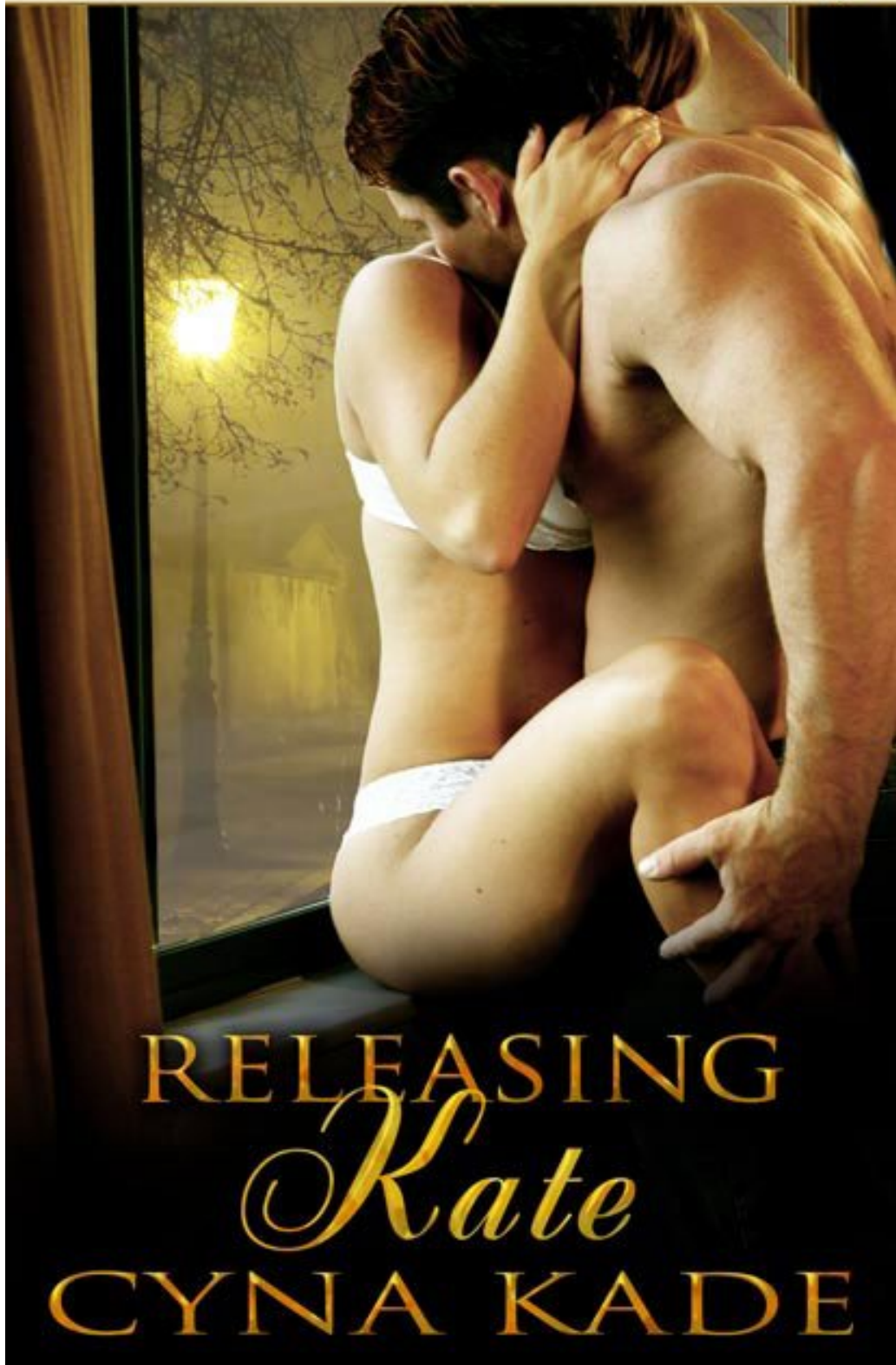


ELLORA'S CAVE TABOO



RELEASING
Kate
CYNA KADE

Releasing Kate

Cyna Kade

Kate Logan is unaware of her genetic imprint. All her life, she's suppressed the dark longings that haunt her. Twenty-first-century women should not want alpha males to protect or dominate them.

Michael Kyle immediately recognizes Kate as his mate. He can send violent sexual visions to her but she doesn't seem to understand what that means. She's unaware and untrained.

He's ready to show Kate that pain can liberate her pleasure. But first, he has to break through her resistance. She thinks her needs are wrong and fears her craving to submit to the sexual demands of this dominant man. Michael has to be patient—gradually increase her sexual pain to free her sexual pleasure and acceptance of her submissive heritage.

If he rushes the process, if he can't break through her barriers...she won't survive their mating.

Note: If you're aching to explore extreme domination and submission with as much pain as pleasure at the hands of a dark, sexy man, this is the adventure you've been waiting for!

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



www.ellorascave.com

Releasing Kate

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RELEASING KATE

Cyna Kade

Acknowledgment

Thanks, Pamela, for all your hard work and helpful comments.

Author Note

This book is a work of fiction. It does not accurately portray BDSM or true Dom/sub relationships. Please practice safe, sane and consensual sex in your relationships.

Chapter One

At two in the morning, Kate walked into hell. Stretchers lined the hallway. Doctors yelled orders and nurses scurried to comply. Two elderly patients moaned loudly, as if trying to outdo each other, adding to the din and the bedlam. The smell of antiseptic fought with the scent of blood and vomit. Kate barely noticed the noises or the smells or the chaos as she walked into the nurses' station of the emergency department.

"Hey, Janet, where do I start?" Kate said to one of the night nurses who stood at the desk filling out paperwork.

Janet looked up from the charts, relief crossing her face. "It's you! What are you doing here, girl?" she exclaimed. "It's been a long time since you graced our halls."

Kate smiled. Janet had been a nursing student when Kate was in X-ray school. They used to party a lot and Janet enjoyed razing Kate. It had been awhile since they'd seen each other. Janet was a night person and didn't function well on days. Kate was an administrator now and rarely worked nights so their friendship had drifted a little.

"Pete's a little overwhelmed. He called and asked me to help," Kate said.

"You're such a good boss." Janet grinned and pointed to the X-ray request box. "Have fun. The patients are ready and waiting for you."

Kate raised an eyebrow as she realized there were ten requisitions in the box and that each patient needed multiple X-rays. "It will take awhile to clear these out, try to keep the docs off my back."

"I'll do my best," Janet replied. "You're lucky that most of the docs are already in surgery. Oh yeah," she paused. "Watch out for this one," she said as she raised a form and put an orange flag on it. "He's drunk and rowdy. He's already punched one nurse. If I were you, I'd put him last."

Orange meant abusive. The patient might fight and was dangerous. Usually an orange flag came with a couple of guards, but Kate didn't see any extra bodies hanging around the department. "When I get to him, I'll need some help," she stated.

Janet nodded. Nothing fazed her, even a request for nonexistent help. "When the time comes, someone will help," she replied.

Kate sighed. She hoped the patient would sober up before she had to X-ray him. It was hard to take films of patients who couldn't or wouldn't hold still. Besides, mean drunks were no fun. They just weren't rational. They typically didn't feel the pain that kept sober patients cooperative. Setting aside the problem of a difficult patient, Kate grabbed a requisition and started the exams.

After a couple of hours, the list of patients had decreased dramatically. Kate took the last requisition from the box, relieved that she was almost done, at the same time aware that this one might be her most difficult exam. Janet was nowhere in sight so Kate figured she'd check the room to see what the patient was like.

Michael sat in the darkened corner of the exam room watching the rowdy drunk on the stretcher. The dimmed lights hadn't put the guy to sleep. Michael wished he could order the

guy to leave and come back when he was sober. Unfortunately, the patient's leg was bent and obviously broken. He needed treatment. Still Michael wondered how much longer he'd have to baby-sit.

Suddenly a surge of adrenaline heightened his senses. His eyes narrowed and his predatory instinct roared to the surface. He raised his head and sniffed before he stilled into near invisibility as the door cracked open. A woman peeked into the room.

Michael's special gift allowed him to see her naked and bound, spread before him like a dinner feast. Her lips trembled and her body arched as his long fingers delved into her dripping cunt.

The woman gasped and cast a quick glance toward the corner where Michael sat. She shook her head as if to clear it. Then she looked at the patient, grimaced and closed the door.

Michael slowly exhaled the breath he'd been holding and smiled. He hadn't expected to find a clan woman here. No wonder his senses had kicked in so hard. He'd been celibate for too long. He simply didn't trust himself around most normal women—his needs were too dark and too strong. He hadn't been able to fit in a trip to Sanctuary. Now he wouldn't have to. Here was a clan woman to slake his needs. But he didn't recognize her. He knew most of the clan members. Even from the distant clans. Who was she?

As if summoned, she opened the door again and stuck her head back in the room. "Hello," she said to the patient, ignoring the sitter.

"Hey, cunt, how are you doing?"

Maintaining a professional demeanor, she explained, "My name is Kate. I'm an X-ray tech and I'm going to take some pictures of your leg. I'm going to bring in the machine now." She propped open the door and walked back into the hallway.

"My leg's fine! I don't want any pictures!"

Michael watched the woman—Kate—as she drove the portable into the room. She didn't look big enough to control the machine yet she had it positioned in minutes. Competent as well as beautiful. She was short and curvy yet athletic, like a gymnast or a cheerleader. Michael's cock tightened with need. He wanted to unpin her hair, to discover its length, to wind it around his hands and force her to the ground. He could almost feel her writhing beneath him.

His heightened senses caught her scent—vanilla with a whiff of strawberry. He clenched his jaw and forced his erection into submission. He tried to rationalize his response. He'd been too long without a woman. But with gut-sinking certainty he knew his celibacy didn't explain his response to Kate. He was sure that she was clan and most likely his mate. Nothing else would cause his dramatic response to her presence.

Yet he'd never seen this woman in Sanctuary, his clan's secret enclave, located deep in the mountains. Sanctuary protected his race and allowed them to fully engage their sexual proclivities without outside interference.

The clan was ancient. No one knew its true origin. As with any society, they had only mythology and speculation on which to base their beliefs, their way of life. History had shown the danger of revealing their innate proclivities. An entire race dedicated to the pursuit of physical sensation might have been tolerated...until their telepathic powers became known. That is where they truly differed from other people. Bitter experience had taught the clan to remain hidden. Even today.

One of their scientists had recently discovered the gene responsible for their needs, preferences and abilities. Now that a biological component had been confirmed, some of the clan argued that it was time to reveal themselves. The elders counseled caution. There was

nothing wrong with working or studying outside Sanctuary but revealing themselves was a foolish idea. If clan members felt too constrained, they could always go to one of the other enclaves scattered throughout the world or live a less sexually satisfying life anywhere they chose.

Michael had done just that. He'd visited all eight clans over the years. He knew many of the other families but he'd never seen this woman before. Besides, she hadn't responded to his presence. If she were truly a mate, she would have taken more notice of him. So if she wasn't a clan member, who was she and where had she come from? And how did she arouse his instincts? No, she had to be clan. That was the only explanation for *his* reaction. Michael shook his head and yanked his thoughts back to the scene playing out before him.

"Hey," the patient said with a drunken smile, "you're cute! If you really want to help me, why don't you go down on me? That will take away my pain."

"Maybe I should relieve your discomfort by cutting it off," Kate replied sweetly.

The patient blanched.

Michael smiled. Not only competent and feminine but spirited as well—everything he required in a woman. But if she didn't know her heritage, he couldn't rush her. He fought down his instinctive reaction to protect her. If he didn't get a grip, he'd break the patient's neck. This wasn't the time or place to claim the woman. He had to control himself.

The patient shut up for a few minutes as Kate finished setting up the machine. Then he started in again.

Kate was just getting ready with another withering statement when a movement in the corner of the room drew her attention to the sitter. He had silently watched the entertaining by-play and she'd forgotten his existence. Oops! Kate typically tried not to threaten patients in front of witnesses. She was getting tired.

"Suck me!" the patient demanded.

Kate ignored the patient's demand and the filth he continued spewing. She knew she'd be done soon. They were just words, embarrassing as they might be.

Suddenly the sitter stood. Kate gulped. In the dim light, she hadn't realized the man's size. He was not only tall but well-built. He moved like a panther. He came over and stood beside her—very close beside her. His dark hair was unkempt, as if he'd recently run his hand through it. His unusual eyes peered down at her from under thick black brows. His slightly crooked nose indicated it had been broken at one time. The rest of his bone structure was perfect. Prominent cheekbones and a strong chin that framed the firm, hard lips that tipped at the edges into a half smile.

Kate felt as though a large predator had just moved into her personal space, taking all her air with him, replacing it with a musky scent that drove straight to her cunt. This was the man she'd seen in that flash of a vision when she'd first entered the room. She wasn't sure what had happened a few moments ago so she had decided to ignore it, for now. But she couldn't ignore the man.

Kate forgot the patient as the stranger circled her waist with a muscular arm. The minute he touched her, Kate found herself chained to a wall facing the stranger. He held a whip in his hand and her knees buckled at the thought of what he was going to do. Kate blinked and found herself back in the room, held close against the man's side. She looked up and he smiled down at her as he moved her away from the patient with a firm but gentle touch that lingered just a moment too long. Kate wasn't prepared for the wave of heat that rippled through her pelvis and she nearly moaned when he released her. She shook her head. It had

been a long time since any man's touch had affected her in any way and she couldn't remember ever feeling such an instant arousal.

Who was he? His perfectly tailored clothes looked expensive. His gray herringbone suit fit smoothly across his wide shoulders, narrowing perfectly around his waist without a ripple or pull. Tailored, not off the rack. She was fairly certain his black tie was pure silk.

As he turned his attention to the drunk, she wanted to warn him not to get too close to the patient while wearing a tie but the wave of masculine rage radiating off him kept her silent. Kate was thankful his anger wasn't aimed at her.

The stranger used a finger to turn the patient's head. As their eyes met, the stranger said, "You will let the tech take your pictures. You will stay still while she does so. You will not speak to her again. She is my woman."

His woman? Kate debated protesting his claim. Before she could say anything, he continued.

"You are insulting her. If you insult her, you insult me. Do I make myself clear?" he asked. His soft voice contrasted with the wave of menace that poured off him.

Stunned by the stranger's aura of restrained violence, Kate nearly forgot to breathe. He hadn't harmed the patient but a sense of danger filled the room. The broad, muscular shoulders filling his expensive suit were not just for show.

The patient and the stranger seemed to share a perfect moment of masculine understanding. The patient shut up and settled down. Apparently, he agreed with Kate's assessment.

The stranger turned to Kate.

Kate looked up and lost herself in his eyes. Such an unusual color, golden like a tiger's eyes. They'd lost the intensity of a moment ago and now looked warm and comforting.

She eyed him warily. Her head didn't reach the top of his shoulders so she knew he was a couple of inches over six feet. He tilted his head down. Smiling, he reached out and lightly caressed her cheek.

Kate shuddered. She wanted to lean her head on his broad chest and forget the world. She'd never felt so warm and protected. He made her feel secure.

"Finish the exam," he commanded in a voice that softly slithered through her. It resonated in her chest and filled her pelvis with heat as his musky scent enveloped her in a protective cocoon. She just wanted to sink into his arms, knowing he'd keep her safe in this perilous world.

Kate mentally shook herself. Women in the twenty-first century didn't expect rescue from a man. She should be angry that he interfered. She'd been a tech for years. She was used to handling abusive patients. She silently repeated the mantra. Part of her was annoyed that the stranger had intruded.

She couldn't deny the man's effectiveness though. The patient remained quiet and cooperative throughout the rest of the exam. Her thoughts whirled while she finished.

Despite her internal protests, she admitted that the knight-in-shining-armor act aroused something primitive deep within her. No one had ever come to her rescue before. A long-buried, deeply feminine part of her thrilled to let the big strong man take care of her problem. *Ouch*, she thought as she finished up, *I must be tired*. She took a deep, calming breath and told herself to think about it later.

By six in the morning, the chaos in emergency was down to a manageable level. Kate couldn't get the stranger out of her head. Usually sitters were just anybody who happened to

be competent and handy on short notice. That guy definitely wasn't the norm. Kate caught Janet just as she was leaving work. "Who was that guy?" Kate asked.

"What guy? Oh gosh, you mean the sitter, don't you? I am so sorry, I forgot he was there and I didn't get a chance to warn you," she exclaimed, a strange expression on her face.

"Warn me? Why? Who is he?"

Janet looked around, obviously nervous. "Not here. Let's go grab a cup of coffee."

Once settled in the cafeteria, Janet squirmed.

"Give," Kate said.

"I'm sorry. I was under strict orders not to tell anyone about him and I sincerely forgot he was in that room."

Kate raised an eyebrow.

"Girl, he's your new boss," Janet stated with a smile.

The previous chief executive officer of the hospital had been arrested on Medicare-fraud charges. The staff was elated. The guy punished offenses but never rewarded good work. He'd starved the departments of funds. He had refused to buy desperately needed equipment. Working conditions had been appalling under his administration. No one mourned his leaving.

Yet the staff worried about who'd come in to fix the mess and just how it would be fixed. Everyone knew the board was looking for a hard-nosed replacement with a sterling reputation. The hospital needed government funds. Whoever came in had to be acceptable to the feds, to the state and to the insurance companies who insured the survival of the institution if not the survival of the patients. After a couple of weeks, rumors floated across the grapevine. The board had hired a new guy. Some big deal who made a career of rescuing hospitals in trouble. He typically fired eighty percent of the department heads. All the managers were concerned, including Kate.

"It is not a good time to make jokes like that," Kate said.

"No joke, girl." Janet shook her head. "It's fact."

Kate waved a hand, encouraging Janet to continue.

"He was apparently roaming the hospital hallways when he heard about the crash. He came down, and get this—he introduced himself and asked what he could do to help. He didn't take command. He didn't make our lives rough. He asked." Janet paused then said, "I was really impressed."

Kate looked at her with a stunned expression. The boss men never got their hands dirty on the front lines. It was unheard of, especially at night. Typically the night shift was invisible to administration.

"Of course, you know how Nora is, especially with such a double whammy—he's gorgeous and he's her boss. Well Nora was all over him, ignoring the patients."

Janet and Nora had tangled plenty in the past. Janet had moved to nights so she rarely saw Nora anymore. Like most department heads, Nora worked days and only showed up on nights when she had no other choice. Nora felt that her master's degree meant she didn't have to touch a patient. Actually, that feeling was probably a good thing since not only was she a bad administrator, she was a lousy nurse too.

Janet continued, "He gave Nora a look that chilled me though it wasn't even aimed at me. He gave her this look, and get this—he said, 'I don't need butt kissing right now and you have a department to run. I suggest you run it. Where can I help?'"

Janet fanned herself with a napkin. “Whoa, girl, is he hot—about six-two, great body, rumpled black hair, expensive clothes and those eyes. They’re like topaz lasers penetrating deep into your soul. Wow! I had trouble talking around him, he’s so devastating. If I weren’t happily married I would have dragged him off to a broom closet. Those muscles, that face, that voice...” She shook her head and went back to her story.

“Anyway, Nora was speechless. I thought she was going to have a heart attack but then she spotted me and told me to give Mr. Kyle anything he needed. Oh I wish I could.” Janet paused to sip her coffee and cool down. “Girl, I had him doing all kinds of nasty stuff. He never once complained or declined. He really was helpful,” she stated, sounding surprised. “That’s why I sent him to help you. Sorry I couldn’t warn you ahead of time.” She stopped as she saw the expression on Kate’s face. “What happened in there? You didn’t do anything that would get you in trouble, did you?”

Kate smiled. Janet knew Kate could be extremely blunt and that she was quite capable of defending herself in ways an administrator might not understand. “Everything went fine. He was very helpful.” She reassured Janet, knowing she hadn’t meant to set up Kate. Sometimes Janet’s hormones overruled her head. Of course, Kate’s own hormones hadn’t been too stable since the incident. She was glad to know she wasn’t the only female affected by the man. “I didn’t have a chance to do anything. He kind of took over,” Kate said as she explained what had happened. She left out the part about her feeling of being feminine and helpless.

“Wow! Do you think there’s a chance we actually have an administrator who understands front-line work?”

“Time will tell,” Kate replied cautiously, suddenly feeling far more vulnerable than normal. She wished Janet had mentioned the sitter’s identity before Kate’s encounter. The rumors had mentioned his reputation. They hadn’t mentioned his physicality. He wore power like a cloak. Strength and intensity flowed around him like the undertone of aftershave. He was the dark knight riding to the hospital’s rescue.

Kate went back to emergency to complete her paperwork. By the time she finished, it was nine. She thought about going home for a short nap, but knowing the new boss was in residence, she opted to work on the budget instead.

By three, Kate readied to leave. The day had been one crisis after another and she had administrative call tonight. She groaned as she stretched. She dreamed of getting a nap. She had just turned off her computer when the phone rang.

“There’s a mandatory meeting for all department heads scheduled for four o’clock,” Eileen stated.

“You’ve got to be kidding,” Kate said.

“In case you haven’t heard, the new boss is here. He wants to meet everyone at four, in the boardroom.” Her carefully controlled tone made Kate nervous. It sounded as though Eileen were sending a signal. She usually didn’t use that tone with Kate.

Eileen had been an executive assistant for years. She’d survived many changes in regime. Her political instincts were honed. Eileen had once told Kate she liked her because they never discussed work. Instead, they’d talk about Eileen’s new grandbaby or Kate’s latest relationship at their once-a-week lunches.

“What’s up? Is he making your life difficult?”

“I really can’t say,” she stated.

Kate thought of a reason for Eileen’s strange tone. “Is he there with you?”

“Yes,” she replied.

"I'll be there," Kate said, knowing that the only other option was to turn in her resignation. She sighed and restarted her computer. She worked on estimates and projections for an hour then she printed them out and headed to the boardroom.

Kate walked into the conference room at two minutes to four. Most of the other department heads were already there. They all looked nervous. Rumors of last night's actions had spread. Only a couple of the other department heads ever got their hands dirty or even remembered what front-line actions were so there were a lot of uncomfortable people.

Kate grabbed her umpteenth coffee of the day. Without a caffeine boost, she'd never make it through the meeting. She sat next to Susan Bringly, the laboratory head. Susan and Kate weren't close but as two of only three female department heads, they did have some issues in common.

Susan's second in command was trying to get her job too. Unfortunately for Susan, he had a good chance of succeeding. Susan was not a great administrator. She rode her people too hard. She rarely stood up for them. She never drew blood and had little idea of the problems in her department.

Janet had told Kate that last night's tech was incompetent. He'd hidden himself in the laboratory because he couldn't hit a vein. Janet said the nurses ended up drawing all the lab work. Nurses were very expensive substitutes for phlebotomists.

Suddenly a hush came over the room as the boss entered at precisely four o'clock.

Administrators were usually late. Probably to impress everyone with their importance. Maybe this guy wasn't that disorganized or that insecure.

Kate watched him walk to the head of the table. He'd changed suits, she noticed, wishing she'd had an opportunity to shower and change. A nap would have helped too. Two in the morning was a long time ago. Kate used to do thirty-six-hour shifts so she knew she was still okay on sleep but she was out of practice. Thoughts of her bed were getting harder to keep out of her head. Then an especially strong image of Kate in bed with the new boss startled her back to awareness.

Where the hell had that thought come from? Looking up, Kate met his eyes. They glowed like amber jewels and if she didn't know better, she'd think he had planted the suggestive image in her head. What was it with the images of sex? Specifically sex with this man? She'd never fantasized like that before.

Normally she didn't go for the primitive, chest-beating alpha males—no matter how good looking or how seductive their voices and eyes. Yet this man effortlessly raised her pulse rate and caused her cunt to clench with need. Kate shook off her arousal and chalked it up to tiredness. She'd explore it later. She was confident in her ability to rationalize any emotion. In the meantime, she'd need her wits about her for this meeting.

Chapter Two

“As you might already know, my name is Michael Kyle and I was hired to clean up this mess,” he stated bluntly, taking control of the meeting. He looked around the table as if considering his first target.

Kate couldn't help noticing that he didn't look as if he had missed a night of sleep. He looked fresh and vigorous and gorgeous.

“Before we get started, let's go around the table. Introduce yourself, tell me your department and give me one statement about the biggest problem your department faces and the greatest strength of your department.” He looked at Susan. “Why don't you start,” he commanded.

“Uhh, I'm Susan Bringly...laboratory...” she stammered, obviously flustered by his attention. “Uhh what else...” she tapered off, already forgetting what else he wanted.

“Strength,” he prompted.

“I'm good with the paperwork,” she replied.

Michael smiled. “That's good to know. Do you believe that the paperwork is the most important thing you do?”

Kate cringed, sensing the trap he was laying down for Susan.

“Well yes,” she smiled brightly, “that's how we get paid.”

“I see,” he said softly. “What about weaknesses?”

She proudly proclaimed, “We don't have any weaknesses.”

Michael nodded and continued around the table. He had a great poker face, never once letting on whether he was getting the kind of information he expected or wanted. Kate thought the strengths and weaknesses given were poor. They reflected personal interests rather than departmental or institutional interests.

When he reached Kate, she decided to take a chance. Given that he'd been on the front lines last night and that he seemed to understand, she decided not to give him the fluff all the other department heads had shared. It was a risk, but what the hell, he couldn't do any more than fire her.

Kate met his eyes and stated, “Kathleen Logan...Kate. I run the radiology department. Our greatest strength is our people. They are dedicated and committed to the patients, which benefits our institutional reputation. Our greatest weakness has been the lack of administrative support. Our equipment is old. At least four percent of our machines are broken at any given time. Our CT scanner is slow and needs upgrading. Equipment problems affect our productivity and our morale. We bring twenty percent of funding into the institution but it could be more.”

Michael nodded. Kate couldn't tell if he was pleased with her analysis.

After the introductions came the inquisition. Question after question, he grilled everyone. Cutting commentary followed painful answers. Kate watched his technique. He proceeded to slash then bandage and soothe egos. How could he have made her feel so safe last night and so fearful now? He hadn't really done anything to warrant either emotion. But now, in this meeting, watching him work, Kate feared this man without quite knowing why. She believed

that the worst he could do was fire her so she wondered at her roiling stomach and achy head. She chalked it up to exhaustion and waited her turn.

When his gaze turned to Kate, she tilted her chin and sat a little straighter. She listened to him detail her section's accomplishments and failures. Other managers had squirmed uncomfortably during their recital. Kate forced herself to sit still. She calmly returned his stare, reflecting his emotionless state.

Kate expected questions on areas of weakness. He smiled at her as he broke the pattern. Instead of asking about failures, he asked about her plans for the department. He had shaken everyone else, now it was her turn.

"Kate, how are you going to handle the network problem?"

The network issue was an old one. The department desperately needed a network to connect all of the digital output. It was not a trivial problem. It defied a simple explanation.

Kate hesitated for a moment and then said, "My solution depends upon your actions."

His eyes glittered as he focused all his attention on her. "Explain," he said softly.

"How technical do you want me to get?" Kate questioned, thankful that her voice didn't reflect her inner trembling.

He quirked an eyebrow. "As technical as it takes to explain."

Kate took a deep calming breath, knowing the action wouldn't escape him, but she needed it. It was a heady feeling, knowing his sole attention was on her. He listened—really listened. She felt as if they were the only two people in the room.

Kate finished her analysis. He didn't say anything. He merely stared. Kate returned his gaze and forced herself to be quiet. The silence was unnerving—something good teachers have always known. Since he hadn't asked a question, Kate refused to break the silence. She waited.

He smiled and nodded then turned his gaze to the next person.

Two hours later, his voice soft, he said, "Thank you all." Then he went for the kill. "I'm beginning to see why this institution is in so much trouble. From now on, you will think of the institution before you think of personal or departmental motivations. You will not give me silly answers such as there are no weaknesses," he said, looking at Susan. "You will think in institutional terms. You will, before midnight, give me a report demonstrating how your unit benefits the institution. Benefits in dollars, not just words. This report will include a list of departmental needs, a cost-benefit analysis and recommendations for a ten percent cut in funding," he said.

Ignoring the shockwave that went around the room as the managers realized what his words meant, his eyes found Kate's and he said, "Kate, make sure you put in the rest of the explanations, the ones you left out because you thought I wouldn't understand."

Before anyone could protest, he continued. "If you don't feel you are able or willing to give me such a report in that time frame, I will accept your resignation instead. That's all." He strode from the silent room.

"Oh shit," said the manager from facilities management. "I can't put together a report like that in that time frame."

"Me neither," stated the head of dietary.

Kate stood up and gathered her notes.

"What about you, Kate, don't you think this is ridiculous? Maybe if we all stand together he'll back down," Susan said.

"I'll do it. What choice do I have? Besides, I don't think he'll back down. I think he meant every word."

"Well, he can't fire us all!" she said.

"Why not?"

Susan just looked at Kate helplessly.

"I'm going to start on my report," Kate said. The deadline meant that she couldn't go home and get the sleep she so desperately craved.

Michael entered his office knowing he had done the mental equivalent of throwing a bomb into the managers' midst. Neat little worlds left him cold. He enjoyed shaking up self-important people. Most of the managers he'd just met would not be here long. He felt a brief flare of remorse then dismissed it and turned his thoughts to Kate.

She seemed to have no idea how their genetics connected them. How could that be? How could she not know? He'd felt her arousal in response to his mental suggestions. He knew she was annoyed by his confident attitude. He'd felt her defiance as she'd responded to his questions. Her every word and action made it clear she'd never been subservient to anyone. If she knew anything about the clan or their ancestry, she wouldn't bait him. Resistance only made his predatory instincts stronger. Defiance didn't deter him. It aroused him.

Once his instincts awakened, nothing but a woman's total submission would quiet them. Kate didn't realize she already belonged to him. He smiled as he thought of the challenge he faced. If she truly didn't know, he would teach her about herself and he looked forward to every minute of Kate's education.

Kate returned to the department around seven to find it in turmoil. "Oh, this day just keeps getting better and better," she said to one of her techs.

Two car accidents meant that three trauma patients lined the hallway. Kate grabbed her lab coat and pitched in to help clear the backlog of work. The three techs on the evening shift would have cleaned up the mess eventually but patients in pain shouldn't have to wait and her people needed help. The report could wait. That's the way she worked and if Mr. Kyle didn't like it, he could fire her.

Kate authorized overtime for two of the day techs who were still there and willing to stay longer than she went to work. By nine, the mess had cleared. Kate was spraying a bleach solution on an X-ray table in an empty room when she felt herself bent over the table, a large male hand held her motionless while her clothes were ripped off. As Kate opened her mouth to scream she found herself standing at the edge of the table with all of her clothes firmly in place.

She whirled around, bottle and towel in hand. Michael lounged in the door. What the hell was happening? Why did she keep having these visions when he was around? Kate wondered how long he'd been there and how he'd sneaked up on her. She was usually very sensitive. It had become a departmental game to try to sneak up on her. No one else ever managed that feat, yet he'd managed to startle her. Kate blamed it on exhaustion and turned back to finish the table. "May I help you?" she asked as she wiped blood off the table.

"You shouldn't be doing janitorial work."

Kate couldn't help herself. She looked over her shoulder at him and started laughing. She typically used humor as a stress reliever, no matter how inappropriate it might be. After the highly stressful day she'd had, she needed the relief. She finished cleaning the table while she got herself under control. When she spoke, it was in bullet points. She was too tired to be polite.

“Facilities management never touches our equipment. The other techs are busy. The blood will dry before they can clean it. The room needs to be ready for more patients. The benefit of being boss is that I do whatever is necessary to keep this department running smoothly.” Being tired made her stupid because she didn’t stop there. “Besides, it is therapeutic and a lot more fun than doing your report.” Kate shrugged and finished the table before turning to face his silence.

His eyebrow was quirked again, as if Kate were a very interesting specimen under his microscope.

She’d surprised him. Didn’t anyone ever talk back to him?

“And my report?”

“Will be on your desk before midnight.”

He smiled then. Not a full-blown smile, which might have been devastating, just a lift of one side of his mouth. The smile drew attention to his lips—firm and tantalizing lips. The smile didn’t quite reach his eyes. “I look forward to reading it,” he said before he turned and left.

Kate grinned. She felt as if she’d won a small victory. She was smart enough to know it had only been a skirmish and he’d let her win. Was he feeding her a line as you would a fish? Seeing how far she’d run with it? Seeing how fast she’d tire? She really should take the paperwork aspect of her job more seriously. But remembering the nine-year-old boy she’d X-rayed earlier, she decided some things were far more important than paperwork. Maybe she should go back to being staff. Life was easier as a tech.

Kate finished cleaning the room and went to her office. She pulled up one of the reports she’d been working on earlier. Kate couldn’t help wondering if the report would be treated as a serious request for resources or as an excuse to fire her. She shrugged and opened five different documents.

Cutting and pasting pieces into a new report, her mind was busy calculating where she needed to alter and strengthen her arguments. What should be downplayed? What should be a priority? She pushed aside the regret that human life was reduced to these numbers.

By ten-thirty that night Kate had finished the first draft and needed a break. She knew the emergency department would have coffee so she wandered over there, trying to stretch out the kinks on the way. Janet was there, looking extremely harassed.

“What’s up?” Kate asked, hoping there weren’t any big emergencies.

Janet rolled her eyes as she explained. “Our new boss just took a trip through.”

“Oh,” Kate said. “That should have made your night. What’s the problem?”

“For someone who looks like a walking wet dream, he can be a real bastard! He had the nerve to say we looked overstaffed.”

“Did you remind him that you weren’t overstaffed last night?”

She gave Kate an exasperated look. “Of course I did but you know that administrators have a problem with the fact that one night you might have six patients and another night you might have sixty. Staffing is always a problem.” She paused and then said, “He reminds me of you.”

Kate startled. “Why do you say that?”

Janet shrugged. “He does the same thing you do. You get really quiet when you’re processing something, like the whole world stops while you’re thinking. He’s like that too.” Janet paused before continuing, “I told him off and argued with him. There are many nursing jobs. He can’t do any more than fire me.”

That seemed to be a common refrain. “Then what happened?”

“He didn’t reply. He just stared at me for a moment, then turned and walked out of the department,” Janet said. She suddenly stopped talking as she took a good look at Kate, then said, “Girl, have you been here since last night?”

“Unfortunately, yes.”

“Go home. Now! You are way too tired to be here!”

“Thanks for your concern and the unnecessary update on my appearance, but my night isn’t done,” Kate stated. She went on to explain about the midnight report deadline as she finished her coffee.

Kate thought about Janet’s encounter as she returned to her office. Janet had argued yet the response hadn’t changed. That was unusual. People typically respond differently to different actions. He was like a black hole, taking in everything and releasing nothing. She hadn’t noticed before but then she really hadn’t had time to process all her impressions. Kate put another note on her mental checklist of things to think about when she was rested.

It had been a long twenty-one hours but by eleven the report was completed. Exhaustion crept up Kate’s back and into her shoulders. The physical strain was enough to make her tired but the additional mental gymnastics had left her empty.

She felt as if she were back in school with an unreasonable, irrational teacher. A teacher who would never give a good grade, no matter how hard she worked. Kate laid her head on the desk. She took a moment to debate whether to hand in the twenty-page report early. Would she get brownie points for being early or deductions for not taking all the time available? She sighed and shrugged. She wanted to go home. The report would be early.

Kate walked up to the executive suite and wondered if she should time-stamp the report to prove it had been done on time. She hated it when that type of thought wandered through her head. Major problems everywhere and she was worried about a time-stamp. Was that a form of denial? Or just a symptom of her personality that she sought to control all the small things she could? She chuckled. More likely, she was just exhausted.

As Kate entered the executive suite, she heard a low murmur of voices. She knocked on the door to Michael’s office.

“Come in.”

Kate opened the door and entered the office. The night supervisor sat in the hot seat, looking uncomfortable. Michael, of course, looked as fresh as ever, and unflappable.

“Your report,” Kate said as she waved it in the air.

He held out his hand, imperviously.

Kate walked across the office and placed it in his hand. She turned and was at the door when he spoke again. “Kathleen,” he said. He paused until Kate turned back to him. “Wait outside for me. I’ll be with you in a moment.”

Kate wanted to groan but she nodded as she met his impassive eyes. She closed the door and heard the soft murmur of voices begin again. Kate stood at the door and took a deep, calming breath. She seemed to be doing a lot of that around him. What was it with this guy? How could he shake her so easily?

Kate longed to sit but she knew she was too tired. If she sat in one of the comfortable chairs scattered around Eileen’s office she’d fall asleep. Her day had been grueling and the cold of exhaustion chilled her. She wanted to close her eyes and dream but instead she meandered around the office. She looked at the silly plaques meant to proclaim the importance of whoever might occupy the executive position.

Ah, that's new though, she thought as she spied a glass display case tucked into a far corner. Hidden lights illuminated the contents. The display looked so tasteful but she stopped dead when her mind finally caught up to the shape of the objects.

Phallic statuary, none smaller than the largest man she'd ever seen. At least twenty of them, made of many different types of materials. They looked old, like a museum collection. A few had partners, in case the observer was unsure as to how to use the objects. Some stood in glorious isolation, as if ready for a helpful hand. Why would a man collect them? Kate was certain they belonged to Michael. But didn't they make him feel inadequate? Could he be gay? At that possibility, Kate felt a little surge of disappointment.

Kate shook her head. Eileen must love this display. Why was it out here? Why wasn't it in his office? The collection fascinated and repulsed at the same time. The cocks mesmerized Kate. It had been way too long since she'd last had sex. Her insides were liquid as she imagined trying to insert the biggest piece.

Engrossed in the collection, Kate hadn't heard the office door open. She did hear the night supervisor scurry away and Michael tell her good night. Kate turned.

Michael stood, arms crossed and shoulders back, against the doorjamb. His eyes locked on Kate. Her face flamed as she realized he'd watched her examine his collection.

"Family heirlooms. Do you like them? Would you like to feel one deep inside your body? Filling you?"

Kate swallowed hard. She hadn't expected his bluntness.

She was struggling with an answer when he laughed. "Sorry. It's been a long day, hasn't it?" he said, running his hand through his hair. "Come and sit down." He nodded his head to indicate Kate should enter his office.

Her equilibrium disrupted, she stumbled as she walked by him. When his hand reached out to steady her he grazed her breasts and created a firestorm of desire. Eyes dancing with amusement, he smiled down at Kate as if he knew the effect of his touch. Then he moved his hand to her elbow and escorted Kate to the hot seat so recently vacated by the supervisor. After seating Kate, Michael didn't go directly to his chair behind the desk. Instead, he walked over to an armoire. Opening the doors, he flicked a switch. Diffused lighting revealed a bar and more statues. The cocks in the cabinet were even larger than those in the outer office. Kate realized he had said something and was waiting for her reply.

"I'm sorry," Kate said, "what did you say?"

"Would you like something to drink?"

"No thank you." Kate was too tired for alcohol and she had the feeling that drinking with this man would not be a good idea. Kate squirmed a little. The chair wasn't comfortable. Combined with the atmosphere in the office she felt trapped. Just the lighted display and one small desk lamp illuminated the room. Kate relived her earlier feelings of lust and fear. Why were her emotions about this man so erratic? One minute she longed to throw herself into his arms and the next he terrified her. He'd really done nothing to warrant such extreme emotions. She dismissed her feelings as the result of lack of sleep while the lust she wished she could act on and the thought of his hard body nearly made her miss his next statement.

"Give me a summary of your report," he said. Leaving the cabinet doors open, he walked back toward his desk.

"Same as I gave you earlier, with just a few added details." Kate was just too tired to go through the entire thing again.

"Nothing has changed?"

“I’ve spent the last month thinking about problems in the department. Nothing changed in one evening.” Her voice was tight, angry that he questioned her judgment. Weak from exhaustion, she just wanted to go home and sleep. She’d have more control after she rested.

Michael stared at Kate. She couldn’t see his face clearly. Most of his face was in shadow. By some strange trick of lighting though, she could see his eyes. They were cold and flat again as they’d been in emergency so many hours ago. He perched on the corner of his desk and looked down at the report. He seemed to be skimming through it but she had a feeling he was taking in every fact and detail.

The soft office lighting and the silence conspired to lull Kate into a meditative state despite the uncomfortable chair. She needed to get up and walk around. She wanted to look at his collection. Why did he collect these? Kate could usually tell if a man was gay and while a group of penises pointed that way, she discarded the idea. Somehow, she knew he wasn’t homosexual though she couldn’t figure out why he’d have such a collection.

Kate wondered if he had more statues at home. Her eyes strayed over the objects as Michael continued reading. Wouldn’t it hurt to have something so large inserted? It was one thing for her to use a dildo on herself but the idea of a man using such a large dildo on her seemed a little scary. He’d be in control. If he used it, Kate wouldn’t have any say. Kate liked control. She never let her partners dictate the pace or timing of sex.

Kate looked up at Michael to find his eyes on her again. His position on the desk, combined with his energy, made her feel like a mouse trying to hide from an eagle. A golden glow emanated from his eyes, warming her. He obviously knew she’d been viewing his collection. A flush crept up her face. His gaze was more intense than any lover’s had ever been. Kate found it a little disconcerting to be the sole object of his attention.

Chapter Three

Michael tore his eyes away from Kate and looked down at the paper he held. He skimmed Kate's report while he worked to calm his libido. He wanted Kate. He wanted her flare of anger. He wanted her writhing body tied to his bed. He wanted her generous breasts in his hands. He wanted her luscious mouth wrapped around his cock. He wanted her to plead with him. He wanted to introduce her to his favorite type of sex. He wanted to hurt her just enough to break through her barriers. Just enough to trigger her genetics. Why didn't she recognize their link? Who was she? Where was her family? Why hadn't they trained her? She seemed to have no idea they were joined in a very old game.

He had to handle this situation carefully. Only his rigid self-control prevented him from forcing her to the carpet and beginning her training. She wasn't ready. Not yet. He smiled. He felt her interest though and knew he could push her a little more.

Michael tossed her report on his desk and looked at her. "Excellent report."

Kate stood. "Are we through here?"

Michael smiled. "Almost. What do you think of my collection?"

Kate froze.

"Tell me what you think when you look at it."

"It's unusual." She strove for a neutral voice.

"That's a cautious answer." He smiled as his eyes drilled into her. "But what was your first emotional reaction?"

Obviously, he wasn't going to let her get away with a safe answer. "Surprise," she replied. "It's not a typical corporate collection."

"No, it's my family's personal collection. After surprise, then what?"

Kate squirmed. "I'm not certain I know what you mean," she temporized, extremely uncomfortable with the idea of discussing his collection.

"Be blunt," he persisted.

"Do penises really get that large?" Kate finally blurted. So much for the cool, contained persona she wanted to project. She met his eyes and ignored the flush in her cheeks and warmth in her abdomen.

"Does size really matter?" he asked quietly.

Oh shit, now what? That's one of those trick questions, like when a woman asks if she looks fat. Kate was quiet for a moment, getting more uncomfortable by the minute. "Depends upon the man," she prevaricated.

"Explain," he commanded as he walked back to his desk.

She'd heard that command too many times today. She fought off the urge to give him an answer. Instead, she said, "My personal sex life is not at issue here. Are we done?"

"Just a few more questions. What clan are you? What family?"

"Pardon? What are you talking about?"

"You're clan or we wouldn't be sharing visions. You must know that."

“Sharing visions? You’re responsible for those horrifying things I’ve been seeing? How could you do that?”

“Our genetics are tied. Are you telling me you seriously don’t know that?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Tell me about your family.”

“My family is none of your business. I’m tired. Are we done here?” Michael stared at Kate and she felt herself start to slip into another vision. “Stop it!” Kate stood. “That’s enough! I don’t know what you’re doing or what you’re talking about but I’ve had enough for today.”

A stray ray of light reflected from his eyes and Kate had the impression that he was laughing at her discomfort. Kate wanted to cringe but she held still.

He moved toward the armoire. “This collection reflects my family’s interest in exploring all aspects of sexuality. We like pleasuring women,” he calmly stated. “I’ve found that some women do care about size and while I’m not small, neither am I quite as large as this one.” He pointed to a penis that was three inches across and over a foot long. “Some women like wide penises. Other women like length. Some like both. And of course, I’m only one man, but some women like all their holes filled at the same time.” He paused. “Even the really large ones have their uses. Some women like their pleasure with a little pain. They seem to find the pleasure/pain contrast an incredible turn-on.”

Michael took out a huge crystal penis. “You would think this would hurt, wouldn’t you?” he asked conversationally. “Yet, with a couple of hours of stimulation, this will fit into a vagina...of course, I have to be careful, otherwise the vagina rips...not a good thing, thus the length of time.” He turned and put the statue back into the case before he moved to stand facing Kate.

Kate flinched when he made a fist in front of her face.

“Some women prefer to be fisted. Have you ever heard of fisting?”

She shook her head, feeling like the proverbial deer pinned in the headlights of his eyes. How should she respond?

He smiled, as if Kate’s confusion pleased him. “Fisting is the practice of putting an entire fist into the vagina or the anus, if that’s your preference.” He stared intensely into her eyes. “It takes hours of vaginal stimulation. My fist is so large that less time simply will not allow the vagina to stretch enough to accommodate me.”

His words painted erotic images in Kate’s head. This couldn’t be happening. Michael’s blunt approach left her head swimming and her body hot. She felt his gaze as his eyes moved down her body. Did he know what his words were doing to her equilibrium? Anger, lust, fear and interest warred in her mind, while her body had no such dilemma. Her body wanted this man to take her in every primitive way he could. He was mesmerizing. Fighting off his spell, Kate gathered her strength. She moved her eyes from his fist to his face.

“This is sexual harassment,” she stated, trying to cool the heat he had generated.

He smiled and shook his head. His voice calm and soft, he said, “I just wanted to tell you what a good job you are doing and to keep up the good work. Your job is not in jeopardy. Don’t assume that I’m trying to seduce you. I was merely discussing my art collection. I haven’t propositioned you.”

Kate’s face flamed as she realized he was right. She also realized she wanted him to pursue her. He’d neatly trapped her. Her desire and frustration made her angry.

“I’m tired. I’m leaving.”

At the door, he moved in front of Kate and stopped her. "Have you been here since last night? Do you plan on driving?"

Kate could literally feel his concern winding through her torso, warming her. When was the last time any man had shown her any concern? Unexpectedly touched and ready to melt, she fought off the feeling. She shook her head and pulled herself together. "Yes I've been here since last night and yes I'm driving," she said. "I've gotten home in worse shape. I'll be fine."

"No. I'll drive you home."

"Thanks, but I'll be fine." Kate just wanted to get away from the confusion he caused.

"You don't understand. I'm not offering. I'm telling."

Kate looked into his eyes and saw implacable determination. The same take-no-prisoners attitude he'd used earlier.

She shrugged and said, "Fine."

He opened the doors as they descended to the parking garage entrance. Kate wanted to protest but knew it would be futile so she politely said, "Thank you," after every door.

The parking garage was a dim, cavernous space. Footsteps echoed and wind whistled between the pillars. Kate had to admit to a certain level of comfort in knowing she wasn't alone. Then she stiffened as she realized Michael's company might not be safer than an empty garage. What was she doing? Was she seriously considering letting him drive her home? All her instincts for self-preservation kicked in and as much as she might want Michael, she wasn't quite ready to take that step. She hadn't even known him for twenty-four hours but she knew he was too domineering and controlling for her tastes. She ignored the fact that her body screamed otherwise. Besides, the conversation in his office had left her shaken.

Kate spotted her car and pulled away from him. She got her keys ready.

He put a hand on Kate's arm. "What are you doing?"

Kate turned toward him and met his eyes. "I'm going home. In my car. Alone."

He started to protest. Kate interrupted.

"George," she nodded her head toward the lit booth at the entrance, "is a notorious gossip. He doesn't care about accuracy either. It's bad enough he saw you walk me to my car. If you give me a ride, by tomorrow everyone in the hospital will assume that we are having a torrid affair."

"That could be arranged."

Kate stiffened even as her heart raced. "You said you weren't propositioning me."

"I wasn't propositioning you in the office. I'm not propositioning you now. I am merely responding to your need and offering my services."

Anger washed through Kate. He had trapped her again. She wanted to jump him right here on the concrete floor. She couldn't deny his attraction. But she'd spent her life being cautious and logical. She wasn't going to abandon her beliefs now. "I didn't get my current position by sleeping with the boss. I won't keep it that way either. Even the appearance of being with you could wreck my career. I'm not prepared to do that for any man. Good night." Kate pulled away and climbed into her car.

Michael stepped forward before Kate could close the door.

"Run if it makes you feel better. I love a good chase." Then he backed off and closed the door for Kate. She started her car and backed out. She waved to George as she left the garage. In her rearview mirror, she saw Michael walking toward the security booth.

The next morning, Steve the daytime security guard told Kate that George had been fired. Kate struggled with mixed feelings—guilt because she knew he’d been fired because of her comments and relief because he really was malicious. She was certain that whoever replaced George would be friendly but silent. Kate shook off her discomfort and continued to her department.

She entered it and found Michael there. She walked up to him and said, “May I help you?”

He smiled. “I’ve already seen everything I needed and heard all I wanted to.” He turned and left the department.

Kate looked at Pete.

Pete shrugged. “He was here when I got in at seven. He didn’t interfere, just watched while I organized the morning work. Then he wandered around for a while.”

“What did he hear and see?” The work was never routine, there were always problems.

Pete shrugged again. “Not much. Luckily it was quiet. He just asked a few questions.”

She’d hired Pete as her assistant two months ago and he was still testing her. What was the something else that had just moved through his eyes? Triumph, she decided. Kate almost hadn’t hired Pete. He seemed to have a problem with the concept of working for a female.

Kate understood his attitude. Many men felt the same. She still didn’t have a handle on him though. His work was good. He cared about the patients. At one level that’s all that concerned her. At other levels, she knew he was dangerous.

He was after her job. Pete had asked for her help the other night but then he’d put her in the weaker position by sending her to work the emergency cases. He didn’t realize she loved trauma work. She loved the challenge of taking films on uncooperative patients. Sighing, she realized Pete read her love of a challenge as a weakness he could exploit. Kate wasn’t sure how to handle his mistaken reading of the situation. At some point, she and Pete would have a confrontation. Kate really wasn’t looking forward to it.

“And you told him what?” Kate prompted Pete. She had a feeling he was hiding something.

“The questions were mostly about you.”

“Keep going.”

“He asked how I felt about working for a woman.” Pete stood with his feet apart and arms crossed.

That must have been an interesting conversation, Kate thought. She wondered if Pete knew about Michael’s collection. In Pete’s world, penises ruled so he’d probably get off on the male domination depicted by the statues. Kate debated whether to pursue her questioning but decided Pete would probably lie to her anyway. This conversation was going nowhere so she shrugged and went to her office.

Two hours later Kate got a call from Eileen. Voice trembling, she asked, “Do you want to have lunch?”

“Sure. I’ll meet you in the cafeteria in half an hour.”

“No! No, let’s go somewhere outside the building.”

“Okay,” said Kate. Obviously, Kate’s world wasn’t the only one being rocked by the new boss. At least Kate would get a chance to ask about the statuary.

Eileen started lunch with a bang. “You’ve seen his artwork, haven’t you?”

“Kind of hard to miss. How do you like it?”

“Well it has certainly stimulated some very interesting...conversations...with my husband.” Eileen waved a hand. “But that’s not why I asked you to lunch...or it is...but not the way you think.” Her cheeks turned rosy and she started playing with her napkin.

“Eileen, we’ve been friends for years, just spit it out. What’s going on?” Kate asked, knowing Eileen wanted to tell her something.

Tears filled Eileen’s eyes. Her distress frightened Kate. She’d never seen her friend so upset. “Eileen...”

“I’m sorry,” she said, “I’m just so worried about you.”

“What do you mean?” Kate had thought her tears were for herself. Eileen crying for Kate? What was going on?

Eileen took a deep breath, struggling to regain her calm before continuing, “Remember that I used to work for Charity Hospitals?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I still have friends there. Michael Kyle worked there before he came here. I’m embarrassed to admit I contacted my friends and asked about him. I was curious,” she defended herself. “Especially after he brought in that collection.” She squirmed in her chair as Kate waited. “Well,” she continued, “I found out more than I wanted to know.” Sighing, she looked Kate in the eyes and stated, “He’s a predator...a sexual predator.”

“What do you mean? He’s been arrested?” Kate felt a little stunned. The fact she was attracted to a predator was disturbing.

“No he’s never been arrested or sued...but I was told that at every place he’s ever worked he targets one female employee. He’s into bondage and domination. He likes to control women and it is not just simple control...he likes isolating a woman and keeping her in sexual submission for weeks at a time.” She spewed the words out in a rush.

“But that’s sexual harassment—”

“No. I was told that the woman willingly participates, that the job is never part of the deal.” She took a bite of salad and chewed it. She frowned before continuing. “He especially likes to bend independent women to his will.” Her frown deepened. “It is so hard to talk to you about this. He’s been so nice to me. He’s a wonderful boss. I really hate that I checked on him. I really hate to spread gossip,” she rushed on, “but he’s been asking questions about you—personal questions about your lifestyle and beliefs. He’s read your entire employee record. He ordered a background investigation on you. I think he’s targeting you,” she finished.

Kate squirmed at the thought of someone prying into her background. Not that she believed they’d find anything. She certainly hadn’t been able to find out about her biological parents. No relatives had ever come forward to claim her after the car accident. Over the years, she’d shoved the adoption to the back of her mind. Maybe Michael would tell her if he found anything.

“Kate?”

Eileen’s soft prompt brought Kate back to the present. She took a moment, trying to sort out her conflicting emotions. She felt a thrill of fear in her stomach even as warmth flooded her pelvis. She knew that alpha males were evolutionary throwbacks. She couldn’t want Michael, could she? She reluctantly admitted that she was tempted. Even while revulsion fought for supremacy in her mind. She wouldn’t be any man’s sexual slave. While Kate wasn’t averse to a quick fling, even though he was the boss, there was no way she’d give up total control.

“He can’t do much without my cooperation,” she finally said.

“Well yes,” Eileen agreed. “That’s the whole point. He’ll pursue you until you do agree. At least that has been his pattern in the past.”

Kate shrugged. “Thanks for the warning. I’ll be careful,” she said as they finished lunch.

Later that night, Kate replayed their conversation. Was Eileen right? Was Michael a predator? Was that how he made her feel safe, protected and threatened all at the same time? And what had he meant about her clan heritage? She’d been adopted. She knew little about her biological family and what she did know made her doubt that she’d want to admit her heritage. She wasn’t sure Michael would accept that denial though. She’d already seen his edge. He didn’t seem to hide his dark side. So why wasn’t she running away from him? Was it possible that he was the right one? Was he a man she could trust with her unspoken needs?

The dark edge of sex fascinated Kate. She’d fought the impulse all of her life by choosing sensitive men—men horrified by the thought of violence toward women. Despite therapy, she hadn’t been able to rid herself of the memory of her biological mother chained to a wall, her back lined with whip marks while Kate’s father soothed ointment on the wounds. The image had been seared into her mind. They’d been so immersed in each other that they hadn’t even realized that Kate had been there. That she’d seen them.

The subsequent car accident and her adoption meant Kate had never been able to ask about the scene. She’d rationalized that she was too independent to enjoy being dominated. Violent, painful sex was wrong and socially taboo. At least that’s what her adopted parents had taught her. What society had taught her. Her biological parents hadn’t seemed to believe that and Michael’s parents had clearly taught him something different. What kind of family collected phallic statuary as heirlooms?

Kate sighed. There was no way she could shed her values and play domination games with a male like Michael. But she couldn’t deny that the memory of Michael aroused her to a stunning level of need. Her cunt clenched and ached. She desperately wanted Michael but there was no way she’d play submissive for any male. Was there?

The mere thought of being tied or whipped took her breath away. A heady rush of longing flooded her pelvis, confusing her. She was an independent woman. She always maintained control, never gave that advantage to a man. The dark side was wrong. She’d never indulge that desire. Repeating the refrain, she tried to convince herself that her new boss wasn’t turning her on as no man had ever done before. He’d barely touched her yet she couldn’t get him out of her head.

Kate tossed and turned. Erotic thoughts of Michael’s collection kept her awake. Were they usable? Mentally fantasizing about which statue she’d try first if she had the chance. What would it feel like, to have one of those things deep inside? She groaned. She’d been too long without sex, too long without a man. Masturbation and dildos were a cold substitute for a man’s warmth. Thinking of temperature led her thoughts to the materials in his collection. Were the dildos cold? Did he warm them before he used them? Why would any man use them? Wouldn’t the size of the dildos make a man feel inadequate?

Eileen had encouraged Kate to reject any of Michael’s advances but Kate admitted she longed to feel his hands on her breasts as his cock rammed deep into her. What was wrong with a few sexual games? She was a big girl now. She admitted her sexuality. She liked sex. Eileen grew up in a different generation. She didn’t understand.

Kate wanted to know what Michael did with his toys. Her vagina ached with emptiness. She masturbated but remained unsatisfied though she had an orgasm. Kate wanted Michael—on her terms of course. Sex was always on her terms. She’d avoid his edgier games but she was certainly interested in the man. Forget the games, they’d just have sex. Sex was good. Michael never left her head while she masturbated and fell asleep dreaming of phalluses.

* * * * *

For the next few days, Michael deliberately stayed far away from Kate as he fought his libido. It was beginning to look as though this job would be far more interesting than he'd originally thought. He anticipated the challenge of gentling Kate and gaining her willing cooperation. Michael needed Kate to surrender completely, and before he was done, she would. In the meantime, he had to tread carefully. He didn't want to scare her off.

He'd pushed too hard the other night. Kate's stunned response to his questions told him she was a novice and she didn't know about her heritage. Given her ignorance, he knew it was too soon to make a move even though the thought of her initiation nearly sent him over the edge.

Instead of pursuing Kate, he focused on restructuring the facility and forced most thoughts of Kate deep into the back of his mind. But she was always there. He couldn't dismiss her entirely. Late at night, thoughts of Kate possessed him and kept him awake. He didn't know how much longer he could resist her. How much longer could he ignore his nature?

He knew Kate was interested. He'd intercepted too many curious glances and her need called to him. She wanted him every bit as much as he wanted her. Forcing himself to be patient was hard. He stayed away from her. Only late at night did he bring her to the surface of his mind. He pictured the best way to heighten her arousal. He tormented himself by imagining the things they'd do together.

One night he abandoned any pretense of sleep and walked downstairs. He opened the cabinet in his living room and stroked a jade cock. It was his favorite piece. The cold stone had never failed to soothe his ferocious needs in the past. This time though it barely made a dent in his raging libido. How much longer could he last? If he lost control, Kate wouldn't survive the encounter and that was the last thing he wanted.

His thoughts were interrupted by the ringing of the phone. He picked it up and heard his father's voice. "Take her! Take her before you send the entire clan into frenzy!"

"Dad! This is a surprise."

"Forget the small talk. She's a mate! You must recognize that fact. Just take her!"

"You can feel her? In Sanctuary? I didn't think that was possible."

"We're not feeling her. We're feeling you. You're the one causing the disturbance in Sanctuary. Not even the elders can explain how that's happening. So take her!"

"She's not clan."

"The hell she isn't! If she causes this kind of storm in you she most certainly is clan. Why do you say she's not? Who is she?"

"Her name is Kate. Kate Logan."

"I don't know any Logan family."

"Logan is her adopted name. She has no idea about her ancestry."

"Adopted? How could that happen? No clan child would ever be left outside Sanctuary— Never mind, that is something to figure out later. In the meantime, you're responding to her. That means she's one of us. She has to be clan. Tell her about us and just take her."

"Dad, I'm moving in that direction but she's a novice. If I move too fast it will be rape, not seduction, and while part of me would enjoy that, I'm sure she wouldn't."

“How could she not know about her ancestry? I’ll do some research and see if I can find out more. In the meantime, Michael, the entire clan is feeling your need. If you can’t take her soon then you’d better visit and get a fix.”

“I’ll keep that in mind and I’ll work harder on keeping myself under control.”

“Good luck, son.”

“Thanks, Dad,” Michael hung up the phone and frowned.

Telling Kate about Sanctuary and everything it entailed would just scare her off. While he could drop hints, maybe it would be better if he showed just a part of his personality. His collection pointed to domination. It didn’t reveal the mental linking that could take place between them. Kate might more easily accept the pain side than the fact they’d eventually share their minds.

Michael was an intelligent man. Kate was an innocent. It shouldn’t be that hard to get close to her and convince her that they both wanted the same thing. He ran a hand through his hair. A few scenarios flitted through his head before he realized just how easy it would be to put her by his side. He smiled and went back to bed. This time he slept.

Chapter Four

Three days later, Kate got a summons to a meeting at five o'clock on a Friday afternoon—Friday of a holiday weekend. Kate sighed. She'd been looking forward to three days off. Pete had administrative call and Kate hadn't had a break in months. Unfortunately, a late meeting didn't bode well.

Kate walked into the executive suite, feeling naked without her lab coat. She'd left it in the department because of the bloodstains and her spare was in the laundry. The holiday had started early for some people and X-ray had been swamped by emergencies. Despite the fact that the command to appear annoyed her, and she missed her pockets, she wasn't going to show up in a dirty coat.

Eileen's empty desk reminded Kate that Eileen always took long holiday weekends. Kate had been so busy she'd forgotten that Eileen wouldn't be here. A vague sense of unease washed through Kate when she realized the entire floor was quiet and deserted. Eileen wasn't the only one who'd started the holiday early. It seemed as though everyone except Michael was gone.

Kate knocked on his door. He opened it and gestured her inside. Tension curled in her stomach. She heard Michael shut the door. Then he locked it with a distinctive click.

Kate turned to look at him, her eyebrows raised.

"Relax. This is a private conversation and I don't want to be disturbed."

Who would disturb them? Everyone was gone. Kate fought a sinking, vulnerable feeling. Was she going to be fired? Or encouraged to resign?

"Thanks for coming."

"No problem," Kate said. She ignored his roaming eyes despite the fact his gaze felt like a warm caress. "I'm always available."

"Not yet, but you will be," he said so softly that Kate nearly missed the comment and before she asked about it, Michael continued. "Pete is worried about you."

Stunned by the blunt statement, Kate remained silent.

He raised his eyebrows, waiting for a response.

Kate pulled herself together to say, "Do you have a problem with my work?"

"Your work is excellent."

"Then I don't see the problem."

"The problem is that Pete is underutilized. He could easily run the department. He wants to run the department."

"I'm aware of that. Do you want him running the department?" Kate struggled to keep her anger under control.

"If I do? What are you going to do about it?" he asked in a soft, unreadable voice.

"You're the boss, but if you want Pete in charge, where does that leave me?"

He waited.

"I agree that Pete is good and that he is underutilized, but I like my job and have no intentions of just handing it to him."

"Then he'll leave and I really don't want him to do that."

Kate knew she should denigrate Pete. She should undermine his position as he'd done to her. She didn't want to sink to that level though. She wouldn't make herself look better by stepping on someone else, even Pete. Kate sighed. "Pete is very capable and you're right, we don't want to lose him. Do you want me to leave?" Kate asked. The unexpected direction of the conversation left her too startled to be diplomatic.

"No. I most certainly don't want you to leave. You're both too capable to lose."

"Then what do you suggest?" Kate fought to stay calm. She was furious that Pete had obviously been talking to Michael.

"I'm not suggesting, I'm telling. Pete is going to take over the department. He's a very happy man right now."

Shock coursed through Kate. She'd joked about losing her job but she'd never expected it to happen. "Am I being fired?" she asked, unable to keep the tremor out of her voice. She wanted him to make it explicit.

Michael smiled. "No, you misunderstand. I want to promote you. I want you to take a position as my assistant. Your reports are tight and concise. Your analyses are logical and sound. I want your help keeping this place together."

Michael perched on the edge of the desk. He loomed over her, reminding her of his size and power.

"It's the perfect solution, given that both you and Pete are underutilized. Besides," he continued, "you're one of the few people here who doesn't seem to be afraid of me." He paused while he tilted his head as if examining an interesting specimen. "Why is that?" he asked softly. "Why aren't you afraid of me?"

"Should I be afraid?" Kate countered.

"Only if you are afraid of facing a challenge."

Kate remembered Eileen's warning and wondered what kind of challenge he had in mind. Thrilled, but wary, she didn't reply.

Michael suddenly stood.

Kate couldn't help noticing the very large bulge in his pants. *Stop it. Don't get distracted*, she told herself.

Michael walked behind his desk, picked up a piece of paper and handed it to her. "This is the job description. The position will be very good for your career. It will give you experience in the executive suite and more familiarity with the other departments," he said.

"This is unexpected," Kate said.

"Think about it over the weekend," he said. "Give me your answer Tuesday morning. Remember, it will be very good for your career and it comes with a generous raise."

Kate spent the weekend trying to relax but her thoughts whirled and gave her no peace. Michael, not the job offer, occupied her mind. He was firmly entrenched in her head. She thought about his collection. She thought about his eyes. She thought about his scent. She thought about his size. She thought about his power.

She warred with herself, asking why he'd so easily taken over her thoughts. She'd never before felt such a constant lust. How could she want this man? He was everything she rejected in men. She'd worked hard to bury the memories of her biological father's cruelty.

The memories rarely surfaced now. How could she even think about working so close to an alpha male?

Kate wanted to make him lose control but at the same time, she couldn't help wondering what it would be like to give him complete control of her. Usually she could take or leave any man. No one had ever threatened her peace of mind the way Michael did and she simply wasn't sure how to counter his effect. Complicating her emotions was the fact she wasn't sure she wanted to resist him. She couldn't remember ever being so excited and aroused.

She wondered what it would feel like to be dominated by such a man. Kate knew he was a chest-beating male even though she hadn't seen much evidence of that lately. She knew it lurked just under the surface, covered by a thin veneer of civilization. Why then did he fascinate her? Yes he was a prime example of masculinity but overt masculinity was something she typically avoided. Didn't she? Yes, she did. She preferred men who were in touch with their emotions—men she could...manage.

Yet Kate wanted to see where a relationship with Michael could lead. Would he make a pass at her? Did she really want him to? Yes. If he didn't make a pass soon, she would. Otherwise she'd always wonder what they could have had. Kate simply wanted an amusing and arousing fling. It didn't matter that he was the boss. She could keep her heart in check. She'd been doing it for years. Besides the novelty of Michael would wear off once they worked together and she saw him every day. So Kate went to work on Tuesday and agreed to work for him.

Kate wasn't prepared for the fact that Michael liked touching. A gentle hand on the back of her neck eased her tension. A hand on her arm guided her through doors. He made fleeting contact with her breasts. His erection teased her back when he stood close behind her. He never once took a wrong step. Most men grabbed—he didn't. Most men didn't listen—he did. His ability to pay attention, to focus his total attention on Kate to the exclusion of everything else, was a heady ego trip. He seemed to be ever present, orchestrating every movement. Softly, with subtle touches, he aroused Kate to fever pitch. But he didn't make an obvious pass. By the end of the first week Kate was ready to scream with frustration.

The next week Kate took the initiative. She leaned into him. She reached out to touch him. She made excuses to lean over him, pointing out things on reports. Kate needed him in a way she'd never experienced. He inflamed her senses. Kate could feel his pleasure as she moved toward him. Subtle rewards, never talked about, never examined, as she fell deeper and deeper under his spell.

Her friends worried though.

Three weeks after being promoted, Janet entered Kate's office like a whirlwind.

"Kate, you don't seem to realize what he's doing to you," exclaimed Janet, worry and frustration lining her face.

"Janet, he's not doing anything!" Kate exclaimed. "I know I haven't seen much of you lately but that is nothing new. Our relationship has always been sporadic since you moved to nights."

"No, no, no, even Eileen says my messages aren't getting through. Don't you know that he vets all your phone calls and all your mail? Even your email routes through his first?"

"What are you talking about? I get my messages."

"Ask Eileen if you don't believe me. I've left four voicemails since you started this position. Have you gotten any of them?" Janet asked.

Kate looked at her with a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach. Was she right? Was Michael really intercepting all her communications? Why would he intercept her messages?

A light knock at the door interrupted Kate's processing. She looked up to see Michael standing there. He didn't look happy. Tension radiated off him in waves and Kate thought it was a good thing his eyes weren't actually lasers or Janet might have been fried.

"Janet," he said softly, "don't you have work to do? I know Kate does."

Janet threw Kate a terrified glance as she hurried out of the room.

"Is it true? Are you intercepting my messages?"

Michael replied by closing and locking the door. He leaned back and stared at her.

Kate met his glance and stayed silent too.

"Yes," he said finally. "If you check with Eileen, you'll find that it is not just your messages I intercept. I'm doing the same thing to every department head and supervisor. The feds aren't sure if the last manager was the only one involved in the fraud. They asked me to keep track of communications from anyone who might have been involved."

"So Janet's messages didn't get through because?"

"Because you know personal communication on office equipment isn't allowed," he answered smoothly. "Have you checked your home answering machine lately?"

Kate sighed. She hadn't spent much time at home lately and she'd told him two days ago her answering machine was broken.

He smiled and shrugged. "Simple answers," he said on his way out the door.

Kate sat still for a moment and then went into the outer office.

"Is it true? Does he really go through all communications?"

Eileen looked grim. "Every piece. Not only does he go through it, he deletes anything not job related. It is in the policy book that he has the right to do that. We just aren't used to anyone following through."

"If Janet calls again, would you tell her everything is okay, that I'm just really busy."

"I wish I could," replied Eileen, "but he told me not to take any personal messages." She shrugged helplessly. "I know this is a little bizarre but you know what a good boss he is in every other way. I've never enjoyed working as much as I do working for him. But I still think he's targeting you. Maybe another job..."

"I think you're wrong," Kate stated before turning and walking back to her office.

She couldn't imagine the possibility of not seeing Michael anymore. Michael was a wonderful boss. He was patient. He explained. He understood human weaknesses. He rewarded good work. He was just great. Besides Kate was in lust. *Eileen worries over nothing*, she told herself though she couldn't shake the feeling of danger. Forbidding and dark like a coming storm, the feeling seemed nearly alive and it weighed her down. But since she couldn't pinpoint the source, she told herself there was no logical reason to feel danger.

Michael wanted Kate. He didn't know how much longer he could wait to advance to the next stage. He told himself she wasn't quite ready though his seduction had been agonizingly slow. He'd stopped all the visions so she wouldn't be scared off. She wasn't quite desperate enough to accept his customary practices. He knew she was ready for sex but not his brand of sex. He knew he had to wait but the waiting was driving him crazy. He longed to cup her tight butt and spread it wide for his entry. He clenched his jaw. She wasn't ready. If he moved too soon, he'd lose her.

He cursed his impatience. He felt the clan working hard to help him calm his raging needs. He should go visit but he knew no one could substitute for Kate. She was his mate. He needed her and he needed her soon.

* * * * *

Kate saw Michael a lot during the next week. Every meeting, every trip through the hallway, he seemed to be everywhere. At times during meetings, she'd look up to find his eyes on her like a physical caress.

Michael continued throwing her intellectual challenges. He forced her to get better. He pushed her to levels she'd never reached before. She was so busy thinking about his intellectual demands that his emotional demands slipped past all her defenses. He kept her occupied.

His critiques were never harsh. Rather he'd ask softly, "Is this the best you can do?" then sigh in acceptance if she truly believed she could do no better. And rarely, she'd get the quick, breathtaking smile of approval. Kate found herself living for that smile.

Her days became longer so gradually she didn't realize that he was slowly filling almost every waking moment with work. Work with him. He became her existence until she was spending twelve to fourteen hours a day with him. All the clues and hints and warnings were there. Kate simply refused to think about it.

The following week was again hectic. Hospital inspectors came to verify their certification. From six in the morning to midnight Michael and Kate scrambled. They found records for the inspectors. They accompanied the inspectors on tours and generally rushed to meet ever-changing needs.

Finally, the inspectors left at five on Friday. Michael asked Kate out to dinner to celebrate passing re-inspection.

She barely hesitated before saying yes. They'd worked hard and she'd celebrated other work accomplishments with co-workers.

"I'll drive," he offered.

Twenty minutes later, Michael drove through a gate, up a short drive and pulled up before a two-story mansion. A wide expanse of lawn separated the house from its neighbors.

Kate looked at him expectantly. "There's a restaurant here?"

"No. If you don't mind, I'd like to change," he said.

"This is your place? It's impressive."

"Actually, it's the family place. I just use it."

"Is your family home?"

Michael laughed. "Not at the moment. You don't mind if we stop here, do you?"

"No. It's fine," Kate said as she pushed aside her unease. She wouldn't have come with him if she'd known they were going to stop at his house. But it seemed churlish to refuse to go in when they were already here.

Michael led the way into a tastefully furnished house. "Make yourself comfortable. The bar is over there," he pointed to the far wall of the living room. "Feel free to get a drink. I'll be back in a few moments," he said as he went down the hallway.

Kate entered the living room and stopped. One wall contained more of Michael's collection. These pieces were not the tame ones found at work though. These pieces were barbaric. She shoved aside the warmth collecting in her pelvis and ignored the thrill of excitement that filled her nipples.

The statuary in Michael's home celebrated not only bondage but domination in all its varied forms. One piece showed a woman bound, on her hands and knees while next to her stood a man with a raised whip. Blood red marks on the woman's back made the scene vivid and unforgettable.

Many pieces showed women on their knees, mouths filled with cocks. Typically, the men's hands held the women's heads in position. Anal sex was not ignored either, always with the woman in the submissive position. Sometimes with her hair wrapped around the man's fist, other times his hand held her head down. Always, the woman was controlled.

Women knelt, kissing the feet of the men before them. One piece showed a woman stretched out on a table, with her legs hanging off the sides. The man's entire hand and forearm was in her vagina, her lower abdomen enlarged by its presence. Other women lay spread-eagled, arms and legs extended in a position of exposure. Sometimes ropes bound the women. Two pieces had men holding female extremities. A thin red line trailed from one woman's vagina. Another showed blood from both the rectum and vagina.

Collars around the women's throats were common, as were piercings of every imaginable part and some not so imaginable. The women's expressions varied. Some women had an ecstatic facial expression, as if they'd found heaven. It was obvious that they enjoyed their vulnerability. Some faces showed resignation. None of the women looked horrified by their position. Similarly, some of the men's expressions showed tenderness, even love, as they inflicted horrendous pain on their partners.

How can anyone enjoy such cruelty? she thought, even as she wondered what it would be like to surrender all control. Kate didn't think she could ever leave herself so vulnerable, especially after she'd witnessed her mother's subjugation.

"Do you like this part of my collection better?"

Kate jumped. She hadn't heard him enter the room. How did he do that? She kept up her brave front as she said, "It's barbaric!" Her face flushed, knowing that revulsion hadn't been her only response.

"Yes, that's a common feeling, but I hoped you might be willing to experiment," he said, implying that if she felt so inclined, he'd be happy to oblige. He moved close to her, close enough that his aftershave enveloped her in warm musk.

"I am attracted to you," he said holding her eyes. "But I believe in making my preferences known, especially since they aren't common."

Chapter Five

When Kate didn't speak he continued, "There are women who enjoy being dominated, not only enjoy it, but thrive under domination, only becoming sexually fulfilled if a man is in control, possessing and owning them. I want those women. I need those women. I'm only satisfied by domination," Michael's eyes seemed to pierce Kate's defenses. "I know we work together and I'm your boss so that creates other problems but if you are interested in experimenting, we could work something out. Are you interested?" he asked, his soft voice contrasting with the hard gleam in his eyes.

"No! That's rape," Kate said, gesturing toward his collection.

"Rape occurs when a woman does not consent. That's submission," he stated emphatically.

"What's the difference?" Kate asked before she could stop herself.

He smiled, "Submission occurs with a woman's permission. Not only does she want to submit, she craves it and needs it. She is never really satisfied without the domination of a strong man. It is an integral part of her persona. Haven't you ever felt the need to be dominated? Are you interested in exploring that part of your sexuality?"

"I saw my mother hurt like that and I don't believe any woman would willingly choose that kind of pain and humiliation. I *know* I'm not interested."

"Your mother? Your biological mother?"

"I don't want to talk about my family," Kate said, ignoring a wave of regret. Submission made a woman a sex object rather than a willing partner. Kate couldn't, she wouldn't ignore all her beliefs for a fling with any man. Yet she was curious and felt comfortable enough to ask her questions. "You could have nearly any female you want. Why do you prefer a type of sex that is not socially acceptable? Why do you want to subjugate a woman?"

"There are many societies, Kate. Sexual exploration of all kinds, including domination, is valued in my culture. I come from a long line of strong males. It's bred into me. In our enclave in the mountains, this type of sex is normal. The women crave submission and pain every bit as much as the males crave to dominate. It's our heritage."

"That sounds like a cult. I think it's time we leave." She turned toward the door. Michael reached out and put a hand on her arm, stopping her movement.

"It's not a cult. It's biological." Michael shrugged. "I learned at an early age who I am and what I like. I like subjugating women. I don't do vanilla sex. I'll go without if I'm between females who can handle my needs." Michael's gaze held Kate pinned.

Michael closed his eyes and shook his head. He let her go and paced the room. "During sex, I make the rules. I don't have to worry about playing fair or containing my energies in the sense that sex is a physical battle. I can only be free when I am dominating a woman because I know at some point I will be able to unleash all my energies and my woman will thrive under my power. I can't separate mind and body. They are one and I make sure my women know that and feel that integration that your culture ignores." He turned and pinned her again. "Does any of this make sense to you?"

Kate met his gaze. Stunned by his passion, she realized she'd never thought of what it meant to be a male in this culture—a feminist culture that proclaimed nurturing, communication and cooperation as religious truths. It was a culture that discounted the nature of males.

Before Kate could respond, he continued. “When I see a woman tied to my bed, I feel powerful. That’s my reality. When I hear a woman moaning and screaming and pleading with me to satisfy her, I feel powerful. In those moments, the energies that wash through me are channeled and controlled. I never feel out of control. The woman is though. She can’t stop her emotions from breaking free and all her thoughts are focused on her body and what I’m doing. Kate, have you ever surrendered completely?” he asked in a whisper.

Kate closed her eyes and struggled to remain standing. Her knees were weak and her breath short. She didn’t want to answer his question. She wanted to tell him she never gave up control. She knew he could take her to a place where her every action would be a response to his and that place frightened her. She didn’t rely on any man enough to go there. Did she? Kate felt him move in front of her. She felt his hand on her face—a light touch, just barely a whispered graze.

“Kate, do you want to test your limits?”

Kate kept her eyes closed, as if she could close him out of her mind by the simple action.

“Kate, look at me,” he said.

Kate shook her head, still trying to escape his words.

His finger tilted her chin.

She opened her eyes just as his lips descended. Hard, warm and gentle lips lightly pressed hers. Kate melted and opened her mouth to deepen the kiss. He pulled back. She couldn’t stop the moan that escaped.

“I already told you, I don’t do vanilla sex, Kate. Pleasure is only one component of what you’re capable of feeling. Why ignore the other half of your sensory potential? Sex is on my terms or not at all.”

“But you want me.”

“Oh yes, I want you very much...but on my terms, not yours.”

“Your games look far too scary for me.”

“Don’t you trust me?”

Kate took a deep breath, fighting to regain her equilibrium. “I don’t trust any man that much.”

Michael smiled a little and shrugged. “Think about what I’ve said. I’m sorry you aren’t interested in testing your limits tonight. Let’s go to dinner.”

Michael hid his disappointment. He’d never met a woman quite like Kate. The women in his clan met his advances with joyful submission. Despite being feminine and curvy, Kate was also independent and focused. She wasn’t compliant and cooperative.

Outside the clan, Michael’s looks and manner meant that he rarely had to pursue a woman for very long before she surrendered to him. Indeed, he often had to fight off advances. He wasn’t into casual sex. His needs were too dark to display them before just anyone. He’d never had to chase before. Normally he accepted any woman’s emphatic declaration that she didn’t want pain but he knew Kate was lying to herself. He craved her submission in the way that only happened with clan women.

He’d watched Kate’s face and eyes as she’d explored his collection. It aroused her. The thought of a strong Dominant aroused her. She wasn’t as put off by the thought of pain as she

claimed. She'd thrive under his control. Clearly though, she wasn't just going to cave, but neither was he.

He was tempted by her offer to just fuck her. He knew the sex would be good—physically. Physicality wasn't enough for him though. He wanted her mind. He wanted her every thought and desire centered on him. He knew he tended to be self-centered and arrogant. No woman had made him itch and ache the way Kate did.

At least she had no awareness of her effect on him. If she knew how close to the edge he was, she'd probably force the issue. Regular sex wouldn't satisfy him for long. They'd have a quick fuck and be done. That wasn't what he wanted. He wanted a long-term relationship—a long-term Dominant/submissive relationship with his mate. A relationship where he felt everything happening to her even as she experienced his body as if it were her own. He wanted her living with him and linked to him in every way.

The stunt in the parking garage on the first day they'd met had nearly sent him over the edge. He'd taken his anger out on George. He couldn't afford to give in to his need for Kate. He walked a fine line between coercion and encouragement. He wanted women who accepted and liked his need for control. Women who would submit to his dark desires because theirs were the same.

When he'd entered puberty his father had explained their heritage. Accepted sexual practices weren't necessarily enough to create the telepathic link that was vital to their survival. The full exploration of sensation was inherent in their sexual practices. People without their ancestry could never understand that sex without both pain and pleasure would be like an intravenous feeding—no taste or texture.

When he'd left the clan, his father had warned him that the women he met might satisfy him for a few weeks but that no relationship would last. His father had been right.

To survive outside Sanctuary, Michael had joined a couple of bondage and Domination clubs. They taught him his desires were real and he was only truly satisfied when exercising dominion over a woman. Unfortunately, the club's rules and regulations—negotiating scenes and outlining everything—left him craving more. He knew the more was the mental link that could be forged with a mate. A link that would allow him to feel her pain, to feel her needs and limits.

The clubs were too tame for him. Besides, he'd just get a scene warmed up nicely when it ended. He wanted—no, he needed—long-term commitment. The longest he'd kept a woman had been a week. He wanted more and he knew Kate was just the woman to provide him with what he craved. She just didn't know it yet.

As a master strategist, he was used to long-term planning. He just needed to bring his skills to bear on Kate. He needed to proceed slowly but he could up the stakes and push a little harder. She was hesitating and wavering. She needed a few more nudges. He could and would rein in his desires until he could make a quick trip to the clan enclave. He needed to find evidence of Kate's ancestry.

His visit to the clan enclave wouldn't include physical sex. Kate was his mate, he didn't want anyone else. The visit would allow him to mentally ride the thoughts and feelings of others in Sanctuary. It would feel like a release. It would be enough to tide him over until he could fully mate with Kate. But before he left he'd make sure Kate would miss him.

* * * * *

Michael touched Kate often. He held her arm when they walked down hallways. He guided her through doorways and managed to brush her breasts as he held doors. He always

guided her to a chair. He touched her hand as he gave her coffee. He crowded her as they looked for files. He always stood in her personal space until finally she simply grew accustomed to his presence. He wore down her control.

She accepted his touch and came to expect him always to be near. At no point did he ever make a gesture or touch that was over the line. Every move was explainable. His presence drove her crazy.

She could smell his heady, arousing cedar scent. It enveloped her whenever he was near. She got so she could smell him before she even knew he was close. Kate could feel him. Kate could see him. Much as she longed to touch him, she resisted. She didn't dare touch him. She was afraid she'd beg if she did. Michael aroused her and she wanted him but thoughts of his preferences held her back.

At home, alone at night, she masturbated. She pretended Michael's warmth filled her rather than a cold dildo. Kate couldn't stop thinking about sex, specifically sex with Michael. She debated calling an old boyfriend. It had been months since she'd had sex with a man. She wanted sex. She needed sex. She needed Michael. Another man just wouldn't satisfy her.

One day Michael asked, "Have you changed your mind yet?"

Kate stared at him helplessly and her cunt tightened in arousal. She countered, "How about just regular sex?"

He just smiled and said, "You'd be bored."

Kate took that to mean that he'd be bored. She sighed and went back to work, trying to push her arousal down into a forgettable location.

Just when she thought she'd explode, Michael went out of town.

He told her he had some family business to take care of. In some ways it was a relief to be away from him, yet she missed him and she missed the tension between them.

A week later, Michael came back. Kate wanted to run to him and hug him. He was becoming a very important part of her life despite the fact she rarely saw him outside work.

Michael seemed glad to see Kate too. He told her to come to his office. He had a surprise for her. When she entered his office, he sat her in a chair and told her about his trip. Then he said, "I bought you a present."

"A present? For me?" Kate was startled. Despite the fact they both knew they could be intimate if things were different, Kate truly believed he wasn't going to make a move on her. Somehow the idea of a present made it seem as though they were in the courting stage of a relationship—an impossible relationship given their different perspectives on sex.

"Yes, for you," he said as he handed Kate a silver package—weighty and expensively wrapped. When she started to open it, he stayed her hand, "No, open it at home."

Kate raised an eyebrow.

"This is part of your education," he said. "You'll enjoy it more if there are no witnesses, especially me."

Kate rushed home, curious about the present, unable to wait to open it. As the wrapping came undone, the first thing she saw was the gilded edges of the book. *An expensive present*, she thought as the leather binding peeked out of the silver paper. Then she read the title and froze.

Boldly embossed into the leather were the words, *The Joy of Submission*.

Startled, Kate dropped the book. It opened to a picture of a woman bent over something resembling an altar. Chains ran from the floor to her arms and legs. Her hair hung free and reached the floor. Whip marks covered her back. A man stood behind her, his hand held a

gigantic curved dildo as large as the woman's arm. The entire scene painted an erotic image of what he could do with her in that position, with that weapon in his hand. Kate's sharp arousal nearly made her pass out from excitement.

She took a quick breath and turned the page, imagining that the next photo would show what happened. It didn't. Instead, the next page had a different image. This time the woman was on her knees. Her arms bound behind her back caused her breasts to thrust out, defying gravity. At the same time that her posture proclaimed her pride, her head hung down. Three men were next to her. One man held pincers near her extended nipple. One man held a glowing brand aimed at her stomach. The third man was shaving her pubic hair. Kate couldn't breathe.

She shut the book and dropped it on the floor, closed this time. She shut her eyes but the images remained. She slowly stood. Her knees weak, she took a moment to gain her balance and then gingerly stepped over the book as if it could suddenly come alive and chain her.

She went into the bathroom. Still unsteady, she undressed and took a shower. She finished her after-work routine and left the book lying in the living room. She knew she should move it, but she simply didn't want to touch it.

He had no right to give her such a gift but as she tried to sleep, the ache in her pelvis demanded attention. She couldn't satisfy herself. She tried her hand. She tried her dildo. She tried a vibrator and finally had an orgasm. Yet she still felt fevered and unsatisfied.

Finally, she surrendered. She got up and grabbed the book. She opened the cover and saw the inscription Michael had written. *You might find page fifty-four interesting. I know who you are and someday you will realize you want to meet my terms. I anticipate that day.*

The inscription promised and threatened at the same time. She shuddered, thinking about his collection. She didn't think she would ever reach the point of allowing him the freedom he demanded. She could resist his gentle, insistent seduction. To do otherwise was unthinkable, but would it hurt just to look?

Kate hesitated, fingers trembling, then she turned to page fifty-four and gasped. It was a picture of her. She looked closer and realized the background and the garments indicated an earlier age. And could it be? Yes! The woman was wearing Kate's necklace. The necklace had been found in the car wreck. The stolen car had contained no other clues to Kate's ancestry. Was it possible? Was this woman related to her? Did Michael know her family? She shoved aside the disturbing thought that her relative might be part of the mysterious clan to which Michael occasionally referred.

Kate frowned as she turned to the table of contents and realized that the book detailed every aberrant sexual act she could think of, as well as a few she'd never imagined. She flipped the pages. Not only did the book contain pictures, it contained detailed descriptions as well.

How dare he? She knew that all she had to do was destroy the book yet was somehow unable to let it go. She felt her cunt clench at the thought of being in some of the positions depicted in the book. She insisted to herself that she did still have control even though she was no longer sure she wanted it.

The book haunted her that night. Had it always been like that? Had there always been a blending of violence and sex? Kate understood that rape was an act of violence, not sex. Rape was pure masculine domination with no thought for the woman. It was not sex. It was violence. Michael did not want rape. He wanted cooperation.

Why did she find the book and his statues so erotic? They promised adrenaline rushing through her body, turning off her head. They promised feeling without any social restrictions boxing her into a lifeless corner. Kate admitted she found the concept more and more

seductive. How often did she just feel? How often did she turn her mind off? How often did she forget to worry about how others saw her? How often did she stop the internal dialogue that constantly monitored her every action, analyzing and evaluating?

Michael promised she wouldn't worry about that when she was with him. She didn't like the thought of pain but increasingly she found Michael's promise seductive and nearly irresistible. What would happen during sex if he actually could turn off her thoughts? If for once in her life she could just feel and give expression to those feelings? She wanted to know.

Chapter Six

Kate spent Saturday unsuccessfully trying to get erotic thoughts of Michael out of her head. She imagined what Michael would do to her. She dreamed of his lips on hers. She dreamed of his hands holding her down. She dreamed of surrender and the pleasures it would bring. She ached for his hard touch.

She finally forced herself out of bed on Sunday afternoon. She was just trying to decide whether to add more hot water to her bath when the doorbell rang. She wanted to ignore the summons but the person on the other side of the door started knocking so she climbed out of the bath and pulled on a robe.

"Just a minute," she shouted as she started toward the entryway. She looked through the peephole then cracked open the door. She didn't take off the security chain.

"We need to talk," Michael said, his voice low, husky and insistent.

"About what?" She was not at all happy that the sound of his voice curled through her abdomen and caused warmth to gather low in her pelvis.

"About your family," he growled. "Let me in."

Kate debated refusing his order but she wanted to know why that woman looked like her and why she was wearing Kate's necklace. "Let me take the chain off," she said. She closed the door and did so. She stood behind the door as she opened it to let him enter her apartment.

Kate clutched the robe closed, nervous even though she knew she was perfectly decent. She waved toward the living room and said, "Make yourself comfortable while I get dressed."

He blocked her path. "Don't bother, I want you naked."

Kate stared at him, shocked by his blatant statement. Feeling a bit like Alice, she stammered, "What—"

"I've waited months to make you mine. That's more than I've ever had to wait before. I'm through waiting," he said as he reached out, grabbed the collar on her robe and pulled her close. "You know you want me. With your ancestry you have no choice," he whispered.

She put her hands on his chest and pushed. "Wait a minute. I'll get dressed and then we can discuss this."

"There is nothing to discuss. You know you want me," he said. "Stop fighting me," he demanded as he captured her head. "Let me satisfy you."

Michael gently nudged her lips open and plundered her mouth with his tongue. Kate enjoyed kissing but she'd never been kissed quite like this, as if she were a treasure to be savored at the same time ruthless ownership was declared. Michael's arms imprisoned her body, pressing her tightly against him.

Kate felt his arousal. She felt his blatant physical strength. She felt her control slipping as Michael's tongue plundered her mouth and one hand pressed her ass forward as he ground his cock into her pelvis.

Instead of surrendering Kate pushed against his chest.

He let her go. "Why are you still fighting? We both know you want me."

Kate backed away from Michael's intensity. "Not like this."

"Anyway I choose. I claimed you as my woman the first time I saw you. I told you I was attracted to you. You know the sexual tension between us has been building since the first time we met."

"But no one owns anyone anymore," Kate stammered as she thought back to that first night. She'd assumed he was just using that expression to back off the unruly patient. She'd had no idea he'd meant every word.

He laughed—a full-throated expression of enjoyment. "For someone as experienced as you, you really are naive and innocent," he said while stalking around her living room, examining her book and video collections. "No pornography?" He shrugged and turned back to her. "Tell me," he said, his voice soft, "did you like my present? Where did you hide it?"

Kate glared at him. "You had no right to give me something like that!"

"I know your sexual experience is limited. I wanted to remedy that deficiency." He walked toward her. "I already know you haven't been fisted. What about bondage? Domination? Submission? Anal sex? Oral sex?" he fired a rapid series of questions at her.

She felt her face flame. Even oral sex had left her cold. Indeed, until he started the list she hadn't realized just how she'd limited her explorations. She liked to think she was experienced. In Michael's world, she was a novice.

"Have you at least gotten out of the missionary position?"

Kate was too stunned to answer him. Standing was an effort. His gift and his statuary collection had made her realize how inadequate her sexual experiences were. Still, to have him bluntly state what she'd been missing embarrassed her at the same time it set her on fire.

"In many ways you're still a virgin." He smiled as he glided behind her. His scent enveloped her as he gently circled her waist with his arms. He guided her back against him. She could feel his penis, large and throbbing, against her back. He moved a hand to caress her cheek and he whispered in her ear. "Good, I like that you don't know your own body, that you won't be able to fight me because I'll blow all your senses."

"Get out!" she yelled, upset that he might be right. She tried to move away from him but he held her tight.

"You think you are sexually liberated. You take your pleasure where you find it. But I bet you never, ever, give up control and let your partner lead. You really don't know what you want. You only know what society tells you is right. Kate, you belong to a different society, one where our needs aren't ignored."

His voice slithered into her chest, echoing deep and mesmerizing her.

"How many real men have you met?" He licked her earlobe.

She shivered as a thrill went down her back. She struggled not to arch against him as her knees threatened to buckle. Need expanded her nipples and she longed for his touch. Yet she couldn't ask, not without losing herself. She couldn't want pain, could she? Anger replaced lust or lust fueled her. She wasn't certain. Neither was she sure with whom she was angry. Regardless, she tried to kick him but he was too fast.

Suddenly, she was on the floor, her wrists shackled over her head, trapped by one large hand. His other slipped beneath her robe and wandered freely over her body—everywhere except her nipples. He crushed his torso down on her. Kate struggled to breathe. She gazed at him, stunned by his physicality.

None of the men she'd played with in the past had ever really let her feel their full strength. Michael didn't hesitate. Kate found herself facing, for the first time ever, a man who was not afraid to use his strength. He held her helpless.

Kate should have been afraid. Instead, she found herself helplessly turned on by his strength. Kate groaned and halfheartedly struggled to free her hands but he held her easily. She didn't want to admit it to him—hell, she didn't want to admit it to herself—but the fact that she couldn't move, that she couldn't fight, that she could barely breathe, that he wasn't hurting her, just holding her still, was driving her crazy.

"Surrender," he said softly. "You know you want me. You know you want to feel what my toys can do. You know you want to feel my fist deep in your vagina, creating sensations you thought were impossible. You know you want to surrender to my physical strength. You know—"

"Stop it!" Kate whispered. "Get out! Get out! Get out!" she repeated breathlessly.

He laughed and Kate wanted to tear out his eyes.

"It's not me you're angry with," he whispered. "It's yourself because your body wants all the sensations I can give you if we can only turn off your mind. Believe me when I say I am quite capable of turning off your mind but I won't do it until you give me permission. Give me permission," he murmured. "Say it. Say you surrender," he said as he rose a little, pushed aside the neckline of her robe and flicked one of her nipples.

"No!" Kate screamed, no longer able to think, gripped by a clenching wave of lust. How could one movement of his fingers send her so deeply into arousal?

He waited until she lay still, exhausted by the intensity and violence of her lust, then he murmured, "Surrender."

"Forget surrender," she gasped and countered, "let's just have sex."

"We could do that but then you'd miss out on one of life's greatest experiences. Giving up all control is a powerful aphrodisiac," Michael claimed.

Kate shook her head, "Surrender isn't necessary."

"It is for me. Tell me you surrender." He reached down and slipped one finger into her slit. Kate tried to move her clit against his hand but he stayed just out of reach. The one finger in her cunt wasn't nearly enough stimulation, she wanted more.

"Have you ever wondered how many orgasms you can have before you lose consciousness?"

"Right now, I'd be happy with one," she retorted.

"Then give in. Most women don't find my attentions disagreeable," he said. "Why are you still fighting me?"

Imprisoned by his body, shaken by the intensity of his assault, Kate was disturbed that he could arouse her with a mere touch.

Part of Kate was excited beyond caring. Yes, he was strong. Yes she wanted to know what he could do. Yes she wanted to be in his power. Yes she wanted him to force her surrender. Yet even as her body surrendered to his will, she said, "Get out!"

Michael simply laughed and moved off her.

She felt a wave of disappointment as he stood and pulled her to her feet. Her knees trembled. Her whole body shook. Was he really leaving? Did she want him to leave?

He pulled her back into his arms.

Kate sighed, part of her delighted and excited that he wasn't yet done.

He gently moved his lips over hers, softly comforting her. By the time he intensified the kiss and she recognized his intent to conquer, he had imprisoned her in his arms.

Unlike most men, he didn't try to hold back his physical strength or mask it in any way. He was immovable and all encompassing.

Kate couldn't escape.

He drew back a little.

She moaned as he ended the kiss.

Then his finger was between her lips.

Kate tried to draw back but he held her firmly pressed against his length. His finger worked its way between her lips and entered her mouth like an advance scout checking defenses. Meanwhile, his lips played along her cheek and at the corner of her lips.

His finger was hard and demanding as he explored her mouth. She couldn't stop herself. She licked the intruder. His finger and her tongue danced as he continued his explorations. Then he exerted downward pressure and forced open her mouth for his.

He removed his finger. His hard lips descended on her mouth and his tongue invaded. He took her air. Kate's knees melted.

Michael swept her into his arms as faintness overcame her and she dissolved in Michael's physicality. No man had ever picked her up before. The sensation of being carried by a strong man overwhelmed any remaining trace of resistance.

Michael's mouth never left hers as he unerringly made his way to her bedroom.

How does he know which door? Aren't I too heavy for him? What will he do next? The random thoughts raced through Kate's head. She needed a moment to catch her breath but he didn't give her that moment.

He laid her on the bed and then he covered her with his body. Still never leaving her mouth alone, he caressed her face as his lower body pressed against her pelvis and held her immobile. She felt his erection—his very large and hard erection. One hand moved across her cheek then down her neck, pausing briefly against her racing pulse. He moved along the neckline of her robe, parting it as he went, giving his hands access to her nipples, now peaked and anxiously awaiting his attention. Not only had he conquered, he'd seduced her cooperation.

He'd gained the loyalty of her body. Her mind said *fight!* Maintain some semblance of dignity in defeat. Her body said *why?* She whimpered and moaned. Again, he avoided touching her nipples although he was close, so close, when suddenly he stopped.

He gently caressed and nibbled her lower lip then pulled away from her. Fixing her with an implacable stare, he asked, "Should I stop?"

"You bastard!" she exploded, with no thought as to future employment.

He smiled. "I won't continue unless you tell me it is okay, that this is what you want. That you agree to sex on my terms." His gaze wandered over her nipples like a caress.

Kate knew the kind of sex he wanted and struggled to pull her thoughts together. She should say no. She tried to say no as she met his eyes. She could see the darkness just under the surface. She could feel his thin veneer of restraint. She could feel his power—power that depended upon her submission. She didn't want to say yes. Her mind hung back when her body's desires were clear. It frightened her that her body was his ally—so easily, so fast. Too much, too fast. "No," she moaned. "Go away."

Michael laughed. "Oh, but I didn't say I'd leave, just that I would stop...and I have."

It hit her then. It didn't matter if she said no. Her body betrayed her and he was in control. Her awareness must have shone in her eyes.

"Continued resistance will just prolong your surrender. You know that. You want me. You will surrender to me...eventually."

Kate found it difficult to breathe as his torso crushed down on her. Yet her body wanted this. Her body wanted him to take her violently, with no discussion. Her mind screamed foul. She was horrified that dominance could excite her. She was aroused and she liked it—no, she loved it—and she was starting to crave his dominance.

“I won’t succumb.” Kate didn’t expect him to give up but when he stood, it nearly undid her. His withdrawal was devastating.

Gazing down on Kate with something akin to respect lurking in his eyes, he said, “Wage war with yourself. You know where to find me when you are ready to explore your hidden depths. Let the games continue.”

“Wait! Tell me why that woman looks like me! Why is she wearing my necklace?” She waved toward the book on the nightstand.

He smiled. “You’re not ready yet,” he said before he turned and left.

Kate really hadn’t expected him to leave. She wanted him back and cursed her weakness. She lay paralyzed on the bed as she heard him exit the apartment. Finally, sluggishly, she went to the door and put on the security chain. Moving to the living room, she poured a shot of brandy and downed it in one fiery gulp. *Get a grip*, she told herself, even as she went back to the bedroom and masturbated to an unsatisfying climax.

How could she fight her desires? She wanted him on any terms. Her sexual arousal was constant. Michael was always in her head and she knew she would eventually surrender to him. Fantasies filled her head but only the ones of Michael had any power and the power was to make her realize just how unsatisfied she’d been by previous sexual encounters. She lectured herself. She told herself she was an independent human being and that she didn’t need any man. That sex was her choice, not his. That she could resist him. Until she convinced herself that she could play his game and not get hurt.

* * * * *

On Monday, erotic thoughts filled her head. She thought of what Michael had done. She thought about his collection. She thought about the book he’d given her. Her work suffered as Michael took over her mind. *What will it feel like to have his fist deep inside?* She nearly collapsed at the thought. By the end of the work week Kate felt desperate for sexual satisfaction—regular sex, with a normal male. She called Derrick, an old boyfriend, and asked him to dinner.

Derrick agreed, of course. Derrick always agreed to anything she suggested. Their breakup had been her doing, not his. She left work early. Michael could fire her if he didn’t like it.

Derrick and Kate went to their favorite Italian restaurant. Dim lighting and soft music created a romantic setting, perfect for talking. Yet Kate felt herself hesitate. She liked Derrick. They’d been together many times, he was a known quantity but tonight something seemed off. She was just a little bored by the familiar game. Michael’s words came back to haunt her. Was he right? Was Derrick too tame, too polite and too politically correct? Kate felt sick as she thought about the energy Michael exuded and the sense of danger he embodied. Derrick was innocuous. Why didn’t that please her?

“What’s wrong?” he asked quietly.

“What do you mean?”

“You feel different. Not yourself.”

Kate looked at him. Surprising herself, she asked, “Do you ever get angry because you have to be nice to women and can’t just take who you want?”

A horrified look passed across his face. "Of course not! Women should be treated with gentleness and respect."

"But..." Kate trailed off as she felt a presence behind her. She looked over her shoulder. Michael stood close.

"Kate, introduce me."

"No! Leave me alone!" Kate replied hotly, angry that she was thrilled to see him.

Derrick raised an eyebrow. He knew she wasn't normally so abrupt and rude.

Michael smiled at Derrick. "You'll have to excuse Kate," he said. "Kate is now mine and she's a little shaken by the idea."

Derrick stared at Michael, then at Kate, obviously confused. "Kate?"

"Michael, please leave. I'm with Derrick and we are trying to enjoy our dinner."

"But darling, you weren't enjoying it, you were bored and thinking about me. Derrick, ask her if she wants me," Michael said smoothly.

Derrick looked at Kate, waiting for an answer. He knew the caveman routine wouldn't go over well. Kate hesitated as she met his eyes. She knew, with certainty, that he simply could not satisfy her. She simply couldn't deny that she wanted Michael. Kate closed her eyes then opened them and nodded at Derrick.

"If you'll excuse us, Derrick, we've had a small spat that needs to be settled," Michael said, placing a hand on her shoulder.

Derrick looked at Kate for a moment. Then he surprised her by laughing. He and Michael exchanged a glance. Two males celebrating a conquered female. What could be more amusing?

As Derrick stood he said, "So, Kate, you've finally met your match. I almost feel sorry for you." He turned and left Kate to Michael.

Kate was angry that Derrick had surrendered with so few questions. Though she didn't want him, why hadn't he fought for her? Why had he left her with this predator? Kate shook off a tremor of unease.

Michael laughed as he sat down in Derrick's chair. "So tame," he said. "You know that's not what you want."

Kate closed her eyes, wanting to shut him out but knowing it was futile. Remembering his finger's explorations, she went weak and needy, even as she realized she was in trouble. *He's a stalker. I should call the police.* Never would she have believed herself capable of wanting to be subdued this way.

"Give in," he said, "and the stress will disappear."

Kate started to stand. He grabbed her forearm, stopping her movement. "Finish your drink and relax," Michael said as he handed her the glass.

She surrendered to his will and sat back down. "If I surrender what are the conditions of my capture?"

He smiled and the smile lit his eyes like a lighthouse beacon in the fog. "Pleasure," Michael replied. His hand caressed her arm. "Pleasure like you've never known before. I will pamper you, take care of you and pleasure you." His seductive voice wound through her willpower.

"And after you've conquered? What happens when you tire of me?" Kate asked as she sipped her drink.

"There are no guarantees," he replied. "Besides, who knows, you might tire of me first. I can tell you I want more than a one-night stand. I don't know where our affair will lead."

Kate jerked her arm away from him or he let her go. She wasn't certain which because, as she stood, a wave of dizziness assailed her.

Michael stood, clasped her around the waist and whispered in her ear, "You are mine. Accept it. We're going home now." He helped her out of the club as she fought the dizziness. It wasn't until they reached the sidewalk that she realized he'd drugged her drink.

"You bastard!" She tried to get free, knowing it was already too late.

"Don't worry," he said. "I will wait for you to ask. Of course, I will help you make the right decision."

Chapter Seven

Kate woke up in a strange room, in a strange bed—a canopy bed—nude and tied to the bedposts. Just as in the vision she'd had the first time she met Michael, light streamed through the window as she took stock of her situation. The scarves around her extremities were of the softest silk. A sheet covered her. She tugged but the scarves were well tied. She couldn't get free.

Michael entered the room before panic overwhelmed her. Kate stopped struggling and asked, "Aren't drugs cheating?"

He shrugged, the movement emphasizing his broad shoulders. He sat next to Kate and caressed her body through the sheet. "I've never had a woman make a date with another man while I was pursuing her. I got angry that you'd try to find satisfaction with someone else. You belong with me. You want what only I can give you."

"If you really believe that then why bother waiting for my surrender? Obviously, it's a moot point since you have me at such a disadvantage."

"True, but if you don't say the words," he paused, "and mean them, I won't take you. It is your choice," he said as he drew the sheet off, leaving her open to his heated perusal.

His hands followed his eyes across her body. He used a light touch she could barely feel but her breath caught and her chest tightened with anxiety as she realized just how helpless he'd made her. A slight smile played across his lips as he took his time touching her.

Kate glared at him. "Enough of the fun and games. I don't like your idea of sex. Let me go!" She spoke with far more bravery than she felt. She felt helpless and vulnerable, totally under his control, and she was furious. Furious with herself. Moisture gathered in her pussy. She realized she liked being at his mercy. She liked feeling vulnerable. What was wrong with her?

He paused in the act of gently pinching a nipple. "You know you want me," he said as he gave a quick twist.

Her thighs and buttocks tightened. She couldn't stop the moan that escaped. "Obviously, my body wants you. So let's have sex and then we can both move on to other things."

"No." He moved a hand lightly over her nipples and another stab of desire shot through her. "I want you to feel to the essence of your being that you belong to me. I don't want only your body. I want your mind as well. You need to surrender mentally and physically. Just having sex won't make you mine...entirely mine. Before I'm done, your every thought will be of me and for me."

Kate stared at him. His eyes were bright with some kind of inner enjoyment and just a hint of dimples showed. Kate longed to run her hands through his hair. Her fingers wanted to trace his unshaven face. She needed this man but still she fought. "Why?"

"Because I can. Your ancestry makes it not only possible but desirable."

"Enough with the cryptic riddles. What about my ancestry?"

Michael remained silent. He used his fingertips to circle Kate's nipples. His gentle touch was driving her crazy. She couldn't remember ever being this needy.

Kate's breath caught as he moved his head between her legs. His fingers spread her wide and his tongue snaked out to lick her clitoris. Kate's hips jerked. She couldn't stay still and the fact she could barely move accentuated her need. Michael licked her clit once more before snaking his tongue into her vagina. A quick in-and-out movement that didn't begin to satisfy her.

She looked down at his head buried between her legs and she realized just how much power he had over her. She wanted to touch his hair and she couldn't. She wanted his caresses to continue. She bit her lip so she wouldn't beg while he continued his assault. She wouldn't beg but she couldn't stop her hips from twitching as they tried to get closer to his teasing tongue.

Michael's tongue flicked rapidly back and forth across her clit while his fingers dove deep into her vagina. He sucked her clit into his mouth and rolled it against his teeth.

Kate couldn't think as Michael continued his intense attack. "More," she moaned, even as she tried to squirm away from him. The sensations flooding her pelvis were too strong. Too intense. Michael held her tightly and continued his attack.

Kate felt lightheaded as she tried to gasp for breath. She tried to tell him she couldn't take anymore but she couldn't get the words out of her tight throat. Michael moved his fingers in her vagina and she felt something at her anus. Before she could protest, Michael drove a finger inside her rear entrance and Kate screamed as she exploded.

Her entire body clenched with the power of the orgasm flooding her senses. It seemed to continue forever and when the orgasm released its grip, Kate lay with her eyes closed, too exhausted to protest or move. She'd never felt such a sensory overload. How had he overwhelmed her so quickly?

She felt Michael move off the bed. She didn't know he was back until a warm washcloth bathed her face. Michael gently wiped the sweat from her forehead. Kate peeked from under her lashes.

Michael chuckled. "I know you're awake."

Kate opened her eyes and stared at him. "What did you do to me?"

"I satisfied you, and from the way you came, I'd say you don't get satisfied very often."

"Untie me."

"Kate, that was the barest hint of where I can take you. Don't you want to explore your sexuality? Don't you want to see how far you can go?"

Kate glared at him before shrugging. "Not like this. This is wrong. Your idea of sex is wrong."

"Says who?"

"Says me. Let me go."

"You seemed to enjoy it. If you don't like a little domination, why were you wet? Why did you climax when I hurt you a little? And why does my collection fascinate you?"

Kate glared at him.

"I want you, Kate."

"Then free me and we'll make love!"

"I've already told you that straight sex is not my thing. It's not yours either, though you're still fighting that idea." Michael moved away from the bed and paced the room. His forehead creased in a frown. His eyes glittered as if fevered. "The only way I can take you is if you agree to my demands." He pointed to the statuery in the corner. "I'll demand your surrender. I'll demand the right to hurt you. I'll demand the right to force your submission."

You'll surrender to all my dark fantasies, and make no mistake, my fantasies are very, very dark."

Kate lay still. His adamant declaration that they could never have regular sex depressed her. She had trouble accepting that the only sex Michael was interested in involved pain—her pain. Even more confusing was the fact that his statement caused her pussy to clench with need. She'd just had an explosive orgasm. She couldn't be aroused again, could she?

He ran a hand through his hair, leaving it mussed in its wake. "Kate, I want you. I need you. Give me permission."

Kate slowly shook her head. "I can't tell you it is okay to hurt me. I just can't do that."

"Not yet."

"Never!"

"You don't understand. I can and will convince you to agree to my demands. It doesn't really require much. A few days, a few weeks. I can destroy your will and your sense of self-preservation. So if you don't want to go where we are headed, you'd better run, Kate. Run far and run fast."

"I want you, Michael. I want sex with you. Regular sex, not this violence you're describing. Let me go," Kate demanded while pulling against her restraints.

Michael continued pacing while he spoke. "Kate, I like hurting women and you, whether you'll admit it or not, want to be hurt. It completes us in ways normal humans can't understand. I long ago accepted what I am, as will you. I like seeing arousal in your eyes. Arousal I've caused while you're tied up and helpless, totally dependent upon my will. I wish I liked vanilla sex. Sometimes I wish I were like other men. I wish we could just have sex," he said as he turned toward her. "Kate, you saw my collection. I won't be satisfied until I've done every one of those things to you. Do you want to be beaten? Do you want nipple clamps so tight you scream with agony? That's what turns me on. You'll find that it turns you on too. I will make you my slave and you'll love that position. You'll love my toys. You will submit to me and I will put you through hell and you'll find satisfaction beyond anything you've ever imagined."

"There's no way I will ever agree to your demands."

"No?" He quirked an eyebrow. "Then why are you so aroused by my descriptions? Why are you wet again? You're not just fighting me, you're fighting your biology. It would be easy to overwhelm you but you must want to be overwhelmed. You must want me to take you've places you've never been."

Kate shook her head.

"You won't believe me if I just tell you. I'm going to show you. You think you don't need a man. I'm going to teach you about yourself. I'm going to teach you about the incredible sensations your body can produce when your mind is fully involved, not off on a fantasy. I'm going to teach you that you cannot survive without me," he stated boldly, walking back to the bed so he could move his hands all over her body. "You're mine whether you accept it now or not. It will be so easy to overwhelm your body. You are incredibly responsive. I don't think I've ever met a woman as responsive as you," he murmured. "Your mind will take a little longer. I've never pursued a woman with such a strong mind. It is an irresistible combination, both physical and mental strength. You are really quite unique."

He took one of her nipples in his mouth, gently licking and sucking. He glanced up and said, "If you'd only stop fighting yourself, stop fighting your desire to surrender entirely and place yourself in my hands, you could find nirvana." He reached down and placed a finger on her clitoris. He pressed just a little.

Kate wanted more. She squirmed, trying to increase the contact.

“Surrender,” he said.

“No,” she moaned even as she tried to move closer to his finger.

Michael broke off all contact. He stood and stared down at her. His eyes glittered. “So be it,” he said. He reached over her. His scent filling her lungs as he untied her hands. He moved to the foot of the bed and freed her ankles then he moved back against the door and crossed his arms. “Get dressed.”

Angered by his seeming indifference, Kate said, “Yes, master.”

“Don’t call me master. The bondage and domination scene is a travesty of my powers. I don’t need a fake title to be your master.”

Kate wanted to make him stand outside while she got dressed but she decided she’d pushed him far enough. She would be lucky to escape. Making demands would not improve his mood.

“Surrender and everything will be much clearer. Your ancestry will see to that.”

“I still don’t understand what my ancestry has got to do with us.”

“Give me five minutes and I’ll prove your ancestry.”

Kate finished putting on her shoes. “No, I don’t think I can do that.”

“Not yet,” said Michael. Opening the bedroom door, he waited for Kate to exit.

Ignoring him, she picked up her coat and purse and walked out of the bedroom.

He grabbed her arm and swung her around. “Why are you so afraid of my challenge?”

“I don’t want your kind of sex.”

“You want me. You will surrender eventually,” he countered.

“Damn you!” Kate swore.

“Shhh,” he murmured. “You know it isn’t me you’re fighting, it is yourself.”

Kate glared at him then twisted free of his grip. She turned and found herself at the head of a stairway. Sighing, she started down, feeling a little wobbly. Michael moved close to her side and took her elbow. It didn’t matter that he’d caused her captivity. His strength was intoxicating. She wanted to protest when he led her to his collection room but she didn’t.

“One more viewing,” whispered Michael into her ear. He moved her in front of the first glass case. She nearly fainted with need. The objects should have horrified her and some of them did but she couldn’t ignore the arousal she felt when she saw or thought about them. She glanced up to find Michael’s eyes on her.

His arms closed around her and he pulled her back against his chest. She fought her rising need. He challenged her on every level and she wasn’t sure she wanted the challenge despite the fact she wanted him.

“These positions allow you to turn your mind off. The woman becomes totally focused on her body and the sensations coursing through it.”

“I’ve never turned my mind off during sex.”

“Liar. You just did upstairs. You weren’t thinking when you climaxed.”

Kate closed her eyes as a thrill anticipation raced through her. She knew on some level that she could trust him. She still hesitated. She’d never freely surrendered the way he demanded.

“If I let you dominate me, then who am I?”

"You are Eve," he replied. "It works both ways, you know. You control me every bit as much as I control you."

"I'm afraid."

"Of what, specifically, are you afraid? Do you fear me? Fear harm?"

"Nooo," she reluctantly admitted. "I think I'll lose me in you."

"More like I'll lose me in you," he countered.

Sadly, reluctantly, she shook her head. "I'm leaving," she stated. "War devastates the land it's fought on and your war is fought on my body and in my mind. I can't afford to lose either. You've occupied my body, I won't deny my arousal, but I simply can't surrender to you. Not the way you want."

Her anger flared when he laughed.

"You remain untouched." She spit out the words. "I'll bet if I talked to prior lovers, I'd find they needed years to pull themselves back together. Always thinking you really cared about them as people, rather than realizing they were simply fodder for your ego."

He smiled, a chilling smile that lit his eyes with amber fire. "You are worthy," he murmured. "No other woman has noticed that my interest might wane with capture. They thought I would always care. Tell me why my interest waned," he commanded.

Kate liked that he asked the question. That he paid attention. "Obviously, the chase mattered. Winning the goal finished the game."

He moved closer and gently caressed her face, scattering her thoughts.

"You and I will never be finished," he stated, still smiling. "You want to feel my power because my power gives you the ability to give up all control, to feel things you've never felt before."

Kate stepped away from him and he let her go. She turned and walked to the entryway. Her hand hesitated on the doorknob. She rested her forehead against the door. *Damn he's right.* She did want to lose this battle. Yet she straightened, turned the handle and started to open the door.

He moved so swiftly she didn't hear him coming. He slapped a palm against the door, closing it at the same time he pressed against her back while his other arm finished her imprisonment.

How the hell did he know she wanted to be stopped? In her experience, men just weren't that intuitive. They rarely understood the subtle variations encompassed in the two letters of the word no.

"We're not done yet," he whispered into her ear as his tongue played counterpoint.

"You'll destroy me," Kate said before she groaned. Shivers ran down her spine. Rational thought drowned in the face of his attention. She trembled, chilled and excited by the horror of his occupation. If he continued, there'd be nothing left of her.

"Will I?" he countered. "Somehow I think you are not so easily destroyed. I simply want to take you places you've left unexplored," he seduced.

"Nothing is simple with you," Kate said, a bite in her voice.

Suddenly he moved away from her. "Leave! I'll call a taxi. Go!" he said when she hesitated. He waved a hand. "Wait outside!"

Kate turned, startled by his actions and cold words. Her heart, body and mind in turmoil. She wanted him, yet was frightened by the intensity of her need.

They stared at each other. His eyes no longer smiled. Instead, something dark moved beneath the surface. Kate feared him in that instant. He meant to own her and part of her

admitted he had the power to do it. Her eyes filled with a touch of regret as she turned and left.

She struggled with herself as she waited for the taxi, staring blindly at the well-manicured lawn. His form of sex was about power but it simply wasn't black and white. Instead his plans encompassed an infinite multitude of shades of gray.

Was the presence of pain alone enough to constitute abuse? Was it abuse if she agreed? If she gave Michael permission to hurt her? Kate's thoughts tangled, circling in her mind in an infinite loop without escape.

Once in the taxi, she closed her eyes, remembering the feel of him, his strength and just how seductive it was to think of abandoning all pretense of control. The thought of letting him rule was liberating. She wanted to abandon civilized conventions. She wanted to believe that he wouldn't misuse his power. The thought of never seeing him again was devastating. Could she really walk away? Did she want to? How pathetic and twisted, she silently screamed at herself. Did he know exactly how much of his battle waged inside her?

Pictures from the book filled her head. She remembered Michael's collection. Her body wanted to know what he could do. She wanted him. She wanted to surrender to his will. She wanted to feel his physicality. She knew his muscled arms were as hard as they looked. She wanted to feel him holding her securely and she wanted to know she couldn't escape, that she could truly surrender to her emotions with no restraints because he'd removed them all. No one had warned her that the thought of a man's possession could create obsession.

All the beliefs she'd built up over twenty-five years were suddenly suspect, cold and unsatisfying. What was the cost of female independence? Could a physical romp be emotionally satisfying? Would giving in to her dark fantasies provide incredible sex? Why did Michael tempt her so?

Michael's strength, physical and mental, was seductive. Kate couldn't deny that she wanted him but his terms were too frightening.

Kate remembered what he'd said about being a man and wondered what else he felt. To know he could do as he pleased. What did it feel like to have a woman writhing beneath him, knowing she was mindless because of his actions? What did it feel like to repeatedly drive a woman to orgasm, forcing his will on hers? Did he care about her as a person at all? Was she merely a game piece, a tool for his ego, making him feel good about his power? Would any woman do in Kate's place?

Kate felt a twinge of regret that she couldn't fight like a man. Why couldn't she play the game and simply leave at any point. Why did the battle hurt? Why was there no way for Kate to fight as a female? He seemed immune. How was he impervious to female charms?

Kate arrived home and entered her apartment. She knew if she ever surrendered to Michael she would be lost. She hadn't wanted to leave though. A traitorous part of her mind had wanted to stay—to stay and find out what he'd do. *Stop*, she ordered herself.

She was just an object to him, something to be won. Her mind recognized Michael's ploy but her body didn't care. *It is just a game to him*, she told herself again, sternly this time. A game she couldn't win. Her surrender would be her undoing. Kate knew he'd be amused if he heard her thoughts. Her body, brimming with need, was ready to explode.

Chapter Eight

The next week, Michael escalated. His moves became bolder. He massaged her breast or cupped her buttocks in the security of his office. He continually startled Kate with his determination until, by Thursday, she'd had enough.

"This is harassment," she said.

Smiling, dimples deep and eyes twinkling, he said, "I haven't even started harassing you yet. You want me to touch you. I know you're wet. I can smell your arousal."

He was right and it made Kate angry. She wanted to fight even as she longed to feel his touch. Kate shook her head to clear it and stepped into the doorway. "If you don't stop, I'll file a lawsuit," she said before she walked out of the room and slammed the door.

Eileen looked up and asked, "Are you okay?"

"I don't know. No, I'm not okay." Kate shook her head. "No that's not right. I'm not sure. He's pursuing me and I'm not sure if I like it or not."

"Kate—" Eileen started.

"No, I have to deal with this myself." Kate turned and left.

Kate drew in a cleansing breath once she reached the safety of her office. She felt weak and shaky. How did he affect her with just a few words? Thanks to him, she now had an executive position. She should feel powerful and satisfied so why couldn't she fight him? Had her life become so mundane and routine that she couldn't resist the lure of the unknown? A different kind of sex, shared with a capable partner, tempted her. It was too tempting and too dangerous. She needed to escape before it went too far. She thought longingly of his body and her need to be touched as she typed up her resignation.

She could no longer be close to him without surrendering. But surrendering to Michael challenged everything she believed about herself. She was afraid that if she turned in her resignation he'd be done with her. He'd move on to other prey. She fought off a twinge of regret and signed the letter.

Later that day, long after Eileen left, Kate dropped off her resignation.

Michael scanned the document as Kate walked to the door. "I didn't figure you for a coward," Michael said.

"What do you mean?"

"We know we're attracted to each other," he said. His eyes narrowed. "Why are you so afraid to see where it goes?"

Desire, anger, lust, irritation and interest all warred within Kate. "We're not good for each other."

"Let's compromise."

"What do you mean?"

"Spend the weekend with me. We won't do anything you don't agree to."

Kate hesitated.

"You won't regret it."

Kate held the doorknob. She knew she should leave but she wanted him at least once and it seemed as though he'd finally given in. Sex would be on her terms.

Michael waited patiently while war waged in her head. She finally looked up at him and asked, "You promise, no pain?"

"I promise I won't do anything you don't want." He stared deeply into Kate's eyes.

Kate was confident that she'd never agree to pain. She was confident they'd just have sex—great sex. The opportunity was too enticing. She couldn't pass on his offer. If she ran away from Michael now, she'd always wonder what could have happened. A weekend—just a weekend. Kate could handle that and then she'd be free of him. She needed to play the game to the end. Just leaving, without ever trying, was cowardice. He was right. So Kate agreed to spend the weekend with him.

* * * * *

Kate didn't mention their arrangement to anyone. Eileen and Janet would try to talk her out of it. Kate was conflicted enough. She didn't need her friends adding to the mix. She knew she had to spend the weekend with Michael even as her mind screamed that it might not be one of her better decisions.

Kate left early Friday afternoon. Michael picked her up at her apartment an hour later. As they drove to his house, Kate struggled to overcome her anxiousness. "Aren't we supposed to have a contract about a scene?"

Michael glanced at her and quirked an eyebrow. "Have you been researching?"

"A little," Kate admitted.

"A typical bondage and domination scene has a contract. We're not doing that."

"What do you mean?"

"You're spending the weekend. I've promised I won't do anything you don't want. I will keep my word."

"But—"

"No buts," he said. "If we detail everything that can and can't be done, where's the mystery or adventure? Contracts defeat the whole purpose of the game. Besides, the written word doesn't guarantee either person will follow the rules laid down in the contract. They are a waste of time. If you want a contract, you're with the wrong man. Do you want to change your mind?"

Kate looked at the passing scenery.

Michael pulled the car to the side of the road. His hand cupped her chin, gently coaxing her to look at him. His thumb stroked her cheek while he said, "Kate, if you don't want to continue, now is the time to say so. You can still back out. Should I take you to your apartment?"

Kate sank into the small, gentle touch of Michael's thumb. She couldn't lie to herself. She wanted this man. She'd rather it wasn't on his terms with his rules but she couldn't deny her needs anymore. "No. Take me home with you."

Michael nodded and put the car in gear.

When they entered his house Michael gently pulled Kate into his arms. He softly kissed her, just barely grazing his lips across hers. Kate tried to deepen the kiss, but he laughed and held her away. "Not yet. We have all weekend."

They made dinner. Her stomach tight with nerves, Kate was barely able to eat. She wondered when he'd make a move. As if he knew her thoughts he started touching her. He

traced her cheek with his fingers and softly caressed her arms. Kate simply wasn't used to a man who didn't grab—a man who could wait. By the time dinner was done and the kitchen cleaned, Kate was sopping wet and completely aroused.

"Why don't you take off your underpants," Michael suggested.

Kate stared at him. "Why don't I take off everything?"

"Patience. It's more erotic this way."

Kate went to the bathroom and obliged him. Feeling wanton in a way she'd never known, she entered the living room and went to sit next to him on the sofa.

He reached over and pulled up her skirt then guided her to the sofa. "Sit naked."

The warm leather caressed her bottom. She squirmed trying to protect the leather from the moisture dripping from her cunt.

Michael placed a hand on her thigh. "Don't worry about it." He flicked open a control panel on the end table, pushed a button and the lights dimmed. He touched another switch and the wall-mounted large-screen television started.

Kate gasped as two naked people filled the screen.

"I hope you don't mind," he said. "This is one of my favorite movies. But if you'd rather not watch, we won't."

Kate shrugged and said, "I've never watched something like this before."

"Let's try it then," he said. "Remember, you can always stop watching at any time."

Michael pulled her close and wrapped an arm around her shoulder. His scent enveloped Kate as she tried to relax into his muscular grip. After all, she wanted sex with him so she shouldn't be embarrassed to be held close or by the fact she was naked under her skirt.

He talked through the whole movie, asking her about the acts they watched. Did she like to give oral sex? Did she like to receive oral sex? Had she ever been in the doggy position?

By the time the movie ended, Kate had soaked his couch and she didn't care. Once again she was struck by the fact of her inexperience. Just talking had left her feeling desperate. At no point had he touched her breasts or her clit or explored her cunt, yet Kate was desperate by the time the movie was done.

She knew he was aroused too. She could see the bulge in his pants and he looked big, but the one time she tried to touch him, he intercepted her hand and said, "Not yet."

"When?"

He grinned. "Did you like the movie?"

"There wasn't much of a plot."

His dimples deepened. "But did you like it?"

"Yes."

"Your arousal surprises you, doesn't it?"

Kate nodded, not sure her voice was steady enough to speak.

"Let's watch one more," he whispered in her ear. "This one is a little different."

The next movie started in a darkened cave. A woman was chained to a wall. Her arms high above her head, her legs spread by a bar. She looked vulnerable, yet the expression on her face was one of expectation and arousal. Kate tensed.

"Wait." Michael held her still. "Don't judge, just watch," he said as he moved his hand to caress her breasts.

Finally, Kate thought, washed away in a wave of longing, forgetting all about the movie.

“Are you willing to give the movie a try?” he murmured against her ear after caressing her senseless.

“Only if you keep touching me,” Kate countered. While she watched the woman’s subjugation, her sexual heat climbed. Michael worked magic. Every time the woman on the screen felt pain, Kate felt pleasure. Not once did he let her watch the woman endure pain with her mind clear. Instead, when the woman screamed from the agony of a whip, Kate moaned with pleasure. Yet despite the bliss he dispensed, Kate still hadn’t had an orgasm. By the end of the movie, she begged, “Please, Michael, I need to come.”

“What will you do to earn an orgasm?” His whisper tickled Kate’s ear. “Pick something from one of the movies and I’ll ensure your satisfaction.”

Kate hesitated. Desperate for an orgasm she struggled to remember the movies. The first one had faded and only the last one was vivid. The most innocuous part had been when the woman had been freed from the chains and tied to a bed. “I don’t—”

“Pick something, Kate,” said Michael. He pulled her down onto his chest and gave her a hard kiss. “Be brave. Pick something.”

“Tie me up.” Kate writhed against his hard cock.

Michael held her face in his hands. “Are you sure?”

Kate knew she was too aroused to make a rational decision but by this point she simply didn’t care. “Yes.”

Michael smiled. “Good,” he said. He kissed her softly then led her to the bedroom.

Kate remembered the large four-poster bed that commanded the room. She shuddered when Michael said, “Leave your clothes on and lie down on the bed.”

She obliged with only a little hesitation. She remembered how helpless and angry she’d been the first time she’d lain on this bed. She hadn’t realized the room would hold memories of her first captivity. What was she doing? Why had she asked Michael to tie her up?

As if sensing her doubts, Michael lay down on top of Kate, his chest pressed hard against her breasts. He caressed her face. Michael kissed her—a possessive kiss—his tongue deep within her mouth. She sank into the pleasure and forgot about withdrawing her permission. When he finished the kiss, Kate tried to move and found she couldn’t. He’d bound her hands while she’d lost herself in pleasure.

He smiled at Kate as awareness entered her eyes. “You’re mine now.” He moved to the bottom of the bed and spread Kate’s legs. He tied her ankles to the posts. He moved back up her body. Then he pulled out a knife.

“How do you feel?” he asked as he slowly began cutting off Kate’s clothes.

She looked at him, shocked by his actions. He looked up and said, “I won’t use the knife on you. How do you feel?”

“Helpless,” she said as she tested the ropes.

“Aroused?” He slipped the knife through her bra and freed her breasts.

“Scared.”

“Why are you frightened?”

“You have a knife and I can’t move.”

“I already told you I won’t cut you and do you really want to move?”

Ignoring his question, Kate said, “I need an orgasm.”

He laughed. “Yes, I suppose you do. I definitely want to reward you for your brave decision to be tied up.” He finished removing her clothes. Then he stood and looked at Kate.

The fact she was naked and helpless, wide open before him, seemed to accentuate her needs rather than dampen them.

He smiled as he trailed a finger down her cheek and around her mouth. Kate's tongue tried to catch him but he stayed just out of reach. "You need to learn patience."

"Michael—"

He placed his finger over Kate's lips, silencing her. "Quiet. Don't beg or I'll torment you even longer. Just sink into your body and feel what I'm doing to you. If you don't think you can be quiet, I'll be happy to gag you. Is that what you want?"

Kate shook her head, her stomach tight with the realization that he could do anything he wanted and she was helpless to stop him. The thought should have terrified her.

"Good girl. Now let's turn your mind off so you can enjoy the pleasure I'm going to give you."

Just like before, being restrained seemed to accentuate every one of Michael's actions. She felt his hot, wet tongue lick across the tip of one nipple before moving to the other peak. She arched her back to increase the contact but his talented tongue was already tracing a line down her belly. He paused a moment to swirl deep into her navel before continuing his journey. He parted her labia with his fingers and circled her clit with his tongue. He never quite touched it, driving her crazy with need. Arching her hips was no help because he was already gone, down her thigh to the back of her knee. It was like being tormented by a feather. His movements were deliberate but so soft that Kate had to focus to feel and when she did, she moaned with desperation. She wanted him to really touch her—hard. Ignoring his earlier warning, she begged for satisfaction. Nothing she said or did changed his actions.

He took his time. Kate knew that much. She didn't know how long because she quickly sank into his caresses and bit her lip to stop herself from begging for more. She knew by now that begging wouldn't help.

Despite her arousal, her orgasm surprised her. Her abdomen rippled with tension and she found herself helpless before its onslaught. She'd never dreamed an orgasm could be powerful enough to cause her to faint.

She woke still tied to the bed. Michael stretched out on the bed by her side. His head on his hand, his eyes roved her body and one finger traced her hipbone.

"Untie me," she said.

"Kate, we're just getting started." He gently massaged her breasts and kissed her abdomen.

Kate struggled to free her hands but the silk was a rigid master. Hours later, he still hadn't entered her. He hadn't come and she wondered how long he could go without satisfaction so during one brief respite, she finally asked.

He smiled, dimples deepening, eyes alive with pleasure and said, "Seeing you like this, helpless before my onslaught, is very satisfying. Far more satisfying than one quick release." Then he paused and looked at her, cocking his head, he asked, "Do you like what I'm doing to you?"

Kate struggled to think. How could she answer him? She settled for a partial truth. "I liked the orgasm."

"Do you think the orgasms would be as intense if you weren't tied up?"

"I don't know, let's try."

He held her gaze until she moaned, knowing what he wanted. "No," she said slowly, "I don't think my release would be so intense."

“Ah, that brave admission deserves a reward,” he murmured as he brought her to yet another orgasm.

By the time morning came, Kate was well sated and weak. The intensity of what he’d done frightened her. He challenged everything she believed but she still thought she had the ability to say no to pain. Though he’d shaken her, she wasn’t worried.

Michael untied her and helped her to the bathroom. She could have walked but she appreciated his concern.

After breakfast, Michael said, “Let’s go shopping.”

Kate looked at him, surprised by the suggestion.

He shrugged. “I owe you an outfit.”

After buying a new outfit, he took her hand and led her to another store. They entered and walked through the front room to another doorway. Kate stopped, just staring. The room he’d led her to contained whips, dildos, vibrators and things she’d never seen before. She tried to back up but Michael stood close behind her. His arm snaked around her waist and he whispered in her ear, “Do you remember the movies we watched last night?”

Kate leaned back against his chest and nodded. His strength enveloped her and she couldn’t remember why it might be dangerous to play with this man. She longed to feel his cock deep inside and if this scene aroused him, she could live with it.

“Why don’t you pick out a toy to play with this afternoon? I guarantee you’ll enjoy it.”

Kate’s face flamed and she shook her head. The hard lump in her throat wouldn’t go away, no matter how many times she swallowed.

“You have my word I won’t do anything you don’t want. I would think, after last night, that you’d trust me a little more.”

He sounded disappointed and she wanted to please him. Kate shuddered as his arms tightened.

“Be brave,” he whispered. “Pick a toy.” He released her with a swat on her ass. He leaned back against the wall and crossed his arms. There was no trace of his dimples and his eyes were flat.

What would happen if she didn’t pick a toy? What if she walked out of the store and out of his life instead? That would be the rational thing to do. Instead, Kate slowly entered the room and looked around. She discarded the idea of a whip immediately. That left the vibrators and dildos as the only familiar toys. She cringed inside, embarrassed by the thought of Michael using either on her. It was one thing to use them while alone. The idea of a man using them made her hesitate. Embarrassment warred with arousal. Kate turned to Michael. “I don’t know how to pick.”

“I told you I wouldn’t do anything you don’t want. You have to pick the toy. I can’t do it for you,” he said.

Kate debated saying no. The right to pick a toy included the right to say no to any toy. Sensations from the previous night flashed through her body. She stumbled as her control slipped. She forgot about saying no and thought about the movies. She thought of what had aroused her most. She ignored the fact that Michael had controlled her arousal during the movies.

She hesitated over a small display of butt plugs. She didn’t like the idea but she couldn’t deny that the sight of the plugs aroused her. She was curious. What did anal sex feel like?

Michael noticed her hesitation—not surprising since he’d been watching so closely. He moved in behind her and whispered, “Anal sex is very intense. It can be painful and I don’t think you’re ready for it, though you liked my finger moving deep inside you, didn’t you?”

His warning and his reminder merely inflamed Kate’s desire and her certainty. She focused on the fact he’d allowed her to choose the toy they would use. She ignored the fact that once they were back at his house control of the toy passed to him.

Oblivious to the fact she was about to agree to the pain she usually so adamantly resisted, she shuddered and pointed to a small butt plug.

“Are you certain?”

Kate nodded.

* * * * *

She wondered when Michael would use the purchase. They had been back at his house for a while. He made her wait.

During lunch, Michael asked her again about the butt plug. “Are you sure you want to try it? I promised not to do anything you don’t want.”

Her cunt was sopping wet at the idea. “Yes, I’m sure.”

“Even though it might be a little painful?” he said, continuing the interrogation.

“How painful?” Kate began to question her decision.

“I’ll be very careful. You’ll be aroused before I insert it. I’ll lubricate it well. But still, you’re virginal there and the sensation of having your rectum filled is...quite intense.”

“It’s almost like you don’t want to do it.”

“Believe me. I want nothing more than to fill every one of your holes. I simply don’t want you claiming later that I did anything you didn’t want. I want your absolute permission and consent before I do anything you might later regret.”

“I want to try.”

“You agree to let me control the situation?”

Kate hesitated.

“I know what I’m doing,” he said, reassuring Kate, and she mistakenly thought that would lessen the discomfort.

Kate nodded.

“Say it,” he demanded.

“You control the situation.”

“Good,” he smiled and held out a hand. He pulled Kate into his arms and gently brushed her lips. “You do know I’ll have to tie you up again?”

Kate tried to pull back to look at him but he held her tight. “Why?” she demanded. “I didn’t agree to that.”

He sighed. “You just agreed to let me control the situation. You need to be tied because if you move too much while I’m trying to insert the plug it will be too painful. If you’re tied up, I’ll be able to make it more pleasant for you. Don’t fight me on this or we won’t use a plug.”

So once again, Kate agreed.

Michael led her upstairs to the bedroom.

Her stomach sank as Michael tied her arms again. Part of her was aroused to the point of madness and part of her was terrified by what was happening. Whenever Michael gave her time to think, she cringed and wanted out of the situation. He must have known that because he didn't give her much time to think.

Instead, he ran his hands over her body, proving to her that human touch can be erotic anywhere on the body. Once again, he ignored her breasts, her clit and her vagina until she was squirming, desperate for release. Kate had never thought she was capable of arousal that would shut off all rational thought. But Michael proved different.

She didn't think. She just responded and didn't care that he was teaching her the pleasure of giving in, being submissive to his desires.

Kate was begging by the time he held up a butt plug. Not the butt plug they'd purchased. That had been a small thing, barely bigger than her thumb. This one was two inches in width. Kate gasped. "That's not what I agreed to."

"Actually, you did. I choose and decide everything. Remember?"

"No, I can't take that thing. It's too big. It will hurt too much."

He locked eyes with her. "Yes it will hurt. That's the whole point. Pain mixing with pleasure will take you places you've never been."

Kate shook her head, all arousal fleeing in the face of that monster.

Michael sighed. "Very well," he said as he stood and went to the door.

"Where are you going? Don't leave me like this!" Kate screamed as he opened the door.

He paused and looked back at her.

"You gave me control. Now you want to take it back. Think about that. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Kate was too angry and scared to think clearly. Instead, she struggled against the silken ties.

Michael returned with a jar of oil.

"Let me go!"

He ignored her demand as he poured some oil on his hands and started to massage her. The oil was warm. He worked his hands underneath her neck, around her shoulders and gently caressed her tenseness away. "Relax, let me help you relax," he murmured as the heated oil seeped into her skin and her muscles liquefied under his gentle touch. He didn't stop with her shoulders but continued down the rest of her body until the flames of arousal started again.

She moaned.

He smiled and continued to work on her. By the time he'd come to the apex of Kate's legs she writhed as much as her ties allowed. He gently spread her labia and continued massaging around her clitoris. Kate thought she'd explode but he was careful to prevent an orgasm. As if from a long distance, she heard him softly ask, "Am I still in control?"

"Yes! Oh yes! Please let me come."

He slid an oiled finger into her rectum. She exploded. But he didn't give her time to rest and recover. He used one hand to massage her vagina and her clitoris as he worked a second finger into her rectum.

Kate felt pressure as his fingers spread her, pleasuring her, as she built to another climax. Her anus expanded until it felt uncomfortable, the sensations overwhelming, leaving her gasping for air. Still he didn't stop.

There was no discomfort yet, only fullness, pressure, as if she had to defecate and she knew it would feel so good to do so. Her abdominal muscles contracted, the sensations in her rectum directly connected to her vagina. She wanted to come again. She felt him spread his two fingers, expanding her hole until she felt a twinge of pain. Kate struggled to move as he withdrew his other fingers from her vagina and moved them to her abdomen, stilling any possible motion. Then he took his fingers out of her bottom and Kate groaned, unsatisfied by the emptiness. He crawled up her body, pressing his full length against her. He placed his hands on her face and forced her gaze to his.

“Are you willing to let me use the plug now?”

“You bastard!”

“Are you willing to let me use the plug now?” he asked again, gently kissing the corner of her mouth.

“Yes!” Kate screamed, uncaring about anything but her need for satisfaction.

He kissed her lips with a hard, quick motion before releasing her head and moving back down her body.

Chapter Nine

Michael worked a pillow under her hips, opening her up to his ministrations. He poured more oil on her anus. Then she felt the cold tip at her entrance. He looked up, locking their gazes. He slowly pressed the plug against her. "Keep breathing," he said.

Her attention focused on his actions as the plug widened her and the pain started.

"Deep breaths, relax."

The pain increased.

"Please stop," Kate begged as she felt a sharp bite.

He withdrew the plug a little and massaged her abdomen. He rocked the plug in and out, never going deeper than it had already gone. "That's it," he encouraged, "just take deep breaths."

Kate started to relax, to sink into the incredible sensations that were ripping through her body. He pushed the plug a little deeper. The throbbing discomfort returned and she moaned. His hand moved to her clit, massaging her, the plug motionless until once more she was thoughtless with arousal. The plug pushed a little deeper. Pain and arousal mixed until she wasn't sure which she preferred.

Kate couldn't hold still. Her head moved restlessly. She struggled against her bonds. She tried to move. She wasn't sure which direction—toward the pleasure, toward the pain?

"Halfway."

"I can't take any more," Kate moaned.

"Tell me what you're feeling," he demanded.

"I feel full. I feel empty." Kate was overwhelmed by sensation. The pressure increased. "No," she begged. "Please, Michael, it hurts too much."

"But you are aroused, aren't you?" he replied as he pushed the plug deeper and her butt felt like it was on fire. He bent his head and licked her clitoris. When he blew on it Kate screamed as an orgasm raged through her.

She was vaguely aware that Michael had seated the plug during her explosive climax. But she no longer cared about the pain, only the pleasure that accompanied it.

Kate came down slowly. As awareness returned she realized her throbbing hot anus was still stretched by the unfamiliar width. She looked at Michael, horrified that the plug was still deep inside. "Please take it out," she whispered and tried to squirm.

Michael lay beside her, one hand caressing her face. "Not yet. Don't you remember the shape of the plug?" he asked. Without waiting for her reply he continued, "The largest width lies within you now, it will hurt coming out too. Let's just leave it for a while." He kissed her and said, "You did very well, you know."

Kate just stared at him, not sure how to respond. Part of her reveled in the things he was teaching her about her body and part of her was horrified that she'd given him so much power over her. He waited, letting her think for the first time since this session had started.

Kate finally realized he'd made her ask for pain. She finally realized he'd known all along what he could get her to agree to and how he'd get her to agree.

“Game’s over,” she said, angry about her surrender.

“No,” he said. “We’re in the middle of the game. Stopping now will leave you wondering what could have been...won’t it?” He held her face while he kissed her. He moved a hand to her nipple, gently circling it, never quite touching the tip.

She couldn’t stop her moan. He knew her body. He knew what she wanted but still he didn’t touch the tip. “Please...” Kate finally begged. She couldn’t stop the plea.

“Please what?” he murmured against her ear.

“Please touch me,” Kate moaned. “Please no more teasing.”

“Will you take a larger plug?” he countered.

Kate stared at him, horrified. “No.” She struggled to fight him.

“If I can’t use a bigger plug, what will you give me instead?” he whispered.

Kate felt helpless in the face of his demand. She wasn’t certain what he wanted. “Please touch me,” she begged again.

“Say it,” he demanded. “Open your eyes and say it. It must be clearly stated. You know that.”

Kate moaned as he started to massage her breast. “You’re in control,” she whispered.

“And...” he prompted.

Kate cried as she told him he could use a bigger plug. He rewarded her with a twist of her nipple and a kiss on her cheek.

He was right, the plug hurt coming out too, but Kate barely felt it as he timed its removal to another orgasm. Her abdominal muscles felt like rubber. She ached all over her body. She’d never experienced such intense sensations.

The second plug was larger. He played with it more. Shoving a little before withdrawing, just as it bordered on unbearable. Teasing her, making her realize that he controlled her pain. He controlled her.

At one point, she thrashed so hard that he stopped and told her they needed more ropes. He looped a special belt around her waist. It tied to rings set into the bed. Rings she hadn’t noticed before. Then he pulled out a strange device.

He removed the pillow under her butt and fit the device under her. Kate’s thighs went over two raised, spread arms. By the time he was done, she couldn’t move at all. Her ass was elevated and spread wide open.

Then he went back to the plug. Only this time, he didn’t withdraw when it hurt her. Instead, each time she felt pain, he’d stroke her clit and push the plug a little farther. Kate couldn’t stop him. She was at his mercy.

The pleasure and pain mixed until she couldn’t separate them. Did the pleasure make her forget the pain or did the pain intensify her pleasure? Finally, he seated the plug deep inside her, spreading her wide.

Only then did he go back to stimulating her vagina. Her burning anus became a counterpoint to the pleasure she felt in her cunt. The low-level discomfort merely made the pleasure all the greater. Every once in a while Michael would rotate the butt plug so she didn’t forget it. He spent hours playing with her. No man had ever spent so much time exploring her body. She loved every painful moment.

It was late evening by the time Michael removed the plug and untied her. She lay there, boneless, unable to summon the energy to move. She was vaguely aware he went into the bathroom. Then he came back and carried her to the waiting bath he’d run. The hot water on her butt caused a gasp but he held her tightly while she adjusted to it. She’d never been

washed by a man before. She'd never felt so cared for, so cherished as she did in that bath. Kate knew Michael was happy with her.

After her bath, Michael carried Kate back to the bedroom. Petite, light in his arms, her skin softer than satin. She'd fallen asleep. He desperately wanted to fuck her. To ram his cock deep inside and feel her clench tight around him.

The fact that Michael had to initiate her slowly was driving him crazy. His strength meant he could do anything to her and she had no chance of refusal. She wasn't quite ready yet though. He had to wait, to force his instincts to submit to his intellect. Soon she'd be screaming with arousal. Not yet though.

Her white skin gleamed in the dim light of the bedroom. He wanted to see thin red streaks painting it. He longed for the yellow purple bruises he'd cause her, knowing he'd feel every one of them just as she did. But for now, her white, unpainted canvas called to him. The curve of her hips and breasts called to him. So tiny and vulnerable, completely unaware of the dark thoughts moving through his mind.

He exulted in the fact that he was going to initiate her and teach her things about her body. By the time he was done, she'd crave pain as well as pleasure. She'd admit that it was integral to her satisfaction. She promised to be one of the better partners he'd had. Other clan women knew how the game was played. Kate didn't. Her fight made her a pleasure to seduce. She'd never win. Her biology wouldn't let her and he had too much experience. He was too strong.

From the first moment he'd seen her back off the drunk patient, he'd known she'd belong to him. She had no hope against him.

His cock demanded that he just take her and force her to do his bidding. He knew that physical domination was too easy. He had to engage Kate's mind, to seduce her into asking for pain. Only that level of trust would allow them to link. With other clan women that process typically took a day. Kate still wasn't there.

He was amazed by her strength. He'd take his time. One step at a time until she admitted her need of the things he could do. Until she begged for pain. Until she was wholly his. He longed to hear her beg for release. He longed to introduce her to the toys in his dungeon. But he could wait. She was too good to risk losing.

Michael stared down at Kate, spread-eagled on the bed. Even in repose, her breasts remained taut. Her hair tousled, her eyelashes resting softly on her flushed cheeks. Head to the side, she looked exhausted. He'd done that to her. He'd brought her to orgasm over and over until she couldn't come anymore. She'd exceeded all his expectations. She'd been worth the wait.

Kate's determination to remain in control of her body and feelings fascinated him. He wondered just how far he could push her. He knew he wasn't ready for their session to end. He wanted to keep Kate tied and bound. There were many aspects of her sexuality that remained unexplored. He hadn't whipped or chained her yet. She didn't know about the dungeon in his basement and he couldn't wait to have her bound to his custom table. He ached to drag her downstairs by her hair but he held back. He knew if he pushed too hard or too fast, he'd lose her. He wanted her consent for each step.

Tracing her abdominal muscles with a fingertip, Michael marveled at the definition. She was so tiny, such a spitfire. He could span her waist with his hands.

Michael's cock pulsed, reminding him that he still hadn't taken his satisfaction. He briefly debated waking Kate and demanding that she satisfy him but to do so would rush the process and destroy the mating rite. Patience was his strength. His satisfaction could wait.

Kate awoke on Sunday morning feeling sore and painful. Her butt ached—no, every muscle in her body ached. She looked around the room but Michael wasn't there. At least the ropes were gone.

She inched up, leaning to one side to avoid putting pressure on her tender backside. She gradually eased off the bed, instinctively knowing that sudden movement would hurt. She could feel aches and tenderness in many places and she knew pain lurked beneath the surface, ready to grab her if she moved too fast. She'd never felt this way before—sensitized, aware of every inch of her body. She felt like a walking nerve ending. He'd called the mind the largest sex organ in a body. Her pelvis filled with warmth as she remembered how she'd begged for more.

She hobbled to the bathroom. Michael came in while she was on the toilet. Her face flamed. Despite the fact he'd seen everything yesterday, she was still embarrassed.

"How do you feel?"

"Sore."

"Sated?"

"No way," she replied before thinking. She hadn't realized until he asked that she was ready for more of the pleasure that only he could provide. She couldn't be horny again, could she?

Michael laughed, a full-throated expression of enjoyment.

She frowned at him. "How can I want more? I'm too sore to be aroused."

He held out his hand and she took it. "Obviously not. Your ancestry is appearing. Don't worry, we'll go easy today," he promised as he helped her up. "But...it is time for my orgasm."

Kate knew she couldn't refuse him. How many men would have waited all weekend as he had?

He led her back into the bedroom. "Undress me."

Kate stood in front of him, suddenly frightened. He just stood, patiently waiting. She mentally shook herself and reached for the buttons on his shirt.

Kate undid one, then another. She paused for a moment, using a finger to trace a line from his neck down his chest to the next button. She looked up to meet his eyes.

"You're doing fine," he murmured. "Keep going."

Kate finished unbuttoning his shirt and eased it over his broad shoulders, pressing her breasts into his chest as she did so. She let the shirt fall to the floor and ran her palms down his chest—his perfect chest, with just enough hair to be masculine. She moved to touch his nipples but he grabbed her wrists and held them tightly.

"You don't want me too aroused, too quickly." He placed her hands on his belt and released her.

Kate unthreaded his belt, moving it slowly from each loop. Her fingers grazed his abdomen as she unzipped his pants. She leaned in close and worked them down over his buttocks before backing off and easing down the front. He wore no underwear so his penis snapped free. She gasped at its size.

He was large—not only long, but thick as well. "I'm not sure I can take you," Kate whispered, fighting the uncertainty and excitement that left her shaking.

Michael raised his hands to Kate's shoulders and bent down to kiss her softly. "You'll do fine," he said, kicking off his pants and shoes before moving her toward the bed.

He didn't start by asking permission to tie her. Instead, he suckled one breast and used a hand on the other. He used gentle strokes, not the hard touch of the previous day. Need rippled through her and started building again. She tried to touch him but he gently pulled her hands away.

"Not yet," he said. He moved down her and began to swirl his tongue around her clitoris. Kate moved—she couldn't help herself. He waited until she was ready to come before asking, "I want to tie you up. May I?"

Kate moaned. "No, not this time...please, I need to touch you."

Michael stopped moving and raised his head. He stared at Kate.

She groaned. She knew he wouldn't continue until she surrendered. "Please..."

"You know what I want." He waited.

Kate came down a little, just off the peak, still needy but not wanting to say anything. Her eyes pleaded with him but his stare was implacable. He waited.

"Just take me!" Kate cried.

Still he waited.

"Damn you!" She shouted. She closed her eyes, feeling her arousal slip away. Michael moved off the bed.

"Surrender or get dressed and I'll take you home," he said as he dressed and left the room.

Kate turned on her side and curled into a ball. The tears started slowly, just a trickle, then she started crying in earnest. She didn't know how long she lay there, unable to obey his command. She didn't want to be tied again but she desperately wanted the sensations he created. Sensations she hadn't known existed. Her world was firmly focused on Michael.

As her tears subsided, she tried to explore what was happening. Why did she feel it was wrong to give in him? Why resist? Kate knew if he tied her again, he'd hurt her. But the pain hadn't really been so bad, had it? Hadn't it enhanced the pleasure? She'd never had orgasms like Michael generated. Worse, she had never realized how addictive sex could be. She felt deeply satisfied on a primitive level. Her body wanted more at the same time that her intellect was horrified.

Michael came back into the room and sat on the edge of the bed. He gently stroked her hair. She sighed as he leaned over and kissed her face.

He startled her when he said, "I'm sorry."

Kate turned her head and looked at him.

"You're so strong. I've never been with a woman as strong as you. My goal is not to break your spirit." He shrugged.

"What is your goal then?" Kate asked. She wasn't afraid, though she knew she wasn't exactly physically safe. But she was emotionally safe, even as she struggled to sort out her conflicting thoughts and desires.

"You—just for this weekend. I want you to please me with your willing surrender," he replied. "Surrender to anything and everything I'll do to you. You know I'll take you places you've never been...hell, I already have." He shook his head. "It's hard because I know I can overwhelm you. I have to stop herself because I don't want your consent simply because you're overwhelmed and desperate for release. I want your consent because you are willing to explore the sexual being that lies just beneath your carefully controlled surface."

"But that just makes me a sex object," Kate protested. The attractive image he painted frightened her.

“No,” he answered. “As a Dominant, I often go unsatisfied to make certain your pleasure comes first.” He paused. Glancing down at her, he said, “So who is really in control?”

“I don’t understand why you need to tie me up. I don’t understand why you need to hurt me.”

“Pain and pleasure blend into one sensation in your brain,” he said as he stroked her head and captured a piece of her hair. He tugged on it just a little, letting her know it would really hurt if he yanked it. “The pain intensified your pleasure, didn’t it?” he challenged her. “Tell me that you didn’t feel more aroused than you ever have by not knowing when there would be pain or when there would be pleasure. Knowing that you didn’t have to do anything but feel and respond because I’d taken the control away from you. Tell me you didn’t like it.”

Kate stared at him. He was right. He’d conquered her in less than a weekend. Kate had read about the Stockholm syndrome. She knew what happened, how the victim fell in love with the captor because he provided all for her. Yet she seemed powerless to stop her longing. Emotionally and physically, she wanted more of what only he could provide.

“You’ve had just a small taste of the kind of sex I enjoy. Accept that fact. It is your choice if we ever have sex again.”

“But you’ll hurt me...”

He laughed, “Of course, that is the whole point. You have to know in every cell of your body that you belong to me and that I’ll take care of you. The pain helps that process but also know that I’m the only one who will ever cause you pain. You have to admit that I am not only physically stronger than you are but mentally stronger as well. I won’t accept anything less than total control.”

A wave of primitive fear and desire washed through Kate. “I’m not ready for that.”

“Yet you didn’t leave when I told you to go this time. Why not?” he countered.

Kate closed her eyes to escape his implacable stare.

“Coward,” he whispered softly.

Yes, he was right. Kate was afraid—not of him but herself. Afraid she’d enjoy the surrender every bit as much as he promised. Part of her reveled in the way he’d led her down this path. She could tell herself he’d forced her. She’d been too innocent to understand his actions. Now she knew she could no longer lie to herself.

Kate wanted to surrender but she wasn’t sure how. She didn’t know how to turn off years of social training. Pain was bad. She wasn’t any man’s slave. Yet she couldn’t shake the image of him—dominating, demanding and relentless. Hateful actions she now longed for him to continue. She was an independent woman but did that mean she couldn’t fully explore her sexuality? How could she not pursue this attraction? Wasn’t sexual freedom part of the modern woman’s code? So why should she ignore what Michael offered?

“I don’t know how to give you what you want,” Kate said, struggling to make sense of her thoughts. Michael was intelligent. She knew he could help her through this dilemma. “I want to surrender but my mind keeps telling me an independent woman wouldn’t agree to this though I know I should be able to explore any kind of sexual relationship I want to explore. I don’t know how to resolve this.” Kate’s eyes roamed the hard planes of his face.

“It’s not the dilemma you make it out to be. Independence is fine for some...but not for you.” Michael smiled. “Think about liberation and what it has done to you. The work and stress-induced illnesses that used to belong mostly to men now affect women like you. You must make every decision for yourself, never being able to rely on another human being. And think about what that same liberation has done to the men in your life. I know the men you’ve been with before haven’t satisfied you. You are too stunned by the orgasms I’ve given you to

have ever really known sexual satisfaction before.” His finger caressed her face. “You have no idea how your innocence undoes me. How exciting it is to watch you break loose of societal constraints.” He stood and started pacing the room. After a few moments, he stopped and stood motionless. “Do you believe I’ll take care of you in every sense of the word? That I’ll meet all your needs, be they mental or physical?”

“Yes,” Kate said, aroused by the thought of Michael providing for her.

“Do you believe I’ll keep you from harm?”

“Yes.” She couldn’t deny that he made her feel sheltered from all others.

“Do you think I can reveal parts of your sexuality that you didn’t know existed?”

“Yes.” He’d already proved that statement.

“Will you surrender to me?”

“Yes,” she answered without thought. When she realized what she’d said, she stared at him with horror.

“It’s that simple.” He smiled as he moved to the bed. He gently raised one of her arms, caressing its length before circling her wrist with silk. He repeated his actions on her other arm.

Lost in his eyes, Kate never even considered resisting.

“That is how you give me what I want.” He pulled back and looked at her. “Say it, say it all,” he demanded.

“Just do it,” Kate said, not wanting to wrestle with the logic demon anymore.

“Give me the words—all of them,” he whispered, his shoulders tight as he awaited her reply.

Perhaps having said yes once made it easier because this time Kate said, “I surrender. For today only, I surrender to your will. Please take me.” Relief swept through her. She didn’t have to worry anymore. She didn’t have to make any more decisions. Her life was in his hands for now.

Chapter Ten

Michael moved to the foot of the bed. He pressed a carving on the bedpost, flicked open a control panel and held down a button. The bed canopy rolled to the side, revealing a ceiling full of ugly-looking metal devices.

Kate pulled her legs up to her chest and tried to free her arms.

Michael placed a hand on her shoulder and pushed her to her back. "Have you changed your mind?"

"What are those things?"

"Just toys. Have you changed your mind?"

Kate looked at the ceiling then back to Michael. He raised his eyebrows.

Kate swallowed hard and mentally shook herself. Time to stop prevaricating. "No, I haven't changed my mind."

"Then relax and enjoy the ride," Michael said as he reached up and pulled down two straps. He circled an ankle with his hand, lightly caressing it as he trapped it in a furred strap. He captured her other leg and pulled it straight before completing her bondage.

He reached over to the control panel and pressed another button. The straps attached to Kate's legs tightened before pulling her legs upward and outward, leaving her open and vulnerable. Michael closed the panel and moved to the side of the bed.

"Tell me how you feel."

"Scared, excited, vulnerable..."

"Empty?"

"Yes."

"Good! You're going to stay unsatisfied for a while. My satisfaction has been delayed long enough. Your body exists for my pleasure." He tore off his shirt and dropped his pants. His erection, hard and thick, pointed toward Kate.

Kate squirmed and pulled at the ropes around her extremities.

Michael crawled onto the bed. He straddled her waist, putting his back against her legs. He laid his cock on her chest then pushed her breasts around it. Using his thumbs on her nipples, he pumped forward and back.

Kate gasped at the sensation. She'd never imagined a man using her breasts as a sheath for his cock or that such usage would be one of the most erotic things she'd ever felt. Her cunt clenched, needing him deep inside even as she didn't want him to abandon her breasts. She groaned, aching and unfulfilled. He ignored her need.

Rocking back and forth against her chest, he pinched and twisted her nipples. As she gasped at the rough usage, Michael grimaced and sprayed cum into her mouth and over her face.

Before she could recover, he used a finger to push his cum into her mouth. "Swallow it all," he growled.

Kate complied and as a reward, Michael turned his attention to her body. Caressing, licking, biting and stroking her. Relentless in his attentions. Kate lost all sense of time. She screamed, mindlessly awash in the sensations he effortlessly created.

She strained against the bonds that held her. Still he didn't satisfy her. The intense session of pleasure became painful. He kept her on the peak, mindless with arousal. Unable to come but unable to relax. She cursed his control even as she pleaded for satisfaction.

"Will you stay with me? Give me permission to keep you tied up forever," he whispered.

"Yes!" Kate screamed. She'd agree to anything to relieve the pressure he'd built.

He smiled as he moved to fill her vagina, not with his cock, but with his fingers. "This might hurt a little. I'll try to be careful," he whispered.

With her legs still in the air, she lay spread open before him. He licked her clit before he slowly, inexorably drove his fingers inside her.

Kate felt herself stretching, widening in a desperate attempt to accept his hand. He was careful but it wasn't enough. He hurt her. But she really didn't care because he suckled her clit while he did it. She felt engorged by his fingers and she loved his possessiveness.

"That's three fingers. I don't think you can take anymore just now."

He gazed at her and she returned his look. She'd never been so intimate with a man. Spread helpless before him, impaled by him and subsumed in his need. He rocked his hand back and forth a little as if to create more space.

Kate moaned. She wanted more and told him so.

"Are you sure?"

"Take me!" she demanded, not quite realizing what she was asking.

He slowly drew his hand back until just his fingertips were in her vagina then he slammed his fingers home, not being careful. He used all his masculine strength to penetrate her.

The pain became intense as he did it again and again and again. But she never dried up, instead she reveled in his power, climaxing with a force that knocked her senseless.

Awareness returned slowly. Her legs were lowered to the bed, his fingers still in her cunt. His head rested on her breasts. She longed to stroke his hair and touch his face. As if sensing her gaze, he raised his eyes and smiled.

"I want to touch you. Untie me."

"You told me I could tie you up forever."

Kate stared at him. "I was in the throes of arousal, I would have told you anything."

"You surrendered when you weren't aroused. You gave me permission. Do you really want to withdraw that permission, knowing that we've barely started your education?" he asked as he slowly withdrew his fingers and moved off her.

Not waiting for an answer he entered the bathroom and returned with a basin and a washcloth.

"If you untie me I can wash myself."

"But it is so much more fun this way," he said while gently wiping her body.

Kate remained silent as he finished.

Michael met her gaze and smiled. "I promise you'll enjoy everything I do to you. Are you sure you want to withdraw your agreement? Think about it before you answer," he said then he turned and left the room.

Kate stayed angry for a long time. Angry because she knew she could easily lose herself in him. Angry that she already had lost herself in him. And angry that he hadn't pierced her with his cock.

Kate watched the sunlight creep around the room. Her throat became sore from screaming for him. She didn't know where Michael had gone but he didn't answer.

Hours later, he came back.

He took one look at Kate and left the room again. Returning in a moment, he brought her water. He lifted her head so she could drink through the straw. He noticed her hoarseness as she tried to yell at him.

"I forgot to tell you the room is soundproofed. I hope you didn't scream too much."

Kate glared at him and said, "Untie me. I need to use the bathroom."

He shook his head. "Don't you long to know what it would feel like to stay tied up? To use a bedpan until I decide different? To have me feed you? To have me bathe you? To know you no longer have to make any decisions, that you no longer have to do anything for yourself?"

"Damn you, let me go! I didn't agree to this," Kate hoarsely countered, frightened because she didn't want to go free.

"Let me remind you again since you seem to keep forgetting. You surrendered when you weren't aroused. You agreed to let me tie you up forever. If you really want to rescind that agreement, I'll let you, provided you can tell me again in ten minutes. You know you aren't fighting me. You're fighting yourself and what your head tells you is right or wrong, not what your body says."

Kate knew what he could do to her in that amount of time. He was right. She knew her head waged war with her body.

He lightly caressed her breasts, gently twirling her nipples in his fingers.

Kate couldn't help it. She started crying. The game was becoming too real. "Please, let me go."

Despite the unease and uncertainty warring within her, Kate found comfort when he crawled next to her and gently held her. Stroking her hair, he murmured, "You've already surrendered. Don't back out now. You know you want an excuse to see how far we can go."

Over and over again, he told her she was beautiful. He made her soar, as if her pain were caused by something other than him.

Kate struggled to make sense of what he'd done in one short weekend. "I need to get to work tomorrow."

"No, actually you don't. I left Eileen a copy of your resignation." He smiled. "Eileen might be a little suspicious but she won't do anything."

Kate stared at him, horrified by the simplicity of his plan, knowing it would work.

"Besides," he said, "there is so much more for you to experience. Aren't you the least bit curious? Two months ago, you told me you'd never agree to pain, yet you did and you had violent orgasms. It was good, wasn't it? We can go much further. Aren't you curious as to how far I can take you?" He licked her ear and she shuddered, knowing part of her wanted to be with him any way and every way possible.

Before she could agree though, she remembered the book. She remembered some of the women and their positions of subjugation. Then she remembered the necklace and the woman who looked like her. She stiffened her resolve. "You've hinted before and now I want to know before we proceed. What do you know about my past?"

He stared down at her. "You're clan, though you have no idea of what that means."

"Clan? Scottish? And you still haven't told me about that woman in the book."

"Not Scottish." He smiled. "And she's your grandmother. She's very anxious to meet you."

"I have a grandmother? Why didn't she adopt me? Why was I abandoned?"

"Are you sure you're ready to hear about your family—your biological family?"

"You've no right to withhold information from me! Tell me!"

"Very well. Have you ever felt stray desires? Desires that seem to come out of nowhere? And have you noticed that you can take more pain? You have more stamina? You're stronger than normal women for one reason."

"What reason?"

"So you can handle my desires and needs. So you can endure pain. So you can channel it into pleasure. That's inherent in you."

"That's crazy!"

"Then why do you respond so intensely to anything I do to you? I recognized you as clan the first time I met you and you can't deny the attraction between us. It's our biology at work."

"I know nothing about that! I was an infant. I was found in a wrecked, stolen car. A car that contained no clues to my identity except for the necklace my mother wore, the same one in the book. If I were part of some cult, why was I abandoned?"

"Your parents left Sanctuary." He shrugged. "It's not a prison. They chose to leave. No one knew your mother was pregnant. No one knew about you until now."

"I want to see these people."

"You will. All in good time."

"That's not your decision."

"Yes, actually it is my decision. Your grandmother accepts that and you will too. We need to solidify our relationship before I take you to them."

"Why? What's our relationship got to do with my ancestry?"

"You need to understand your heritage before meeting other clan men."

"I don't understand."

"No you don't. You haven't grown up with the concept of domination and submission. I'm trying to give you a gentle introduction."

"I don't want your kind of sex!"

"No? You've already agreed to stay with me."

"This is crazy. You need to let me go."

"Not tonight. You've had a busy weekend. Tonight we'll just sleep." Michael freed Kate's bonds and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close.

Kate's mind raced but Michael felt warm and she fell asleep pulled close to his chest with his arms holding her tightly.

Kate woke to sunlight streaming in the window. She stumbled to the bathroom. Then she dressed and followed the scent of bacon to the kitchen.

Michael looked over his shoulder. "Sit down. Eat. It's been a long weekend and we have a lot of work to do."

"But..." Kate hesitated.

“But?”

“You said you were going to keep me tied up forever.”

“Yes, I did, and you believed me. Did it add to the sensation of being captive?”

“You didn’t mean it?”

“Oh I most certainly meant it when I said it. I would love to keep you tied up forever but how would that work? It just isn’t practical without your cooperation so I’ll have to let you leave. You are not ready.”

Irrationally, Kate smothered a sigh of disappointment. “Did you really leave my resignation on Eileen’s desk?”

“Yes, and that means I should get to work early and retrieve it before she sees it.”

“Michael...”

“Yes, Kate?”

“I want to meet my grandmother.”

“Not until you’ve accepted your ancestry.”

Kate frowned.

Michael sighed. “Kate, you’re making everything too complicated. You are made for me. You like what I did this weekend even if you’re not ready to admit it in the cold light of day. That’s okay. I can wait. I won’t force you. I won’t trick you. You’ve had a sample of what I like and how it affected you. Your ancestry won’t let you hide your needs. Sooner or later you’ll accept them. Now finish eating so we can get to work.”

Michael dropped her off at her apartment. “Take your time. I’ll cover for you,” he said before he drove off.

Two hours later, Kate entered the executive suite.

“How was your weekend?” asked Eileen brightly.

Kate shuddered, flashing back to the feel of Michael’s hands on her.

“Kate?”

“Oh it was fine. How was yours?” Kate asked, not waiting for a reply as she made her way to her office. She felt out of place. She didn’t belong here. She belonged in Michael’s arms. She sat down and stared at her computer, making no move to start it. Her phone rang, startling her back to awareness. She picked it up and heard, “My office now!”

Kate’s heart raced as she made her way to Michael’s office. He stood by the window. With his jacket off and broad shoulders backlit by the morning sun, he looked like an ancient warrior. Kate clenched her hands into fists. She ached to run into his arms.

“Close the door,” said Michael, his voice deep and gruff. “And lock it,” he continued as Kate moved to comply. “Kneel,” he said, pointing to a spot on the carpet. “Now raise your arms and lock your hands behind your head.”

Kate swallowed hard, feeling faint. But she didn’t protest as she followed his orders.

Michael circled her.

Kate tensed, waiting for his next move.

“Lower your eyes to the floor and tell me how you feel.”

“I...” Kate’s throat was so dry she had trouble speaking. She tried again. “I feel...”

“Yes? How do you feel?”

Kate tried twice before she could get the words out. “Aroused, Michael. I feel wet and achy. I need you.”

“Kate, I haven’t touched you. Why are you aroused?”

Kate’s eyes flew to Michael’s face as she realized she’d entered the office and followed every one of his orders without any hesitation or protest. Not only followed but anxiously anticipated what he might do next and that anticipation had effortlessly aroused her.

“You need what only I can give you, Kate. Are you ready to accept that fact? Are you ready to let me teach you?”

“Just take me, Michael.”

“No, honey. You gave yourself to me for a weekend. I want more and I think you do too.”

Kate struggled to her feet, shaking her head the whole time. “I can’t...”

“Yes you can,” he whispered. “You’re the strongest woman I’ve ever met.”

Kate shuddered. She tried to fight. She tried to say no. His gaze pinned her though and she knew she couldn’t simply walk away from him. She needed to know what he could teach. There was no way she could resist him.

Michael watched Kate struggle. He felt powerful when he saw the desire flash across her face, her eyes deep pools of need. It took all his self-control not to grab her and just fuck her. He’d never had a submissive so defiant and strong yet at the same time so innocent and pliable. The heady combination made him a little dizzy. He ached and briefly wondered how long he could ignore his needs.

“Let me take care of you.” Michael moved close behind her and circled an arm around her waist. He pulled her back against his chest and said, “Forget societal rules. Grab your happiness. You know you want to be with me.”

Kate closed her eyes, listening to Michael’s murmuring voice. She did want him. Why was she fighting? The pain hadn’t been that bad, she had wanted it and Michael had been right, he took her somewhere she’d never been before. He promised there was more and he knew her family. So many reasons to say yes and the only reason to say no was her silly idea of what she should and shouldn’t do sexually.

Kate relaxed into Michael’s broad chest and said, “Yes, Michael. Yes, I want what you’re offering.”

Michael turned her and his hard lips descended. Kate lost herself in his kiss. It felt so good to surrender to his strength.

After a few moments, he pulled back a little. “I want you to have lunch with Eileen and tell her you are resigning.”

“What?”

“You need to tell Eileen you’re resigning. Tell her about us and make sure you tell her you are with me because you want to be with me. I don’t want to be arrested for kidnapping.”

Kate frowned, remembering Eileen’s claim that the women Michael seduced were there because they wanted to be. She didn’t like the idea that she was about to become another one. “I don’t want to just be another of your women.”

“Kate, you’re clan. You’ll never just be just another woman. I used the others because I couldn’t find a clan woman to live outside Sanctuary. You’re different.” He pulled her even closer and stroked her cheek. “You are very different. I’ve no intention of ever letting you go.” He kissed her hard. “Now scoot,” he said as he swatted her rear. “Make a lunch date with Eileen. Today is your last day of work.”

Kate left the office. She couldn’t believe that she planned to turn her back on everything familiar to follow an unknown path. She felt a twinge of panic but she believed in Michael.

Besides, this was her decision and it seemed as though the fact that she was clan would influence all her actions now. If things went wrong, at least she'd always have a place there. She had enough money set aside to live for six months. She'd be okay. She had to accept his challenge. She really had no choice and that's what she told Eileen later that day.

"Kate, you can't be serious. I told you what I heard about how he left other women."

"Eileen, you've been in a happy marriage for forty years. Would you tell me not to pursue the first man who has seriously interested me in years?"

"Oh Kate, you know I believe in relationships but this one is different. He's changing you. I can see it and I'm not sure the decision you're making is yours or his. He's not nice to his women. He leaves them broken and alone."

"I'm different."

"I'm sure they all thought they were different."

"He knows my grandmother."

"What? You told me you don't have any family!"

"I was wrong. He's going to take me to see her."

Eileen shook her head. "Kate—"

"No! I have to do this Eileen."

"Oh child." Eileen shook her head. "You know where I am if you need help."

* * * * *

Eileen entered Michael's office. Not worried about her job, she told Michael, "I'll be watching you. Kate's a good woman. She doesn't deserve to be hurt."

"I'll take good care of Kate and you're wrong, she was born to be hurt by someone like me."

Eileen's eyes widened in horror at Michael's statement and his cocky grin. This was a side of him she hadn't seen before. This man was dangerous. What had Kate gotten into?

Michael watched Eileen's horrified expression. She couldn't do anything now. He'd already turned in his resignation, as well as Kate's. Soon they'd be beyond Eileen's watching eyes. Kate belonged to him now and he could barely wait to get started. Apparently Kate felt the same. Later that afternoon she entered his office and said, "Can we get out of here?"

Chapter Eleven

Michael watched Kate enter his home. He knew she still wasn't prepared for the full depth of her heritage. He had to move slowly. She needed to build up her stamina and experience first. She'd surrendered, but simple surrender was not enough for a mating. Before he was done, she'd crave his attentions and beg for pain. She'd ceded one level of control but she had no idea how many other levels existed for someone like her.

Kate drew in a deep breath and turned to face Michael. "Are you going to fuck me now?"

He chuckled. "You aren't ready yet."

"I want you. I don't care if you hurt me. I need your cock deep inside me. Haven't I waited long enough?"

"No, actually you haven't. You'll receive me when I say, not just because you want me. You haven't earned it yet," stated Michael, his voice harsh.

Kate stared at him.

"You still don't quite get it, do you? You're mine now. You have no say in anything we do." He wrapped his fist in her blouse and with a quick downward motion, tore it off. Kate tried to back away but he grabbed her arm while he tore off her bra. Then he let her go, naked above the waist.

"I am going to hurt you. I am going to teach you about every kind of pain. The dull, the sharp, the ache, the empty, the slash, the burn, the throb. Oh there are so many different types of pain. I'm going to teach you all of them."

"You'll kill me!"

"No, that's the whole point. You'll heal very quickly. You're clan. You can take anything I give you and before I'm done you'll *want* everything I give you."

Kate backed away. Had Eileen been right? Was she in over her head?

Michael watched the fear flick across Kate's face. "Kate, you know you want it. If you fight me, it will excite me too much and I won't be able to stay in control. Fair warning, this is your last chance to escape. If you don't leave now then you're agreeing to anything I chose to do and I've already told you what I want."

Kate's cunt clenched. She wanted this man. She couldn't—wouldn't—walk away from him. She had to find out where Michael could lead her. "I'm not leaving but I'm frightened."

"Of course you are. You've shut off a huge part of yourself. It won't be easy to free you. It's been buried deeply beneath the layers of the culture of a society that you thought you belonged to. Are you staying?"

Kate couldn't bring herself to leave before she found the truth. Swallowing hard, she nodded.

"Then it is time for your education to begin. The clan has rules for Dominants and submissives." He chuckled. "Well, the rules are more for submissives. You need to learn them." His voice hardened. "First rule—anytime you break a rule I will punish you. Second rule—you obey me without hesitation. The third rule is mine. You don't wear clothes in my home unless I say. You will be naked most of the time." Michael moved close and grabbed

her again. He finished stripping her before pushing her to her knees. “Do you understand the rules, Kate?”

Wide-eyed and stunned, she couldn’t answer.

Michael threaded his fingers through her hair and forced her head back. “You just broke a rule. Which one, Kate? Tell me which rule you broke?”

“I...hesitated.” Kate stopped.

Michael’s grip intensified. “Which rule is that, Kate?”

“Rule two!”

“Very good. What does rule one say?”

Kate’s eyes filled. “You will punish me. Please, Michael—”

“No, Kate. I can and will punish you.” Michael went to his knees in front of Kate. He let go of her hair and captured her face. “Kate, are you sure you’re ready for this?”

Kate stared into his golden eyes. “No I’m not sure but I have to know where we can go.”

Michael smiled. “Good girl! Let’s go find a suitable punishment for you.” He stood and helped her to her feet.

Michael led her to the bedroom and tied her to the bed. He then proceeded to work on her all evening. He caressed and bit and pinched. She was so aroused and needy but he kept pushing her to a peak then stopping. He counted how many times she broke the rules and told her he’d continue tormenting her until she learned them.

“You’ll never know satisfaction again if you don’t get it right.” He continued until she obeyed without hesitation.

She clenched her jaw in an effort to stop begging for satisfaction. Still he didn’t stop. Finally she fell asleep, exhausted from being held on the peak for so long.

* * * * *

Kate woke the next morning, unsatisfied. Her vagina ached with emptiness. Her clit felt enlarged and sore, as did her nipples. She looked down to see them erect and begging for attention. She pulled against the fur cuffs holding her spread-eagled. She longed to masturbate, to ease her need. She squirmed against the bed but got no satisfaction.

Michael entered the room with a finger against his lips, cautioning her to silence. “Close your eyes and don’t peek,” he said.

Kate instantly obeyed. She kept her eyes closed despite all the noise Michael made. She was curious. What was he doing? But she didn’t dare peek. If nothing else, she’d learned to obey.

It seemed like an eternity to Kate before Michael said, “Open your eyes.”

She immediately noticed the heavy curtains shutting out the daylight. She turned curious eyes to Michael but remained silent. Michael smiled and pointed.

Kate looked over to see a chest sitting in the corner.

“Have I told you how much I like toys? That’s my toy chest. I think you’ll really enjoy some of them. I know I will. But not right now. That first,” he said as he pointed to the other corner of the room.

Kate looked over to see a small table. Arranged on the table were some of Michael’s collection. She looked at him questioningly.

“Very good, Kate. I guess our session last night did teach you something,” he said. He picked up the smallest statue, small being a relative term. The jade object was easily two inches across and eight inches long. Not too large but not small either.

Michael walked to the bed and caressed her stomach.

Kate’s eyes widened in lust and embarrassment. Was he going to use that thing on her? Her cunt clenched. She needed something but did it have to be a dildo? Why couldn’t it be Michael’s large, warm cock? She stayed silent. Michael’s intent gaze clearly indicated that her concerns were of no matter to him.

“This is your first punishment,” he said.

Kate nearly groaned. If this was punishment, what was yesterday? With her legs tied apart there was nothing to stop Michael from putting the tip in her vagina. The jade stone was cold, erotic and scary all at the same time.

Michael looked at her. “Relax. This won’t hurt too much.” He smiled as he slowly worked the dildo into her vagina. She felt her vagina stretch. The cold of the hard stone bit deep and chilled her need a little.

Michael stroked her clit and toyed with a nipple. Pleasure warred with the hard object in her vagina and she tried to escape but Michael moved his hand to her abdomen, preventing any movement. With his other hand, he rotated the dildo, gently moving it around but not deeper. “It will warm up in an hour or so,” he said calmly as tears leaked from her eyes.

“Sink into the sensation. Let it carry you away.”

She shook her head.

“Are you disobeying me?”

She shook her head again.

“I didn’t think so. But you’re still fighting your responses. You have to let yourself go. You are clan. You can take anything I do to you. As a clan submissive, you belong to me. Your body. Your mind. Everything belongs to me. Pushing your boundaries will teach you that faster than pleasure alone,” he stated as he slowly rocked the dildo back and forth.

Moisture flooded her cunt. She held very still while her pussy worked to adjust to the hard object buried deep.

“That’s right,” he snapped his fingers, as if just remembering something. “I owe you more punishment.”

He smiled as he reached into his pocket and pulled out some jewelry.

“Your body is an instrument to be played for my pleasure. These are nipple clamps. Have you ever used clamps?”

Kate shook her head.

“Good.” He twisted and pulled on one of her nipples. Intense sensation arrowed straight to her vagina, tightening it around the jade dildo as he attached the clamp. He waited a moment and then asked, “Are you ready for the next one?” He held it up for her to see.

Despite the alligator teeth, and the agony from the first one, Kate knew what Michael wanted. She nodded.

He grinned. “You’re learning.” He repeated the procedure on her other nipple.

Agonizing pain shot through both nipples. Kate felt nerve lines running directly to her shoulders. She tried to hunch but it didn’t change the sensation. All of her attention focused on her nipples, overwhelming the now dull ache in her cunt.

He smiled as he brought his hands around her breasts and started massaging them.

Her nipples extended even more. She moaned as he cruelly pumped them. She couldn't breathe. The pain was blinding.

"Sink into the pain," he repeated over and over, his eyes never leaving her face.

Kate tried. She knew by now that giving herself up to it made it bearable but this pain was too intense, too sharp. She couldn't get on top of it. It overwhelmed her.

"You can do it," he encouraged. "Don't worry," he smiled again. "Your nipples will go numb soon. Then all you have to worry about is when I rip off the clamps and sensation returns." He pinched the tips and twisted the dildo one more time before leaving the room.

Kate didn't know how long he was gone. She drifted in and out of awareness. She lost herself and drifted on the pain. Arousal lurked just below the surface. Kate could feel it tantalizingly close but still out of reach. She tried to relieve herself by squirming but the dildo wouldn't move, it was simply too big.

Her nipples were numb and the dildo was warm by the time Michael returned. Kate tried to calm her racing heart. He looked dangerous as he loomed over her. He raised a hand and lightly stroked her face. She'd never felt so helpless. She'd never felt so aroused.

Michael leaned over her and blew on her clit before sucking it into his mouth. He ripped off the clamps. Kate gasped as sensation flooded back into her nipples. Her orgasm was unexpected and painful in its intensity. Her vagina contracted around the hard dildo. However, it was also powerful and satisfying. How could she like this pain? How could she like what he had done? How could she feel so empty when Michael removed the dildo?

Michael drew a bath. He carried her to the bathroom and said, "You shouldn't be surprised by the intensity of your orgasm. The foreplay started yesterday. The pain heightened your need. It didn't dampen it. You need it to give you the fullest possible pleasure. That's bred into you. The sooner you accept that fact and quit fighting it, the sooner we can move deeper into exploring your sexuality."

Kate frowned up at him.

"That's right. We've barely started. From now on," he said, "you will never have pleasure without pain, pain without pleasure. Your body will become attuned to that fact. After a while, pain alone will cause a pleasurable orgasm. You are mine," he stated as he gently washed her vagina, "and you will accept your ancestry."

Michael helped her out of the bath and towed her dry. He led her back to the bedroom. Then he lowered her feet to the floor and forced her to stand. "Stay there," he said.

He slowly undressed, watching her expressions as he did so. Kate's hands itched. She wanted to play with his nipples and run her hands across his chest. She licked her lips, thinking about his hard, taut skin and how good it would taste. His cock sprang free, fully engorged. Michael stepped toward her.

He pressed on her shoulders and forced her to her knees. "I want you to suck me," he said as his cock pressed into her mouth. She eagerly opened her mouth while he held her head still. His hands wrapped in her hair. Using her like a convenient receptacle, he pressed deep. When he hit the back of her throat, Kate gagged.

"No," he stated softly, "swallow me as if my cock were the most delicious thing you've ever tasted."

Kate's eyes pleaded as he pressed deeper and she struggled to obey. She struggled for air. He pulled back a little so she could breathe.

"You breathe at my pleasure, you know that, don't you?"

Kate nodded.

“Good girl,” he said, praising her, and pulled out entirely. He walked over to his toy table and held up a device she’d never seen before. Two leather straps were attached to a large rubber O-ring. “This will help.” He walked back and inserted the “O” into her mouth then attached the straps to the back of her head.

The circle was larger than his cock, so now she couldn’t close her mouth on him. She was open entirely for his pleasure.

He eased his cock inside her mouth, pushing all the way to the back once more.

Again, she gagged.

He pulled back and slapped her. “Swallow,” he ordered as he pushed deep into her throat again.

Kate’s throat stretched, trying to accommodate his width. She felt violated and vulnerable. She felt aroused.

He continued to move in and out until she had the motion down. She knew when to swallow and when to breathe. As her skills increased so did his speed until he was ramming his cock down her throat. He reached down and twisted a nipple as he shot his cum deep.

Hot waves of pain and pleasure washed down into her stomach as the same washed up from her vagina. When the waves met, Kate lost herself, simply feeling his power and his domination and his control.

Michael removed the gag before he scooped up Kate and laid her on the bed. He sat on the edge, waiting for her to rouse back to awareness. He stroked her body, inventorying all the bruises he’d created. He knew they weren’t serious, all her minor bruises would fade by morning. Being clan guaranteed quick healing.

* * * * *

Kate moaned and opened her eyes, surprised that she wasn’t bound. She looked up at Michael and smiled. “Can we have sex now?”

He laughed then bent down to give her a quick kiss. “You’re not ready yet.”

“You keep saying that. What do you mean?”

“When clan members mate—mate, not have sex—it is a violent explosion. You haven’t come far enough to handle our mating.”

“I’ve accepted everything you’ve done.”

“But I haven’t done anything nearly extreme enough to free your heritage.”

“What we’ve done isn’t extreme enough?”

“No,” said Michael as he continued stroking her. “You’ve only been here a day. We have a long way to go.”

“What are you waiting for? What do you expect to happen?”

“There’s a link that forms. A link in our minds. We shared visions when we first met but now you’re fighting that link. You haven’t surrendered enough yet for the link to fully form.”

“A link? In our minds?”

“Yes.”

“Michael, I don’t like the sound of that and I’m not sure I can take much more.”

“Do you want to leave?”

Kate hesitated, her stomach knotted and she longed to say yes but looking into Michael's eyes, she felt her fear slip away. "No." She shook her head. "I have to follow this through to the end...even if it kills me."

"It won't kill you, Kate. I promise you'll be okay, even if it doesn't always feel that way. I'll take care of you. Now get some sleep. I'll leave you untied tonight. You need a small break."

"Will you sleep with me?"

"No but I will stay with you until you fall asleep."

Michael crawled next to her and pulled her into his arms. The familiar scent of cedar washed over Kate. She sighed. She was content to be able to touch Michael and she quickly fell asleep.

Michael disentangled himself from Kate. He stood and looked at her sprawled form. So tiny. So delicate. Their ancestry was truly amazing that a body so small could take everything he could dish out and still beg for more. He smiled. He knew just how to proceed tomorrow.

Chapter Twelve

The next day, Michael allowed Kate to bathe then led her out to the living room. Kate knew she'd only been with Michael a short time but her old life felt unreal. Only her time with Michael counted. Was it really only the second day? She was losing track and she didn't know if she cared. All that mattered was here and now—this current moment.

Michael led her over to his collection. He stood behind her with his hands on her shoulders and whispered in her ear, "Pick one."

Kate shuddered as she looked at the statuary. It was still barbaric but now she felt a thrill of excitement. Kate was aroused. She felt like a kid in a toy store with unlimited funds, wanting everything.

He nuzzled her ear.

Kate slowly looked over the collection. She imagined herself as the female in each pose. She felt faint, her knees weak with longing.

Michael supported her, pulled her against his chest and moved his arms around her torso. One hand lingered over her clit, lightly caressing, as he waited for her decision.

She moaned and leaned her head against his hard, masculine chest. Sinking into his gentle caresses, wishing for more pressure.

"Greedy woman. Pick one," he ordered as he stopped touching her and moved his hands to her shoulders so she faced his collection.

She felt panicked that she didn't know what Michael wanted. She wanted to please him. She'd accepted the pain but it wasn't quite right yet. Even she could feel there was some kind of barrier. She knew Michael was working very hard to break down that barrier. Kate couldn't help feeling frightened by what would happen then. Michael's hands tightened on her shoulders, bringing her back to his question.

Kate shuddered and trembled so hard only Michael's grip kept her standing. Her gaze roamed the pieces but she already knew which one she needed next. With a shaky hand, she pointed.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

Kate nodded.

"Why that one?" he whispered as his lips nuzzled her hair.

"It's haunted me," Kate replied simply. "From the time I saw it in your collection. It was in the book too..."

Michael reached around her and pulled the piece out of the cabinet. "She's totally helpless, isn't she? Tell me what you feel when you look at this."

"Ecstasy. Total physical domination."

The woman lay facedown on a special table. The table had holes. Her breasts hung down through two holes. It was obvious that the holes were a little small so that her breasts were compressed by the opening. Weights stretched her nipples, the clamps biting deeply into her breasts. A strap ran from one side of the table, across her back so she couldn't move. The woman's arms were stretched over her head, as if reaching for surcease. Straps across her

upper arms, around her elbows and at her wrists held her in place. Her face fit into another padded hole so her face was visible only when Michael turned the piece. The woman had an O-ring gag in her mouth. Another strap held her head in place. Eye cups covered her eyes and ear plugs dimmed her hearing.

“This is a feature I really like.” Michael pointed to the lower end of the table.

Kate hadn’t noticed before, but that end was padded too, rounding up and pressing against the soft part of the woman’s pelvis. A strap across the waist held the woman in the table’s embrace. It wouldn’t do to cover her buttocks. Thin red lines indicated she’d already been whipped. The waist strap didn’t hold her pelvis, she might have moved during the whipping except for the rest of the table’s design.

The table ended at the end of the woman’s torso. Her legs were placed in a Z-shaped device. Her thighs aimed back toward her head and inclined downward at a shallow angle. Then her knees were bent, resting on padded planks. Almost doggy style yet with none of the freedom allowed by the position. Straps held her upper thighs. Other straps above and below her knees and at her ankles completed her imprisonment.

All of the woman’s orifices were exposed but empty. Her rectum was red and tortured looking. Yet despite its painful appearance, her labia were swollen and glistening, her clit extended. She looked very aroused.

“I have a table like this,” Michael whispered in Kate’s ear. “Do you want to try it out?”

Kate started. It was a device requiring supreme confidence in one’s partner. The woman was totally open, vulnerable and restrained. There was nothing she could do to protect herself. She wouldn’t even hear or see what was coming next. She wondered if she could take it. Then she nodded, trembling so hard it was difficult to breathe.

“Answer me,” Michael whispered.

“I...I want to try out the table, please.”

Michael hugged her tightly. Then he swept her off her feet and carried her downstairs to a basement she hadn’t realized existed. Kate stifled a moan as she saw the room. Every torture device used in the statuary was full-size in this room. Even the soft lighting couldn’t lessen the harshness of the equipment. The basement contained a variety of brutal toys but her eyes fixated on the table placed prominently in the center of the room. She was frightened. She was aroused.

Michael must have sensed her turmoil because he sat in a chair, still holding her. His hands and voice soothed her as he bluntly told her what he wanted to do to her. Then he paused and asked, “Is this of your free will?”

With a flash of her old defiance, Kate yelled, “Stop! Stop offering me a way out! That only makes it harder for me! I agreed to this journey and I need to see it through all the way to the end. Don’t ask me again!”

“Ah, progress. I will take you at your word and not ask again.” Michael smiled and led her over to the table. He made her kiss it before she climbed on top. She hadn’t realized that the table could be adjusted exactly to fit her body. He made her fit her breasts through the holes. Then he made an adjustment to tighten the holes. It was like having part of her breasts bound. It didn’t hurt but she knew the pressure was there and she knew he could create more if he chose.

He slowly and methodically placed her body as he wanted it, adjusting the straps so they held but didn’t cut off circulation. But once again, Kate knew he could increase the pressure at any time.

The padded lower end of the table pressed into her, but apparently not enough. It was a bladder device and he expanded it more so Kate's internal organs felt compressed. Her pelvic bones did not rest on the table. Her lower body was supported entirely by the padded bladder pressing into her, the straps at her thighs pulling her tight against the device.

"How can you fit anything inside me with that pushing in so tight?" she asked.

He laughed and said it wouldn't be a problem.

He left her head for last. "I'll do your head last. Once it is strapped, you'll go somewhere else and I want you to know exactly how restrained you are before that happens."

Finally, he was satisfied. He came around to the head of the table. "Look at me," he commanded. "Can you move anything other than your head?"

Kate tried. She couldn't.

"Once the gag is in place and your head is bound, you won't be able to stop me." His words threatened and promised at the same time.

For just a blinding instant, her mind screamed at her not to do this. Then arousal took over and her bodily needs overrode all sense of self-preservation. Her cunt, spread wide by her position, was dripping and she could not stop what she'd set in motion.

"Do it. Please, just do it."

He put on the eyecups and then placed the O-ring in her mouth. He gently placed her in the face hole and strapped her head. He left the earplugs until last. Before he put them in, he bent near her ear and whispered, "I'm very proud of your bravery. Enjoy the ride, sweetheart."

Michael placed the clamps on her nipples and slapped her butt until it felt angry and hot. He inserted something large in her cunt then added something to her rectum. When they started vibrating, she couldn't even squirm as her need built to a raging fire. All she could feel was blind need.

He lowered the head of the table. Kate hadn't realized the table inclined in either direction. After lowering her head, which raised her butt in the air, he left her alone to ponder her position. Kate had never felt so helpless and so isolated. He was right. Overwhelmed by sensation, she went someplace else, somewhere deep within. She didn't know or care where he was or when he'd be back.

The rest of her time was a blur of pleasure and pain. She only remembered bits and pieces and Michael never told her how long she lasted on the table.

* * * * *

Days later, Michael watched Kate sleep and thought about how far he had pushed her. Too far, too fast, too perilous, yet her heritage still hadn't fully bloomed. So many years of social and cultural training made her distrust the pain. He wanted to bring her along slowly but he didn't know how much longer he could wait to satisfy his desires. He walked around in a constant state of arousal. Arousal to the point of pain, and while he didn't fear his own pain, it did make him a little wild and a lot dangerous. How much longer before Kate broke free?

No matter how long it took, he had to be patient. He had to wait for her natural instincts to surface. If he didn't, their joining would be as sterile as if she were simply human. He wouldn't sabotage their mating that way. He'd broken many of her barriers. It wasn't her fault she'd spent so many years in the wrong society. It wasn't her fault her cultural prejudices ran so deep. He could do this and if he couldn't then he'd have to take her to

Sanctuary and some other man would. That was just unacceptable. Kate belonged to him. He just needed to figure out the right trigger. What would create a crack he could then widen? Maybe it was time to move deeper into her head.

Kate woke when Michael entered the bedroom. He wrapped her hair around his hand and dragged her off the bed. He silently led her downstairs into the dungeon as she struggled to get free. He showed no remorse, no hesitation as he placed the collar around her throat and chained her to the wall. Then he raised an arm and put a leather band around her wrist. He bound her other wrist the same way. He pulled her arms high above her head until she stood on tiptoe, barely touching the ground. The weight on her arms was relentless as he spread her legs and fixed a spreader bar between them.

Kate writhed, trying to move. She couldn't. She felt the chain at her neck as he turned her to face the wall. He lightly spanked her ass. "You are turning a nice pink," he commented.

Kate felt her ass warming as he continued. "Do you like the idea of being beaten?" he asked.

"No," she replied breathlessly, knowing he had much more in store for her and knowing she was aroused by the fact that he would cause her pain.

"Ah, still lying to yourself. We'll have to do something about that and I know just what to do. I'm excited to be the only man to explore this virgin area," he whispered in her ear as he pressed his length against her back.

Then he moved suddenly and Kate heard a whoosh at the same time that she felt a sharp sting on her warmed ass.

She screamed.

He laughed, "Darling, that was a love tap. If you are already screaming, you'll never make it through this."

"But it hurts!"

"Of course it hurts. It is supposed to hurt. It will hurt even more before I'm through with you. You know that. You want to hurt," he stated.

"Not like this," Kate moaned.

"Any way I choose," he replied. "But I really don't want to hear you scream." He inserted a gag in her mouth. "I do want to hear you moan though, especially as the pain turns to arousal." He grabbed her cunt and felt her wetness. "See, you are already turned on and I've barely started," he said as the cane whistled through the air again and again and again.

He hit her ass. He hit her thighs. Her back was not ignored and neither was her anus. Halfway through, he stopped and inserted a butt plug, violently shoving it in, expanding her to the breaking point.

"Don't lose it," he ordered, whispering in her ear as he pressed against her from behind again, increasing the throbbing pressure, "or I'll punish you even more."

Kate struggled to comply, even as she wondered what could be more punishing.

He stopped again and Kate thought they were done, but he merely attached nipple clamps with weights so she could feel her arousal even more as shooting pains raced from bobbing nipples to empty vagina. And the whipping continued.

By the time he was done, Kate sagged in the restraints, unable to stand. Pain and longing washed through her like a cleansing wind. From her stretched shoulders, bearing the weight of her body, to her abused nipples, to her throbbing back and thighs, she ached and wanted him in ways she never thought possible.

He removed the gag and asked, "What do you want now?"

"You." Kate sighed. Her cunt was begging for fulfillment, but after the whipping, he left again.

Kate felt the pain change. The welts turned to throbbing aches. Still she wanted more. Just when she thought she couldn't stand the weights on her breasts any longer, he came back and yanked them off. Kate moaned.

Michael pushed her back against the brick wall. The rough stone caused the pain to change again. Michael grasped her face in his hands. "Break free, Kate! Open your mind!"

"I've surrendered! What more do you want?" Kate screamed and opened her eyes...to find herself in bed with Michael's arms wrapped tightly around her. His golden eyes stared deeply into hers. Suddenly she gasped as she felt Michael's hand slap her butt. Yet his hands remained still.

"What...how...?" Kate tried to form a coherent question, still feeling the whip and butt plug.

"That's a small taste of your heritage," he whispered.

"I don't understand. It wasn't real?"

"It felt real, didn't it? That's only a piece of what's inside you." Michael kissed her forehead and placed a finger on her lips as Kate started to ask another question. "Sleep now. We'll talk later."

* * * * *

A period of peace descended. Michael knew he'd pushed Kate to her current limits. She needed time to adjust to her new position. They talked about bondage and domination and submission. They talked about why her pain and pleasure receptors crossed and melded. He had no problem explaining what he was doing. He knew that even if Kate was aware of his tactics she'd be unable to resist.

They were sitting at the kitchen table, finishing breakfast one day when Michael said, "You'll never enjoy plain vanilla sex again. It simply won't please or satisfy you. You belong to me. You need to set your mind free so we can fully mate."

"You keep saying that. What does it mean?"

"I'm not sure you're ready to accept...everything yet."

"Do you really think I'll ever accept if I don't know what I'm getting into?" Kate asked with a spark of her original defiance.

Michael's lips curved into a half smile as he answered, "You crave and take the pain to create a channel between us and the rest of the clan. You won't understand until we complete the process. It's like trying to explain sex to a virgin. No words can describe the act. Know that the pain has a purpose. I'm not hurting you to simply hurt you. There is a reason and a need."

"Why can't we just have sex? What's the holdup?"

"You are the holdup, honey. I can send you visions as I've already demonstrated but you aren't sending me anything. When the channel is complete, I'll feel everything you feel. Then we'll know we are close to bonding."

"I have no idea of how to send you anything and what difference does it make?"

"The difference is your sanity. Mating is a violent and powerful process. You need to be ready and you aren't. To send to me, you need to break through all the years of conditioning and social constraints that you've accepted because you were raised in the wrong society."

Kate shook her head, still confused.

“Let’s do something you understand,” Michael said, holding out his hand to her.

Kate took it and let him pull her to her feet. He led her upstairs. Pausing briefly, he opened a closet and pulled out some sheets before continuing to the bedroom.

Michael made Kate stand at the edge of the bed. He spread her legs and roughly inserted a butt plug in her anus. She felt the pressure and didn’t care as she struggled to control her breathing. He looked up at her and smiled. Then he inserted an egg vibrator into her wet vagina, turning it to its highest speed. “Feels good, doesn’t it?” His words caressed her as she fought panic. He gently spread her labia then roughly attached clamps to her clit and labia.

Kate shuddered.

He moved her legs together then he started wrapping her tightly from the hips down. “You won’t have to worry about losing the butt plug,” he stated as he continued wrapping. “The wrappings will hold it in. The wrappings will hold in all the sensations, as well as your arousal.” He smiled up at her again as he finished with her feet.

Kate felt tight, like she would explode as the sensation of total helplessness washed through her. But he wasn’t finished.

He placed vicious clamps on her nipples. Not only did the clamps pinch, they pulled. They were weighted with heavy lead balls that swung with every breath she took. “I can’t take any more,” she moaned.

“Yes you can and you will, you really don’t have a choice,” he said. “We are committed to this.” He paused. “Aren’t we?” he questioned softly.

Kate sobbed as she nodded.

“Then we continue,” he said as he placed a pillow-like device on her abdomen. Then he pushed it in and she gasped as he wrapped it tightly to her. It pushed her abdomen in so she could feel every pulse of the vibrator throughout the entire area. It no longer just vibrated in her vagina. It now vibrated the butt-plug. It vibrated the clamp at her clitoris. It vibrated the clamps on her labia. She vibrated in every part of her lower body.

“I hope you like my additions,” he whispered as he continued to wrap body. Her shoulders and breasts were still free when he stopped.

“Beg me to hurt you,” he commanded.

Kate struggled to look at him. She was afraid. His latest actions were ruthless and hard with no trace of the smile he usually wore.

Chapter Thirteen

He saw the pleading in her eyes and he hardened his heart. How much more could she take? She had to break free.

He worked the bindings over her breasts and nipple clamps in such a way that the weights still swung free. He reached her throat but didn't stop. The bindings were snug.

Kate could breathe, but she could never forget she was bound. He put cotton in her ears, dulling sound, but not silencing it. He left a little hole for her nose and mouth. He covered her eyes so all she could see was blackness. Then he picked her up and carried her to the bathtub.

"The bindings will absorb water," he told her as he made sure every part of her was wet. "They'll shrink as they dry, binding you tighter than I ever could. You might find it difficult to take a deep breath. You might feel faint. You will definitely feel constrained. You know this is what you want. You know this is good," he said as he picked her up and carried her to the bed. He placed a heavy chain around her waist, adding to the pressure in her abdomen. "Don't want you to roll off," he said as she sensed him stand back and inspect his handiwork.

"Find yourself, Kate. Find the crack in your mind that will release you."

Kate groaned, unable to move her mouth enough to reply any other way.

He tweaked a weight and Kate groaned again. She tried to squirm but her attempts were useless. She couldn't move.

He continued playing with the weights. Her nipples were now on fire from his attentions. He slowed the vibrator. Kate tried to yell but he ignored her attempts. Then he was gone. She felt his absence and started to panic. *He can't leave me like this*, she thought before she stopped thinking altogether.

She felt her isolation. She felt herself and only that. Nothing else existed in the world. The bindings tightened but she could still breathe.

Kate felt the low-level vibration, the pinch of the clamps and the pressure in her rectum. She felt everything and nothing outside her body existed any longer. It took a long time for the bindings to dry, agonizing millimeter by agonizing millimeter. Every time she thought she couldn't stand it anymore it didn't stop and she had no choice but to accept.

She endured. She longed for an orgasm. She couldn't come though. He'd made sure her arousal wouldn't go away but wouldn't be satisfied either. Kate started moaning and couldn't stop. She needed him. She needed the release only he could give her. Yet still he didn't return. He always pushed her past what she thought she could handle.

Michael stood in his living room, fingering the jade cock. He couldn't believe Kate's strength. Did he dare push harder? For the first time, he doubted his ability to break her reserve. He'd thought the whipping vision would create a crack and it had, but not enough of one. Even the mummy wrappings hadn't forced it wider. He'd been certain that, if she were needy enough, she'd use her mind to form the link and to call out to him. She hadn't. He couldn't seem to force the link to work. For the first time in his life, he hesitated. He'd caused her enough pain to free her. Any more would cross the line, even for him.

His phone rang and he debated whether or not to answer it before sighing and picking up the receiver.

“What’s the problem, Michael?”

“She’s still resisting.”

“Then up the pain.”

“Dad, I’ve already taken her beyond anything I’ve ever done to any other woman—any other clan woman—and you know that’s a lot. Kate’s mind isn’t ready for more.”

“But it’s her mind you have to turn off. You know that. If you can’t do it, bring her to Sanctuary.”

“No. She’s mine. I’ll teach her.”

“Michael, you’re demanding too much of yourself. Let us help.”

“Kate belongs to me. No one else touches her. I’ll finish this myself.”

“Michael, even clan women have their limits. We can feel her.”

“How can you feel her when I can’t?”

“Don’t panic. It’s not a real link, Michael. Just a low-level intensity and it might be coming from you, not her. Some of the women are afraid that she’s near breaking. You want to bend her to your will, not break her mind entirely.”

“I know, Dad. I wish you could help but this is something Kate and I need to work out. We’ll get through this together,” Michael said before ending the call. He wished he were as confident as he’d claimed but he still couldn’t feel more than the barest thread of a link between them.

He could send her visions but the channel was one way. Her thoughts and feelings didn’t echo back the way they should. Was she crippled by her upbringing? Without the link—a strong link—he couldn’t bring her all the way and show her everything she was capable of feeling. He poured himself a drink. He swallowed the fiery liquid in one gulp and then shook his head. He wouldn’t accept defeat. He had a few more tricks he hadn’t tried yet. Kate was in for a busy day tomorrow.

* * * * *

Kate felt every muscle in her body. This time after playing with her and inserting his toys, he’d chained her to the cold dungeon floor. She’d spent a miserable day and she felt every nerve ending. She throbbed. She ached. She wanted more of the wonderful things Michael did to her. She napped, dreaming of orgasm. She was amazed she’d slept at all but Michael was right. Her body seemed able to handle things she’d never thought she’d survive. Not only had she survived, she felt exhilarated by her success in coping with everything Michael had done. She longed for him. She wanted his touch. She needed him. As if her thoughts had conjured him, he came in and sat next to her.

He gently raised her face and said, “I want you to tell me your darkest fantasy, the one you’ve barely admitted to yourself.”

Kate struggled to laugh. She hadn’t had much practice laughing lately. “I’m living it now.”

“No...haven’t you realized yet that there is always more?” He lightly moved a hand over her nipple, which immediately hardened. “I love that,” he said softly as he bent his head to lick the tip. “I love the way your body is out of your control, the way it responds to me.”

Kate shuddered, knowing he was right.

He demanded again, “Tell me your darkest fantasy.”

Kate shook her head.

Then he surprised her by gently unchaining her and removing all her jewelry and dildos and restraints.

“You’re free to go,” he said, waving his hand toward the door.

“No...” Kate whimpered, horrified by the thought of ending her torture, of leaving him.

“Yes,” he stated coldly, his rapidly changing moods always catching her off guard. “Unless you tell me your darkest fantasy, the one that’s haunted you the entire time you’ve been here.”

Kate stared at him, horrified, wondering how he’d known that indeed she did have a dark fantasy, one she’d discovered when she met him. Kate looked at the door, knowing she should leave as he silently waited for her decision. She struggled to her feet—weak. She was not sure she could even make it to the door.

He sat still as he watched and waited.

Kate sobbed, cursing her weakness as she felt her way along the wall. There was no way she could walk across the open floor.

Still he sat waiting. Looking at her.

She felt his gaze like a hand caressing her body.

She finally made it to the doorway. Then she slumped to the floor, too weak to continue. They stared at each other across the room. Kate sighed. She didn’t want to tell him. She didn’t really want her fantasy to come true, did she?

Still he waited.

Kate’s sobs quieted though tears silently dripped down her face. She wanted his comfort.

But still he sat, across the room, far from her. Not touching her with anything other than his eyes. Waiting.

“My fantasy would kill me,” she stated softly.

“I won’t let that happen,” he replied. “You know you can count on me. We need to break your barriers without breaking your will, Kate. You have to submit and cooperate for that to happen. I feel our link now but it is a weak and fragile thing.”

Kate shuddered, knowing she was going to give in, but still resisting.

He waited, not threatening her, not encouraging her, not comforting her.

Kate knew she should leave. She should crawl out the doorway if necessary. Hadn’t she been through enough? Why did she want more? Why couldn’t she tell him no? Why was she helping him destroy her? Her body had betrayed her, rejoicing in the mixture of sensations only Michael could create. Now he wanted her mind to do the same.

He waited for her answer, knowing she needed him. She needed his discipline. She needed to submit to him. She needed the training only he could provide.

Kate looked at him helplessly, not wanting to take the final step, yet knowing she must. She told him her dark fantasy.

He rose and came to her. He picked her up and smoothed her hair back. “Tomorrow,” he said, “we’ll start tomorrow, after you’ve had time to think about it more.” He carried her to the table, laid her on the wooden surface and bound her wrists and ankles.

Kate knew it would be a restless night. She was scared. She was aroused. She couldn’t get the image of the next day out of her head.

* * * * *

Kate woke and felt as if she were going to crawl out of her skin. She was aroused to the point of frenzy. Every part of her body was sensitized, waiting for Michael.

Just as she thought she couldn't stand any more, Michael entered the room.

"Michael," Kate screamed, "please, I've changed my mind. I don't want to do this. It's too much."

"Oh Kate, that's what you don't understand," he said, shaking his head. "There is no fantasy too dark between us. That's what being clan means." He kissed her. A deep, erotic kiss, which left no doubt about his possession.

He moved around the table so she could see him. "Are you afraid of more pain?" He waited while Kate struggled to assess herself.

"I need release, please—"

"That is not what I asked," he said, interrupting her.

His eyes locked with hers and she lost herself in their golden light. Something snapped deep inside. Kate took a breath and stilled her racing heart. "I'm terrified but before you ask, I don't want to leave."

He turned and went outside for a moment, returning with a brazier. He remained silent as he carefully arranged the charcoal and lit it. "It will take a few moments to reach the right temperature." He moved next to Kate and stroked her abdomen.

Kate watched him. Knowing that her fear excited him, she tried to remain calm. Burning was not erotic, she told herself, even as she felt her excitement rise.

Michael's hand trailed down to her pussy. He stuck a finger inside her. "You're wet," he commented and smiled.

"Please..." Kate struggled to frame a plea.

He caressed her face. "Don't fight your arousal."

She looked up at him, struggling with breathless excitement. She couldn't speak.

"My symbol," he stated simply as he held up a short rod. The end curved into a small butterfly, less than an inch across, the lines delicate and curved, ready to take flight. "It makes a small, very delicate, beautiful mark. I can't wait to see it on you."

Kate was horrified by the excitement she felt at the thought of being branded. She wanted it and she could imagine the burn and pain it would cause.

"The pain will be intense but you'll heal."

"The brand will be forever though," Kate replied.

"Of course, that's the whole point. That's why you asked for it, isn't it? The brand will mark you as mine." He smiled as he continued lightly caressing her body. "A reminder of me, always present on your body reminding you that you belong to me. You should feel honored that I agreed to mark you."

Juices dripped from her cunt. "Brand me as yours, Michael."

The coals were now red, glowing hot, and he moved away from her. He carefully embedded the butterfly into the heat. "A few more moments. You have time to think about it." He walked back over to her, holding the magic egg. He placed the device in her vagina and turned it on. "There," he said, "that should get you in the proper frame of mind."

The egg vibrated. Not enough for her to climax, just enough to cause her pussy to clench. Definitely shy of an orgasm. She writhed. She hoped he'd do more when he returned.

She didn't hear him come back into the room. Despite his size, he was silent as a cat. She was lost, focused on her arousal, the brand forgotten in her desperate need to come, to be

satisfied. Waves of lust passed through her, alternately tightening every muscle in her body, more and more until she felt like one giant cramp just waiting to release.

“Open your eyes,” Michael commanded.

Kate struggled to obey, to come back from her internal journey.

“Are you with me, Kate?”

“Please, I want to come,” Kate begged him, still not able to bring her mind back to the brand.

“Soon,” he promised as he removed the vibrator, careful not cause an orgasm.

Kate could still feel its buzz, even though it was gone.

He pulled his wide belt from his pants and snaked it under her chest. Then he pulled it tight across her nipples, binding her breasts close to her chest, so tight that her breathing became shallow, even as her nipples reveled in the rough feel of the leather. “Left or right,” he murmured as he stroked each side and Kate realized he planned on branding her at the upper curve of a breast.

“No! Not there,” she protested.

“Yes there. It is the perfect place.”

“No!”

“Oh yes, exactly there, so if you dare bed another man, he’ll see my mark on you. You belong to me, I’ll brand you wherever I please,” he stated as he walked over to the brazier and removed the glowing brand from the coals.

Kate sobbed with dread and arousal as he moved toward her.

“If you move, the brand will blur. I don’t want that. You will hold still because if the brand is blurred I will continue branding you until I get a perfect impression. Do you understand?”

Kate nodded, knowing she was helpless and in his hands. Calm descended. She wanted to please him. She wanted a perfect brand too.

He laid his arm across her shoulders. She couldn’t see what he was doing so she closed her eyes and waited.

The wait was not long. She felt the glowing, hot brand burn her skin, marking her as his...forever. Kate screamed at the searing agony, which remained even after the brand was gone.

“Excellent,” he whispered as he inspected his work. His eyes glowed with possession. He lightly blew on the burn.

Kate squirmed with pain.

“Tell me how it feels.”

“It hurts!”

“That’s just physical. Tell me how your mind feels.”

Kate stared helplessly at him. “I feel owned.”

“Good girl. You are owned.”

“Yes,” she said, sighing with relief.

“Are you still aroused?” he asked as he began stroking her again.

“Yes, please help me come,” she begged, all pride and resistance gone as she realized the pain from the branding had not decreased her arousal. It had intensified it to the point that she mindlessly needed the satisfaction that only he could give her.

“Soon,” he smiled as he smoothed a cooling gel on her brand. Then he moved between her legs and licked her clit, sliding two fingers into her cunt. He laved and caressed her until all sensation blended into ecstasy. All that mattered were his actions between her legs. Her orgasm was sharp and long as waves of pleasure swept her away.

* * * * *

Kate woke to sunlight streaming into the bedroom. The heavy drapes were gone, as were her bonds. What was going on? She looked at her breast, expecting to see the butterfly brand but her breast was smooth with no trace of a burn. She nearly sobbed with disappointment. Had it all been just another vision? But it had seemed so real.

Where was Michael and why wasn't she tied up? Did he expect her to stay in bed? What did he want? Kate gasped when she realized she was trying to predict his desires. She felt as if she were waking from a dream. Where was her independence?

Kate gingerly sat up and fought off a wave of dizziness. She eased her legs off the bed and slowly stood. It had been so long since she'd walked unaided. Where was Michael?

Chapter Fourteen

Kate showered. Proud of herself for remembering rule number three—no clothes—she ignored the pants and shirt on the chair. She slowly made her way downstairs. Her mind raced, amazed that the scene had been yet another vision. She could still feel the burn and the arousal it had given her and the satisfaction Michael had given her. How could it be not real?

She entered the kitchen to see Michael's head slumped on the kitchen table.

"What's wrong?"

Michael straightened. "We're through," he said.

"What?"

"We can't have intercourse until you embrace your heritage! If we just have sex, your mind won't be able to handle the confusion and intense sensations. I won't do that to you, much as I'd like to. Whether you believe it or not, I'm protecting you! Now get out while you still can."

Kate stared at him, hearing the words but not understanding. "What do you mean?"

"I've never brought any woman as far as I've brought you," Michael murmured as he lightly touched her body.

Kate moaned, a simple touch from Michael more arousing than any intercourse she'd had with other men. She ignored his words and his worried glance.

"Kate, look at me."

She struggled back from that place in her mind—the place he'd created. A place where sense was everything and thought held no sway. She had trouble focusing on his eyes. She struggled to understand his words. Words were such a poor substitute for touch and sensation.

Michael looked serious. "I can't *make* you connect, Kate."

"What...?" She struggled to form a coherent sentence.

"Kate, you have too many barriers. I was certain the vision of your branding would break through to you." He shook his head before running a hand through his hair. "We're just not connecting the way mates should."

"But...you wanted me to...to crave...to beg for pain." She stumbled over the words.

"And so you did." He smiled. "Far beyond anything I'd dreamt of before. No woman has ever caused me to reach my limits before."

"I don't...understand."

"We're done, Kate. I can't do more without risking your safety. Your heart nearly stopped during the vision. I'm sure you don't remember it but you nearly died. That's too far for me."

"But I don't want to stop!" Kate yelled at him. "You did this to me. You made me crave the pain. You made me crave you. You can't just walk away. No other man will ever be able to satisfy me the way you do, Michael. No other man will ever be able to turn off my mind," Kate argued.

Michael stood. He walked to her and grabbed her face between his hands. "Kate, if you still want to explore your ancestry, I can take you to Sanctuary. Maybe another man will be able to do what I haven't."

"I don't want another man! I want you!"

"Then damn you, open your mind to me! Send a thought to me! Anything so we can create a channel between us!"

Kate's eyes filled. "I don't know how."

He let her go and stepped back. "I'm sorry, Kate. I never really thought I'd find a woman who could accept everything I dish out. I've always had to stop before I was done because the woman couldn't take any more. I never thought of what would happen if I found a clan woman who couldn't touch her heritage. It would be physically dangerous for you if we were to stay together any longer." He paused then said, "I want to push but I'm afraid I'll damage you beyond repair, permanently. I like your helplessness. I like giving you pain. I like your dependency. It makes me feel good," he calmly stated as he moved close and gently brushed her hair.

"Then why stop?"

"Haven't you noticed how things are escalating?" he asked. "No, maybe you haven't." He chuckled. "You've been fairly out of it at times." He shook his head. "I've noticed. I've noticed how each time the pain has to be just a little greater so the pleasure remains the same for you," he whispered proudly. "But still you deny your natural inclinations. It is time to stop before you get hurt."

"I can take more!" Kate insisted. Then she paused, realizing what she was asking of Michael.

"Yes," he said, "now you're beginning to understand." He shrugged. "That's why we need to stop."

"Damn you!" Kate screamed, knowing he'd made up his mind and they were done. "No! I won't let you do this to me. I won't let you toss me out like you've done with every other woman!" Kate felt something explode in her head. She gasped as she felt Michael's torment, so great that it forced her to her knees at the same time that Michael cried out.

"Kate!"

He grabbed her head and forced her to look deeply into his eyes. They glowed golden and warm. Kate felt as though she were falling into a deep abyss of hurt and longing. She reached an imaginary hand to stroke the knot of pain she found in Michael's head, soothing it into a smooth line as she projected her need for him.

His eyes narrowed and he smiled, that little half grin that Kate knew meant he was planning something she might not like. She felt him stroke her clit. In return, she stroked his cock. All the while they knelt on the floor facing each other.

Kate lost track of time as they mentally explored each other. The pain and the pleasure mixed in a part of her mind she'd never felt before. They communicated in ways beyond Kate's wildest fantasies. No wonder Michael had insisted upon breaking her free. She felt Michael's longing and dark needs as if they were hers. At the same time, he echoed her need to submit. Their lust mingled into one overwhelming ache that took her breath away.

Michael slowly pulled back.

Kate stared at him and whispered, "What's happening?"

"You've done it!"

"What?"

Michael smiled. "That's the link we need. You feel me even as I feel you. Incredible, isn't it? I knew you could do it."

No," she said, "we've done it. Will you fuck me now?"

Michael laughed before he stood and pulled her to her feet. "Yes, let's finish this stage and create a new beginning. Now that the channel is open I can take you the way I've longed to do. Just follow my lead and you'll finally realize what it means for us to mate."

Michael threaded his fingers in her hair and forced her against the long, lean line of his body. His rock-hard cock pressed against her as his tongue invaded her mouth. She moaned deep in her throat as her hands moved to his butt, forcing him even closer. He ended the kiss. His eyes narrowed with need and he said, "Let's take this someplace more comfortable. I want our first time to be memorable for our joining, not a hard kitchen floor." He took her hand and led her upstairs.

Kate thought they'd go to the bedroom she'd been using but Michael led her down the hall to another room. His room. Burnt amber carpeting covered the floor. Surrounding the dark masculine bed like an ocean of fire. Kate's breath caught when she realized the four-poster bed had chains attached.

Michael released her hand. He started unbuttoning his shirt. When Kate moved to help, he grabbed her wrist and said, "No. Just watch." He slowly undressed as Kate's eyes devoured him. She no longer had to pretend she didn't want the pain and everything else he would teach her. He smiled when he removed the last piece of clothing and Kate swallowed hard. Once again realizing just how thick and long his cock was.

"You're so big! I need you so much. I need to touch you."

"No. You need to learn to use your mind. If you want to touch me, use your mind." He gave her a quick hug before he captured her wrists in one hand and led her to the bed.

"No, Michael. I want to make love to you and I need to touch you to do that."

"I want to mate and you don't need to physically touch me. Use your mind," Michael said as he bound Kate's wrists. "Of course, I can still touch you. That's my reward for being so patient," he said as he crawled into bed. "I want to feel your naked body against me."

Michael stroked a long line from her neck to her pelvis then followed the same line with his mouth. He avoided her nipples. He avoided her cunt. He avoided her clitoris. Kate grew wild, needing an orgasm.

Wound tight with need, she begged, "Please...let me touch you."

"Use your mind, Kate," he growled.

Kate tossed her head. "Please..."

"Your mind, Kate. Use your mind."

Kate stared at his bent head as he licked his way across her hipbones. She fought to find the right place in her head, to open it so she'd be able to reach Michael. She forced her lust into a corner so she could concentrate. It felt like a door opening. She entered and sent a thought, a long stroke straight to Michael's cock.

He looked up and grinned. "That's it. Do it again."

She smiled and did as he asked, adding a slow lick to one of his nipples.

He stared back and inserted a real finger into her vagina. She clenched, trying to hold it inside, but he'd already left. "I think you're ready now."

He shifted and moved the tip of his penis to her labia. "This might hurt a little but you'll enjoy that, won't you?" he asked. Not waiting for a reply, he continued, "I'll go slow. Just try

to relax. Would you like a drink before I start?" he asked calmly as if they were on a date and not on the precipice of the unknown.

Kate felt his penis throbbing. Hot, it was so hot compared to the coldness of the dildos. She struggled to form a coherent thought. Needing him. Needing every sensation he could give her. Needing his possession. She shook her head.

"Good girl," he murmured as he moved forward a little.

Kate gasped at his size. He'd barely entered her and she felt stretched beyond anything she'd ever thought possible. She felt his cock forcing her open. As he continued to press forward her vagina stretched. She couldn't stop herself, she tried to escape him.

He stopped his movement, "No," he said, "don't move or you'll excite me too much. If I lose control, you'll really get hurt," he promised as he kissed her. "You really don't want me out of control," he threatened as he gently pulled on a nipple.

Kate nodded and took a few deep breaths. She made an effort to relax, to accommodate him. She mentally stroked her fingertips along his butt.

He murmured, "That's good..." then pushed forward again. Slowly—so slowly—he continued to enter her. She could feel his width expand her, as though her abdomen filled as he embedded more of his length inside her. His eyes never left hers. He stopped and withdrew. "That was half," he said.

"I want you but I'll never be able to take in all of you."

"Yes, yes you will. You'll take me all the way to the hilt and you'll love every minute of it. It will hurt so good you'll explode."

Michael kissed her while gently massaging her breasts. Her desire rose again as he pushed forward. The pain was less this time. When he reached the halfway point, he stopped again but didn't withdraw. "Do you have any idea of how expanded you'll feel when I am entirely buried within you?"

"Michael, I feel so full now, how can I possibly take any more?" Her vagina tried to grasp his size.

He moved a hand to her abdomen. He pressed down and rubbed. "That's it," he murmured, "relax, take deep breaths."

Kate did as he ordered. His will was hers. She felt him deep inside her mind. She felt his pleasure as he forced his way deeper into her cunt. She felt herself gripping his penis in a tight, warm, wet hold.

He pressed forward again. Then he stopped. He pressed forward again and again stopped.

The burning sensation between her legs overwhelmed her and she finally cried out, "Please stop, just for a minute, let me adjust."

"I know what you're feeling. You don't really want me to stop, do you?"

"It burns! Please, please stop. Just for a minute." She tossed her head, trying to escape.

Michael captured her head with his hands. Staring deeply into her eyes, he said, "Feel me."

Kate focused all her will on Michael's topaz eyes. She took a breath, then a deeper one. She shoved aside the burning sensation between her legs and felt Michael's hard body on top of her. She reached with her mind, stroking his butt and up his back. Reaching his head, she forced it down for a kiss. Their tongues tangled and Kate's discomfort lessened.

"That's the way." Michael bent his head to give her a real kiss before moving his hips forward again. Again the burning started.

“Michael, please...it hurts...it hurts too much.”

“Really? You can’t lie to me or to yourself anymore. I feel your excitement and your need. You don’t want me to go slow. You don’t want me to stop. You want me to fuck you hard and fast. You’ve been denied for so long. Break free now, Kate!” he said. He pushed with all his strength and rammed his pelvis against her clitoris.

She felt her delicate organ against his hard bone and she moved closer. Her vagina struggled to accommodate him. Her hips twitched as she tried to push her cock even deeper. *Her cock?* For a brief second she realized she’d lost track of her own body and she felt only Michael’s lust. His strength and power intoxicated her and she screamed for more. Her mind shifted back and forth between them, between the sensations of being male, of being female, of being one among many, many minds.

Kate panicked. What was happening? She tried to pull away from Michael but he held her tightly. “Enjoy the ride,” he whispered. “Enjoy your heritage.”

She felt several minds all working in harmony to force her to a higher and higher plateau. They fueled her lust and need until finally overwhelmed, she screamed her release. Wave after wave of pleasure gripped her as her vagina clenched around Michael’s cock until all her barriers washed away.

* * * * *

Michael was still inside her cunt when she roused again. She felt his pelvis grinding against her clitoris. His eyes glittered as he half smiled down at her.

Kate felt filled in unimaginable ways. The discomfort was tolerable. Simply a counterpoint to the incredible experience she’d just had.

“Are you all right?” he asked.

She nodded, not yet able to speak.

“Good,” he said as he started moving. “Know you are clan. Know you are my mate. I possess you and own you even as you possess and own me,” he said as he withdrew before pumping in and out again.

Before Kate had a chance to ask what was happening, her body clenched with need and her mind filled with a kaleidoscope of faces, hands and bodies. Like a group orgy where every part of her body was touched by another and every opening filled. Some of the touches were pleasurable and some painful. Absorbed in the sensations bombarding her, her mind ceased processing and she was carried into ecstasy.

* * * * *

The next time Kate woke she was alone and untied. Her vagina throbbed. It was hot and sore. Her insides felt bruised. She briefly felt angry at his assault. Then she laughed at herself. The anger was a holdover from her old society. Now she had a new one with new customs that she quite enjoyed. She wanted more. She wanted Michael again. His determined claim had left her with no defenses and she found she liked the sensation of helplessness. She sent her mind seeking him.

Michael walked into the bedroom.

“How do you feel?”

Kate stretched her arms toward him and smiled.

He grinned back and picked her up. He carried her to the bathroom and placed her in the bathtub. He gently washed her.

“You handled that remarkably well,” he said.

Kate looked at him longingly.

He laughed. “You want me again, don’t you?”

She nodded.

“We need to let you adjust for a day.”

“I’m not sure I can wait. I’m so aroused.”

He leaned forward and gave her a hard, quick kiss. “You are my mate, aren’t you?”

Kate shuddered and fleetingly wondered where her will had gone before dismissing the thought. “What happened? Who were those people?”

Michael smiled. “That’s what it means to be clan. We rarely have sex alone. Although I didn’t think it would be quite this powerful, given that we’re not in Sanctuary. Did you enjoy it?”

“You know I did.” Kate shook her head. “It was incredible. You were helping me through it, weren’t you?”

“Yes. If I hadn’t, you’d have gone mad from the confusion of sensation. Now you see why the link between us was vital.” He touched a bruise with a finger. “I had to go much further than even I wanted, to forge that connection.”

Kate stroked his face. “We’re past that. No regrets. No sorrows. Every ache and pain was worth it.”

He bent his head for a quick, hard kiss. “We’re not quite through.”

“What do you mean?”

“As strong as our joining was, it is a pale reflection of being in the enclave.”

Kate blanched. “You’re joking? I don’t think I could survive anything stronger.”

“I think you’ll not only survive, you’ll thrive. Shall we find out?”

“What?”

“I think it is time you meet your grandmother.”

“Can’t we just stay here and adjust for a few weeks first?”

“I know you’re not a coward, Kate, but maybe you’re right—a few weeks of playtime first so you can strengthen your abilities.” Michael smiled and carried her back to bed.

* * * * *

Two weeks later, Michael drove up a winding mountain road. He smiled over at Kate. His mate. His woman. He’d take care of her and make sure she wasn’t overwhelmed by being clan. She looked a little nervous but excited. The last few weeks had surpassed all his expectations. He’d been right to wait for Kate to grow into her abilities. The suffering of the last few months was over for both of them.

Kate’s heart soared as Michael drove through the large gates and she got her first view of Sanctuary. Tall trees surrounded a small mountain lake. Cabins nestled in the woods. Soon she’d meet her grandmother and her new family. A feeling of belonging washed over her as she felt surrounded by the life force of the clan. After so many years alone, Kate knew she’d be very happy here.

About the Author

Cyna Kade started reading science fiction and fantasy when she was ten. By age fifteen, she added romance to her reading list. Erotica followed much later. Cyna believes the best books mix genres, and she's followed that belief in her life. She's lived in the north, east, south and west. She's been married and liberated and deeply loves her children. She's worked as an x-ray tech, computer programmer, systems analyst, university instructor and has earned a multidisciplinary Ph.D. Hobbies are equally varied, including stained glass and tai chi.

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