

21 Sins

by

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## Chapter One

### My Beautiful Girl

“My beautiful girl,” he whispers in her ear. She clings to the tall, decaying trunk of a dead aspen, where once in a long ago summer, small green leaves quaked, shivering in the airy mountain breeze. She shivers in a similar way, a tremor that starts at the top of her mop-like hair and travels through her firm, naked flesh, becoming more than subtle as it passes through her rounded bare behind. The flesh there is opulent; its natural color a pearly hue, sometimes a blush of pink, occasionally bluish when she shivers from the cold. At this moment, however, the color of that rounded, quaking ass has deepened to an angry red.

She has been beaten. Even now, as he whispers in her ear as tenderly as a lover would, she feels the hot fire of punishment on her skin. It warms her body and will eventually soothe her spirit in the same way his simple words soothe her.

She sighs, expelling a cleansing breath of air as the pain in her body begins to dwindle.

“Our days are numbered, just a handful remain,” he tells her. “We have to relish every second.”

“No, sir, you’ll not go.”

“I have no choice, my darling.”

“But without you...” she starts, her voice full of urgency.

“Hush,” he stops her. “Without me you’ll remain who you are, guided by those who come after me. They will take you on a different journey, but they will love you, too.”

“How can you say that, when you don’t know?” she looks up pleadingly, whispering her objection. “When you won’t be here?” Tears form in the corners of her eyes, threateningly—no different than any other day for the last six months of his illness.

“No crying, love,” he softly reprimands. “The end will be on us quickly enough.” She sees the pain in his eyes and how the bright bold color of dominion fades a little more each day. He walks with a cane now, though he still has the fresh exterior of a young and robust man. And for the moment he is with her, feeling the wildness of her sexual spirit unleashed by his brutal whip, he is more alive than in his grave.

“The day will come when my tears won’t stop,” she says, with a degree of haughty self-assurance she rarely shows—though it is essential to her make-up, essential for the life she leads. Will, determination and self-control are replete in her complicated personality, just as her desire to suffer, to surrender, to please, and to be this man’s humble slave forever have defined her.

Sadly, there will be no ‘forever’ for these two.

When he touches her flaming ass with the palm of his hand, the paradox she lives and breathes each day nags at her again. Her master is cruel, a proud sadist in love with the act of beating her, turning her skin into ribbons of red wounds, and watching her writhe under the weight of his floggers and the sting of his whips. Even the way he binds her causes pain, as her wrists are wrapped with thick sisal, which cuts into her tender skin the more she struggles at the whipping post. The cruel elements of nature collide with her this day, as a sharp wind castigates her tormented flesh. She has no idea which sensation to feel as so many batter her body.

Now that the whipping has ended, the paradox begins in earnest. Her lover, her master, discards his pompous cruelty in favor of genteel kindness. He kisses her ear, massages her wounded ass, and takes the steamy heat pouring from her crotch and turns it into a climactic surge of orgasmic bliss. She whimpers as she begins to come on his loving hand. She caws and mews. Her body bucks against the post, scratching her pure white breasts on the splintered wood. Yet, she doesn’t care anymore with this climax crashing through her like an angry tiger crashing through the jungle. Her head thrashes back and forth and her lips part as her cries fly aloft like seagulls into the air. Her eyes have brightened into an eerie glow. Then for several seconds, they roll back into their sockets as the ecstasy takes her deeper. Her master’s hand, lodged purposefully between her legs, is flooded by her wetness, bathed in her juices. He holds his fingers to her lips and makes her lick them clean. She cannot resist his touch, disobey or

disappoint him.

He's pleased. "Such a good girl you are. Such a survivor."

He talks this way a lot these days... how she is a survivor of her life and every fate that has tried to slap her down. Fate brought her to him. Now fate will take him away from her, but she will remain intact, able to go on being the woman she has become. He is preparing her for his end and her new beginning.

When he removes her from the whipping post, she falls to her knees in the mud—a product of last night's rain across the valley. He snaps the collar and leash around her neck and leads her to a fallen tree, which becomes their makeshift bed. Tying her—arms stretched above her head, her legs wide open—with her wounded backside against the scratchy bark, the pain in her shoulders and ass returns. But he cares little about her comfort; a chameleon to the very end, his sadistic, self-serving desire returns. He straddles the tree trunk between her open thighs and removes his thick erection from his pants. Impaling her in one swift thrust, he begins his last vigorous taking of the slut he's created. She cries again, and grunts like a common whore, as he stabs her cunt repeatedly. Then she comes one more time as her master takes his pleasure. For an angry, despondent man this is the only joy he knows now. He will savor it to the finish, until the last burst of excitement, the last trickle, the last gasp, the last spasm finally quits his body, and he is done.

"Thank you," he silently whispers as he peers into her hooded gaze.

She stares back at him, forever haunted, forever wounded by his love.

## Chapter Two

### Lot 21

"And Lot 21 goes to you, Sydney," Tuck Stevens closes the ledger having divvied up the week's assignments between Sydney Wingate, Astrid Kimball and himself. He picks up a manila folder and flips through the sheets as he sits back and sighs. "Might as well get your feet wet."

Sydney fumes, all 110 pounds on her slight frame. She doesn't look frail at all, however. Her brunette hair is fixed in a short, slim pageboy—an easy style for a woman who has little time to spend on frivolous female affectations. She takes pains to project an efficient and persuasive image, wearing glasses rather than contacts, just to be taken more seriously. And her clothes are sedate and tailored, befitting her position in the judge advocate's office.

Regardless of her attempts to present a professional persona, however, she exudes a cool, confident femininity with every breath. She is lush, built like a goddess, with gleaming emerald eyes and a deep, sexy voice. At the moment, however, all femininity and professionalism are pushed aside. "I don't want to 'get my feet wet', Tuck. You knew when you hired me that I wanted no part of these cases."

"Yes, and times change," he intones plainly. Tuck is one of the good ol' boys, easygoing, casual in his dress and manner, but when it comes to decisions, once made, they are written in stone. This one is no different and Sydney feels that in her bones. "You can't do a decent job and skirt this issue any longer. Ignoring it will not make it go away, I don't care how it offends your sensibilities." He looks her

directly in the eye, not wavering an inch.

“Okay,” she quietly relinquishes.

He stares at her still, then smiles, then nods his head and looks back down at the file in front of him.

“Lot 21...”

“Doesn’t she have a name?”

“A name?” As if the idea has never crossed his mind. “I suppose.” He pours through the document, trying to please the irritated Ms. Wingate. “Yes, here,” he spots what he was looking for. “Melinda.”

“Melinda what?”

“You want a last name, too?” He looks befuddled.

“It would be nice,” she does her best to contain her anger.

Tuck shrugs. “They don’t have last names, Syd. They don’t really have first names, just numbers. Hers is 21. But since she was with Samuel Janes last, call her Melinda Janes, if you like. That good enough?”

She purses her lips, annoyed. “No, not really, but I suppose I can’t expect more.”

“She’s a voluntary commitment,” he continues in the face of her glaring green eyes. “And your intervention need only be a formality. She’s applied for permanent status. You review her file, give her the basic interview, the exam and rubberstamp the request. There’s no need to ruffle anyone’s feathers over these cases. You can’t stomach the idea? Well, I got news for you, these girls like what they are doing—even the ones that come from within the system—like the pros in Nevada like it. Don’t make a case of it, Sydney. It’s not worth the grief. The system is not going to change anytime soon.” His bushy eyebrows narrow as he makes his point.

“Maybe I want to make a case of it. Maybe I want to be sure that she hasn’t been coerced by anyone. I’ll take your file, and do the job. I’ll do a thorough job, just as I do everything else. Okay with you?”

“Sure. Whatever.” He shakes his head as he hands his colleague the file on Lot 21.

“Any deadline on this?”

“Not that I know of.” He looks at Astrid to agree. The woman is the older, harried, blowsy version of the younger Sydney. Her dark hair is piled atop her head, slightly askew where she tucks her pencil when not in use. Although her make-up is a little heavy for a woman approaching sixty, she maintains a comely professional appearance. Thirty years ago, she turned many a head and had men beating down her door. A raw and knowing sensuality oozes from her slightly over-weight body, making her comfortable to be around. Now she garners a degree of respect that she’s rightfully earned.

“No deadline,” she confirms, though she raises her eyebrows meaningfully. “But Sydney, don’t make a big deal of this. The girl’s made her decision, and I think it was a pretty independent one. Her guardian wasn’t the usual kind; they had a special relationship from what I can gather. Kind of sad, actually.

Together for five, six years, three in an official agreement, and he had cancer—one of those quick virulent cases. He'd just turned forty, young, good looking. But," Astrid sighs sadly, "he decided on the quick way out, crashed his car into a culvert. The girl's heartbroken—seems the blush never wore off. Given the circumstances, I think it's best to have her placed as soon as possible."

Sydney views the woman thoughtfully. "Maybe you're right. But then, given these circumstances, there's reason to exercise some caution before we rubberstamp the rest of her life."

"Perhaps." Obviously, like Tuck, the woman thinks Sydney is taking the process far too seriously. "I understand she even has a new guardian waiting in the wings, and the transfer could be pretty painless."

"That's good. I'll keep it in mind." Sydney employs her best clipped but civil retort, and with file in hand, excuses herself and leaves the room.

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The transfer sector of the Detention Building has always made her queasy. Her stomach begins to churn, her heart races. Sometimes her head feels as if it's about to explode as she walks its corridors. The practices taking place behind the dank stone exterior are spoken of in convenient euphemisms that easily rattle off the tongue, without disturbing one's ethics. Those who work within speak in code to keep the reality of what takes place inoffensive.

When she spends her time counseling wayward teenagers and juvenile runaways, she justifies her presence in the system, considering herself a positive force—a counterbalance for the harsh alternatives. Her work takes place on the 'other' side of the building, far from the transfer sector, far from the evil that runs concurrent to the task of reformation. Nearly every one of her cases sent the troubled girls back to their families and a society willing to give them a second chance—not always an easy task when the process would just as easily make them grist for the mill that continually requires fresh recruits. She's grateful that not one of her charges has been permanently detained. But then, she has been dealing with the mildest forms of aberrant behavior. Why bother with the hardcores? They are only destined to disappoint.

"You've been assigned to Room 75. Lot 21 will be delivered there when you're ready." The secretary is an efficient woman, fast on her way to becoming a *lifer*—an institutionalized bureaucrat with a heart of stone and a facial expression that suggests her size 45 underwear are much too tight. She moves like a great machine, deliberately, ponderously. In ten years, she's turned looking down her nose through her coke bottle glasses into a fine art.

"I believe her name is Melinda," Sydney corrects her.

"Lots don't have names. And we don't need do-gooders here. Give her the once-over and send her on."

"Excuse me, I don't recall your name?"

"Ms. Goudy."

“Ms. Goudy, I have been retained to give counsel to Melinda Janes—Lot 21 as you call her. She is a person, not a thing, and I expect that you and your staff will remember that while she is in this facility. She may well walk out this door a free woman, entitled to the respect that you’d accord anyone. It would be premature to assume that I will simply ‘*send her on*’.”

“Oh, you are the naïve one,” Ms. Goudy scowls.

Sydney ignores the comment. “Room 75 down this hall?”

“It is.”

“Then have Melinda brought to me right away.”

“Whatever you say, ma’am.”

Sydney’s body quickly expels a burst of energy, as if she could shake the creepy feelings away and feel like a normal human being in this freaky setting.

At the far end of the corridor, she opens the door on Room 75 and stares dazedly at the pale green windowless room with the great mahogany desk in its center. No. This won’t do, she immediately decides. But there’s no time to change now. The girl is already coming down the hall. Sydney scoots inside, takes her seat and attempts to look casual and inviting inside an atmosphere of oppressive gloom. Maybe she should have brought a flower for the desk to soften the mood, she absurdly thinks just before she hears the knock on the door.

“Come in.”

The door opens and a matronly guard leads the naked girl into the room. Her subject wears a chain around her neck, which is attached to the leash tightly held in the woman’s firm fist. “Lot 21, ma’am,” she says. “Just ring me when you’re finished. There’s a guardian who wants to view her this afternoon, but I need your permission.”

“I’m sorry, you don’t have my permission,” Sydney answers flatly. “I haven’t even begun my interview. The guardian will have to wait.”

The woman looks at Sydney queerly. “All right. I’ll tell him that.”

“Thank you.”

The woman doesn’t budge, as if she’s waiting for more instructions.

“You can leave now.” Sydney gives her the order she’s waiting for. “But please bring her a dress to wear when you return.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the woman nods, drops the leash, turns on her heel and exits the room.

Sydney tries to disguise the shudder that passes through her. *Remain calm*, she tells herself with clear resolve. She might be more nervous than the lovely creature before her who now awaits her command.

The girl is not what Sydney expects—a wasted, vanquished specter of a girl. Instead, she notes with alarming clarity a young woman of some substance. Outwardly, she is quite attractive, with frosted ash brown hair, which is now a tangle of long curls. Her skin is fair, her lips full and pouty, and her firm, naked body gently contoured, almost sculpted, her muscles defined. Either she's labored hard or works out in a gym. Most difficult for Sydney to understand are her eyes, imbued with sensuous sadness that's hard to miss. And yet, just briefly, she sees them flash with a stunning spark of brilliance, intelligence, knowingness. They are deeply penetrating like those of a haunted child, a wounded animal, a tormented genius.

"I should have a chair brought in," Sydney sighs worriedly, as she gives the room another once over, realizing that there is only a low stool for the girl to sit on.

The naked girl looks at her puzzled. Then without being told, she moves to the side of the room and sits on the stool, with delicate ease placing her bottom cheeks on the small wooden seat, opening her thighs shamelessly and clasping her hands behind her back. The chain droops at her neck, the leash dangling down her back. She sits with her back straight, her breasts pushed proudly forward and her head held high, but her eyes diverted downward in a gesture of humility. She leaves little to the imagination in such a pose, exposing her pubic area and all the womanly treasures between her legs. Obviously, she was well trained. How many hours did it take to perfect this posture, Sydney wonders?

The girl's left ankle is banded with steel—the current practice for women in her position. Her lot tag and identification charm dangle from a ring embedded in the band. There is also the insignia of her indentured status tattooed high between her shoulder blades according to code. Sydney sees no other distinguishing marks, but she will be required to inspect her further—something she dreads. Inspections are meant to be personal and demeaning. Does she have the guts for that kind of intimate exam?

Guardians routinely mark their girls to exhibit their ownership, using tattooed initials and insignias, or brands to indicate their right to use these girls as slaves. Officially, they are indentured servants—nothing more. But the prevailing custom fanned by the winds of ruttish human craving has turned them into chattel, stripping them of any right to self-determination as long as their sentences are in force. Maybe this makes sense for the ones convicted of crimes. But voluntary committals, like this one, defy logic—at least in Sydney's judgment. There must be reasons, extenuating circumstances, a pattern of abuse the girl is following to a reasonable, if not rightful, end.

Sydney studies the girl, becoming more nervous and irritated with each click of the big school clock on the far right wall.

"I think we'll need a chair," she finally decides. She rises from her chair, exits the room, and spends the next few minutes combing the adjacent rooms to find an appropriate chair. The best she can do is a small wooden one with no arms and a straight ladder-back.

"There, sit," she says as she places it in front of the desk.

The girl's strong thigh muscles allow her to gracefully rise from the stool without assistance. She then sits in the offered chair. For the first time since her arrival, she looks slightly uncomfortable with the unusual circumstances.

"Your hands in your lap," Sydney says, seeing how the girl attempts the same humble pose with her hands behind her back—finding that task more difficult in a standard chair. Following the Sydney's direct order, she's reluctant but she does obey, and yet, she looks no more comfortable with her hands resting on her thighs.

“You’re not at ease, are you?”

“No, ma’am.”

“You’re used to sitting on stools?”

“And on the floor.”

“But your life has changed in the last month, and you’ll find a lot of things are different. There will be many things to get used to.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“I’d like you to call me Sydney.”

The girl’s face contorts; her befuddlement is obvious.

“I’m here to help you, Melinda... your name is Melinda?”

“Once.”

“What did Mr. Janes call you?”

“When?”

“When he wanted to address you?”

The girl looks even more confused. “I’m sorry, I don’t know how to answer.”

Sydney clears her throat and tries again. “How about just before he died.”

“He called me ‘beautiful girl’ a lot then.”

Sydney smiles at the revelation. “But no other, more common name?”

“No. I don’t recall.”

“How about before?”

“I don’t recall when he called me anything specific.” She’s obviously struggling hard with her memory, trying with little success and still confused by Sydney’s questions.

“Not even early on, before you became his...” Sydney stumbles here, unable to spill out the truth... “before he became your guardian.”

“I suppose he called me Mel, Melli, like everyone else did then.”

“But your name is Melinda?”

“It was then. But it’s not part of my agreement now.”



“Agreement?”

“The papers I signed.”

“Oh, yes, there were papers... but I don’t have those. Maybe they are in your permanent file.”

“Maybe.” The girl has no idea.

Sydney studies her thoughtfully. It will be a long interview at this slow speed. It’s not the girl; it’s her own mind unaccustomed to this foreign way of thinking. She has defiantly refused to honor the recently sanctioned custom of indentured servitude. But she’ll have to honor it now whether she likes it or not. She’s forced to think carefully through any question for fear of stumbling on her words, or looking stupid because she knows so little about this girl’s unusual life. Much, much more difficult than she expected.

“You have reached a critical juncture in your life, Melinda,” she begins again. “I understand that Mr. Janes’ death was very difficult for you.”

“I was in love with him, yes.”

She nods compassionately. “So, I’m not going to rapidly place you in any new situation. You need time to grieve and time to repair. It would be unwise in my opinion to jump immediately into another...” she falters for words again, “arrangement like the one you had with Mr. Janes.”

“He wanted me to continue as I am,” the girl says.

“He told you that?”

“Yes.”

“And is that what you want?”

“I’ve been made this way.”

“But you have choices.” Sydney feels her frustration rise. “You’re a voluntary committal. It would be irresponsible of me not to lay out those choices before you, so you can make an intelligent decision about your future.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the girl responds—mechanically and automatically.

And Sydney feels placated. “I think you’ll understand more later.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Tomorrow we’ll talk again. You’ll be wearing a dress and sitting in that chair. I’ll be Sydney. You’ll be Melinda. Equals. You understand that? And you won’t be wearing that chain.”

“If that’s what you need, ma’am.”

“It’s not what I need!” she can’t stop her bottled-up anger from blurting out. “It’s what *you* need.”

The girl stares silently, hauntingly, too baffled to reply in any way, but finally saying, “Yes, ma’am,” because that is what she knows how to do.

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“The only way to get through to her is show her!” Sydney announces to Astrid and Tuck, as they sit in causal conference in the employee lounge. “The reason these girls don’t leave the system is because of their conditioning. Well, I’m not going to let her conditioning effect the outcome here. Melinda *will* get a taste of liberty and equality, and I know what she’ll choose. She’s smart as a tack. You can see it in her eyes.”

“You’re making this personal, Syd,” Tuck interjects before she can continue.

“Yes, I am. I think it needs to be personal. If someone doesn’t *get personal* with these girls, we might as well condemn them all before we even start. Their lives are written and they are not going to change.”

“You think that changing them is better than letting them live as they are? That’s a value judgment.”

“Oh, don’t you argue ethics with me, Tuck Stevens! We all know that the courts and the criminal justice system made a deplorable left turn when the outside service contracts were created. Maybe, at the time, it seemed like a good way to handle over- crowded jails, but it’s turned into slavery. There is no other name for it. And the supposed “voluntary” commitments are nothing more than men preying on innocent girls like Melinda, twisting their minds into agreeing to their absurd arrangements, making them think there are no alternatives. Once a girl starts, she’s stuck for life with no way out... especially when those of us who might help them out ignore the facts.”

“There aren’t many that make it out, Sydney.”

“Oh, don’t say that. You’ve seen the statistics—what they become when they are finally free. Straight prison is much better for them... at least there are the common rules of decency in force there that prevent the rape and sexual abuse, and the... conditioning.”

“This is just one girl you’ve talked to, Sydney,” Astrid reminds her, as she looks over top of her reading glasses perched halfway down her pointy nose. “Voluntaries are sometimes the worst, because they want it. They *do* want it—whether it’s conscious or subconscious—it appeals to something in their basic character. So, there’s their choice; albeit one that was made early on, it was still their choice then. We’re not responsible for what’s happened since. Don’t make this girl’s reformation your responsibility, because, hon, it’s not going to happen.”

“Maybe not. But not because I didn’t try.”

“You’re a regular Joan of Arc,” Tuck muses.

“Well, then, let’s just say *shemine* now. I own her until I’m ready to let her go. Okay with you?”

“I’m not standing in your way,” Tuck laughs and wipes his hands. “After all, I assigned you the

case.”

“Good.” Her eyes flash brilliantly; her nose flares. Excitement wells in her with the possibility of proving the system wrong, these two wrong, and making something more of the girl who needs her now.

### Chapter Three

Through the hole in the floor...

The girl arrives at the appointed time dressed in a navy prison shift. Despite its formless shape and drab color, Melinda Janes is still an attractive young woman. This is inborn. Her hair has been freshly washed. It shines, and as it dries, her natural curls spring to life, another odd paradox, Sydney thinks. She is no less haunted, but it is good for Sydney to see her looking less like a slave. Although, so far, the small measures taken to normalize the girl have done little to alter her cautious and restrained mood of acquiescence. She is so unlike any woman she’s ever experienced, but is it wrong? Are Tuck and Astrid right to assume that she won’t change—can’t change? And is her life less valid because she can’t?

Sydney has thought through the session carefully, what she’ll say and how she’ll say it while adopting a helpful, compassionate, but not condescending attitude. She takes a deep breath, smiles and begins. “We’re going to spend some time together, Melinda, talking about you. I want to get to know who you are so I can make an intelligent decision for you. You are free to speak your mind, say anything you like, jump in anytime. I know this might be hard, but you need to think of us as equals. Do you understand that?”

“I think so,” she says.

“Good. Then I’ll begin with some questions about your past... I want you to answer in depth, graphically. Say as much as you like.” She looks into the girl’s eyes, seeing if there is any sign of confusion, any lack of understanding. Not finding any, she continues. “My files say that you were living with Mr. Janes prior to your official agreement; could you explain that?”

The girl takes a moment to frame her answer, then begins speaking in a clear and softly sensuous voice. “I was sixteen when my mother met Mr. Janes. My mother lived with men, with lots of different men and he was the last one. I think she may have liked him best of all, but I can’t be sure, because I was very young during some of her affairs. She was very happy with Samuel. He took care of her and all of her worries seemed to disappear. But then she became sick not long after we moved into Samuel’s loft. She was dying.”

Sydney feels the girl’s heart swallowed in sadness. She sees the tears in her soft brown eyes. And yet, her placid expression remains unwavering.

“And how were you treated?”

“I was my mother’s child and usually ignored by everyone but my mother. I had a room at the top of the loft house that was all mine. When I wasn’t in school, I stayed there a lot, especially during the parties. Mama would come to me all excited about the night, dressed in wild, sexy clothes. She’d sit with me talking like we were best friends. Then she’d run off, lock the door behind her and tell me to be a

good girl.”

“You were *locked* in your room?”

“She told me that she could get in lots of trouble if I were caught hanging around the party. Besides, Samuel insisted that my door be locked.” She pauses, the faint glimmer of a smirk emerging. “But I saw what was going on anyway.”

“Oh? How was that?”

“There were loose boards in the floor of my room that I pried away. I could see almost everything happening in the main room, and sometimes I could even get a glimpse of the ‘hideaway’—which was next door. But that room was dark most of the time and I couldn’t see very well. I had to look down through the broken plaster, which blocked half of the room.”

“So, what kind of things did you see?”

“In the big room they were always having sex. The women were naked, wiggling themselves over the men, who were sometimes naked, too. The women sucked their cocks. And sometimes they played spanking games. Everyone would laugh like it was enormous fun.”

“Do you suppose they were on drugs?” Sydney wonders aloud.

The girl looks at her quizzically. “I never saw anyone take drugs. Samuel despised the drug culture and kicked anyone out he caught with illegal trash. He’d get vicious. I asked mama why, and she said that his mother and his brother O.D’d. Both died. And... he was convinced that drugs only dampened sexual energy. He even said that in front of me, long before we were together. He said he’d beat me if he ever caught me using.”

“And did you... try any drugs?”

“Once.”

“When was that?”

“I was seventeen and with my friends. Most of the buzz had worn off by the time I got home that night, but Samuel was like a trained dog. He sniffed me out, and I was so shocked when he accused me of smoking pot that I couldn’t lie fast enough to save myself.”

“And he beat you?”

“He dragged me into the dining room, laid me over the sideboard, and in front of his houseguests, he lifted my skirt and spanked my ass with a wooden slat. I was scared and ashamed and embarrassed. I screamed for him to stop...”

“But you didn’t try to get away?”

“No, you don’t fight with Samuel.” The girl’s flat monotone changes as she describes the scene. Her body posture exudes an excited energy that makes Sydney shudder. “I begged him, but he wouldn’t stop until he was satisfied that I was punished. I swore that I’d never do drugs again. I pleaded with him, but he is merciless. When he was finally satisfied, he pushed me to the floor and stared me down, looking at

me like he was exploring my brain and reading my thoughts. I decided then that he was clairvoyant, gifted, that he knew things without seeing them. I had reason to fear him.”

“And what did your mother say about your punishment?”

“My mother was very kind to me. She nursed my bottom, which was very hurt and bruised. But she also reminded me of Samuel’s rules. *‘You break them, that’s what you get.’*”

“So, how did you feel about being treated this way? Be honest.”

“It aroused me.”

“It what? Aroused you... as in ... sexually?”

“Yes,” she states simply. The girl doesn’t have the moral judgment regarding the act that Sydney does.

“I see.” After a meaningful pause, the energized air around the two settles. Sydney breathes deeply and continues. “So, back to the times you spied on the parties below your room... what other kinds of things did you see?” She fears this sounds voyeuristic, even salacious, but certainly, this line of questioning is appropriate to obtain the background information she needs. And the girl doesn’t seem to mind, since she has no agendas, no plans, perhaps no thoughts beyond the present moment. What a blessing!

“I saw lots of sex,” she says.

“Men and women having intercourse?”

“And women making love to other women, and sometimes men poking each other in the ass—at least that is what it looked like. Sometimes, there was a lot of smoke in the room so I couldn’t see clearly—they didn’t use drugs but they smoked like fiends.”

“Including Mr. Janes?”

“No. He never smoked, but he didn’t seem to mind that other people did. My mother was always smoking.”

“You said that you couldn’t see into the other room very easily—what was it you called it... the ‘hideaway’?”

“When the lights were low, it was nearly impossible to see anything. But I could hear what was happening. I didn’t understand the sounds at first, but I know now that they were torturing bound women with floggers and whips.”

“You’re sure of that?”

“Absolutely.”

“But you only know that because of what you heard? You never saw the women in bondage or being beaten?”

“Not in that room... except for once. Sometimes I’d see a woman bound with rope having sex in the main room. But that wasn’t very often, and it never lasted very long.”

“And the one time in the hideaway?”

“That night, the lights were on, big spotlights glaring so brightly that I was drawn from bed when I saw the beams shining through the loose boards at the side of the room. I moved to the hole in the wall and pried a piece of the plaster away to see more.” As the girl speaks, excitement gathers around her again like swarming bees. All this generates an agitated pulse between Sydney’s thighs. “I looked down at the room, seeing a woman tied to a chair. A huge man stood over her, slapping her face and her breasts, accusing her. I didn’t understand what he said. They were Dutch, mama told me later. But I knew he was accusing her of something terrible and was punishing her hard. She was beautiful in agony.”

“Beautiful?”

“I liked seeing her that way, seeing her wince when he raised his hand to slap her...” the girl’s eyes glaze over as the image returns to her like a rush of fresh air bathing her in the memory... “seeing her red face and her bruised breasts all contorted inside the ropes... my body was hot and squirming on itself. I think it was some sort of interrogation... the man demanded answers but was never satisfied. She sobbed, but she didn’t want him to stop.”

“How could you tell?”

“By the look in her eyes.”

Sydney returns a puzzled glance. “You could see her eyes from so far away?”

“Yes,” she answers, sounding a bit annoyed that Sydney would doubt her. “I could see her eyes as plain as day. She was staring my way, though I’m sure that she couldn’t see my face. Maybe she felt my excitement. She was in ecstasy. I know that now, maybe not then. But I liked what I saw and I couldn’t stop staring or feeling what I felt. She was the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.” She pauses then adds. “I wanted her pain.”

“You wanted her pain?” Sydney sits back, nonplussed.

“Yes.” The girl bows her head bashfully.

Sydney squirms uncomfortably, aware of, but trying to ignore her physical response to the conversation. The awkward, nagging silence hangs like a cloud around the room.

“The woman must have seen me,” the girl finally continues. “The next day when I was at school, someone repaired the holes in my wall and the loose floorboards. And mama came to me asking a lot of strange questions. But I didn’t tell her much because I was ashamed to admit that I was spying.”

“And the spying ended?” Sydney is almost grateful to hear this.

“Yes.”

“And how old were you then?”

“I turned eighteen two days after my room was repaired.”

“Tell me more about your mother, Melinda.”

The girl thinks about her answer for a moment, as if there are a hundred things to say and she's not sure where to start. “I know she liked men. She liked Samuel. And she was very pretty. Sometimes she slept in my bed... she'd fall asleep when she was drunk and I'd have to push her to the edge so I'd have a place to sleep. But I liked her face when she was sleeping; it was peaceful then, and her worries were gone, and the constant pain didn't have to be masked by her smiles. She simply didn't feel that angry pain when she passed out. I remember hoping that she would die, so that she would always look that lovely, that content.”

“It must have been sad for you when she died?”

“I think I was more scared than sad.”

“Scared? Because you were staying alone with Mr. Janes?”

“In a way. He told me that's what mama wanted, so I stayed.”

“You have no other relatives?”

“I probably do. Mama talked about her cousins, but I had no idea where they might live. So I stayed in the loft.”

“How did Mr. Janes treat you then?”

“Not very different from before, but he talked to me directly, which made me uncomfortable at first.”

“Why was that?”

“Samuel was a very intense, very mysterious man. I never knew what he was thinking, or feeling. I didn't understand his moods or how to please him.”

“Was he still having his parties?”

“Yes.”

“And you were still locked in your room?”

“No. He didn't lock the door anymore, but he told me to stay upstairs.”

“And did you?”

“No. I crept down the stairs and peeked in the living room during the parties.”

“You were curious?”

“I was curious. Wouldn't you be, if you were bored in a lonely room with nothing to do, no TV, no music? The sound of laughter and strange noises float up the stairways and nag at you until you can't stand it anymore.”

“You could have closed your door.”

“Maybe, but I didn’t, because I wanted to be downstairs.”

Sydney takes some time to absorb the things the girl tells her. Is it the shock or the arousal that disturbs her most?

“So,” she starts again, finally deciding to ask what’s really on her mind, “when did Mr. Janes first have sex with you?” As soon as she asks the question, she immediately wonders if her bold probing will shake the girl’s seamless composure.

But she answers without flinching, “When I asked him to.”

“You asked him for sex?”

“Yes.”

“And how soon after your mother’s death was that?”

“I don’t remember exactly, but not long, a few weeks, I think.”

“But why?”

“Because that’s what I wanted.”

“You were in love with him?”

“No. I wanted sex, the way I saw him having sex with his friends.”

“And you just asked and he agreed?”

While Sydney waits for the new story, the girl seems to fish through a thousand memories to retrieve this one, and once plucked from the many others that must be crowding through her brain, she starts a monologue that, beyond anything Sydney has heard so far, leaves the counselor breathless, her heart beating rapidly, her mind spinning, her body hot and flustered. “I went to Samuel one night when I was alone and he was alone. I wasn’t sure what I wanted, but I confessed to him that I had often spied on his parties. I thought he’d be mad at me, but I needed him to know how much I wanted to be treated the way he treated his female friends. He wasn’t angry at all. But he asked me to explain more. I told him how I lay awake at night thinking of being in the center of those parties, the one who was touched, who was loved, who was used, who was tortured. I confessed that I played with myself until powerful feelings ripped my insides apart, and I could finally sleep. I was shaking so badly when I finished that I could hardly move.” She takes a breath. “I waited for Samuel to lash out at me, but he was very kind. He told me he would have to think about my proposal. He didn’t mention it for several weeks, but he did look at me differently. I think he was examining me, deciding if I could be more to him than my mama’s little girl...”

“And I assume that he finally agreed to your request?”

“Actually, I thought he’d just forgotten... maybe a month passed, including several party nights when I stayed in my room, lying on my bed with the door open, listening to the sounds of the music and the laughter, and the sex going on for hours. I refused to go downstairs and watch what I couldn’t have.



Instead, I'd play with myself until my body exploded from the terrible force. Then one night, Samuel called me down to the living room and put me in the center of the room. I was terribly embarrassed, and blushing so hotly that my ears were burning. I'd never seen these people so clearly. They all looked at me very strangely.

"‘The girl's been spying on us,' Samuel told them. He circled me like a proud cock. I was almost faint from the humiliation and the excitement in my belly. ‘But, can you imagine,' he mocked me, ‘she wants to play with us. She wants to be the center of attention. The little virgin wants to be bound and beaten and fucked from her youth.' The room went silent, and these big, fat tears formed in my eyes. I wondered if I had made a mistake. I felt like a fool. I could have run from the room but my feet wouldn't take me anywhere. All around me, Samuel's guests leered at me, with big smiles, licking their lips hungrily. ‘Tell them what you told me, Melli,' he said. I couldn't say anything. ‘Don't make me into a liar,' he warned. ‘You want what you've seen us do! Say it girl!'

"‘Yes," I answered, without even thinking. I was frightened, but my dream was coming true.

"‘Shall we strip her naked?' one of the women asked him.

"‘Yes. I think that's a good place to start,' he answered.

"‘While I shook like a scared jack rabbit, two women ripped off my clothes—and they weren't gentle about it at all! I still couldn't move, even as scared as I was, even as much as I wanted to run away.'"

The girl's hands, for so long resting calmly on her thighs, begin to clutch at her flesh through the blue denim prison shift. Then she rubs her thighs with her palms, unknowingly as she continues to tell her story...

"‘Samuel and one of his friends began to bind me with rope, tying me into a harness that thread through my thighs and round my neck and distended my breasts absurdly—just like I'd seen women tied when I looked through the peek hole in my bedroom floor. One of the women put her hand on my sex. Dipping her fingers around my vagina, she found me wet. I heard her chortle with her discovery. I never did stop blushing.

"‘Then, with great ceremony, Samuel laid me down on the daybed in the corner of the room, and with his friends holding my arms and legs—like I was going to object—he took my virginity from me. He lunged into me in one violent move. I remember crying from the pain, and then the explosion that followed as he continued to take what he wanted from me. I was tied to that bed for the rest of the night and gawked at, used again by two of the men and then left to myself once they were bored with me.'"

"‘You were raped," Sydney says with conviction, wishing that she could clearly communicate the obvious fact to her charge.

"‘No, ma'am. I couldn't have been when I asked to be taken, and when I loved every second.' The girl will not waver from her opinion.

"‘I see. And this kind of activity continued in Mr. Janes' loft?'"

"‘For about a year. Nearly every week, I submitted to the same sort of thing.'"

"‘And that is how you lived your life? Being sexually available for Mr. Janes and his houseguests.'"

"I also went to school, which Samuel paid for. He expected me to get good grades and insisted that I take English and history and current affairs. . . he wanted me to speak well, to sound intelligent. I was not allowed to talk in slang the way my friends would. . . though that was true long before mama died. He hated her gutter tongue, as he called it."

This explains what Sydney has observed about the girl, her quick wit and flawless grammar.

"He never expected you to work?"

"He said I could pay my debt to him in other ways."

"What other ways?"

"He never really said."

"With your body?"

"No, I don't think he meant that. Sex was my choice. If I went to one of the parties, he figured he had my permission to use me. If not, he didn't make an issue of it."

"So, you didn't have sex with him otherwise?"

"Well, yes, we did have sex. Whenever he was horny, he'd come to my room and make love to me—usually in the regular way. Sometimes he wanted me two or three times a day. Sometimes right after I returned from school."

"And this went on for how long?"

"About a year."

"But then he became your guardian and you his indentured servant. How did that happen?"

"After my school year, Samuel asked me if I wanted to stay with him. I said more than ever. He said we could get married, or we could try another arrangement where I was more *hischattel*. I liked that idea better than getting married, which seemed dull. Eventually we'd be full of spite. None of my friends had parents who cared a whit about each other. But becoming Samuel's 'indentured servant'? It was very appealing. And it sounded like a lot more fun than getting married." The girl's eyes light excitedly, as if filled with the same childlike naiveté that spawned her unusual pact with a man fifteen years her senior. She seemed more like a kid at play, even now, not a serious independent woman capable of making the right choices for herself. She was a girl smitten, for whom the infatuation never seemed to have diminished.

"Did you understand the seriousness of the arrangement you were agreeing to?"

"I knew what I wanted."

"But did you know that you were giving up your legal rights, that you would be required by law to live with Mr. Janes, being the man's servant, doing whatever he demanded of you?"

"I understood that."

“And you read the agreement you signed?”

“Samuel made me read every word.”

“And you agreed even though much of it was a lie...”

“What do you mean?”

Sydney leafed through the document that was in her office mail that morning. A copy of the service agreement between Samuel Janes and Melinda duBois had arrived from the hall of records—yes, she did have a name, at least at the time she signed the document.

“The document was drawn up as a labor contract—most of the agreements of this sort are—claiming that you were in ‘arrears to Samuel Janes in the amount of \$30,000 dollars for...’” she reads directly from the pages before her, “*“room and board, school expenses, clothing, funeral expenses and other sundry items, which the contract holder has paid for... and since no other remedy has been found to pay off the said amount, and in lieu of legal action, the defaultee, Melinda duBois agrees to a term of three years service to repay the debt.”*” Sydney looks up from the papers. “You allowed him to assess that kind of value to living in his home?”

“It seemed reasonable to me. But then, that really wasn’t the point.”

“You would have agreed to any amount?”

“Yes, I would have.”

Sydney reads on silently, until another hair-raising paragraph jumps out at her. “This next item states that you agree to rescind your legal status as a free women, and come under the sole jurisdiction of Samuel Janes... including revoking the use of your name... you’re heretofore referred to as the ‘subject of S Janes’.

The girl trembles anxiously as Sydney moves on...

“You agreed to ‘*honor all requests, demands and direct orders given by the contract holder in matters of personal appearance, hygiene and behavior.*’ You agreed to ‘*give satisfactory service in the performance of your required duties as outlined.*’ You agreed to ‘*subject yourself to discipline deemed appropriate,*’ if that proved necessary to the enforcement of this contract. ‘*The contract holder alone would judge what is satisfactory performance and what is appropriate discipline.*’ No guidelines were stated.” Sydney looks at her again, critically. “In other words, you gave Mr. Janes free reign over your life in every aspect, without any restriction. Is that correct?”

“Yes.”

“And you read every word of this contract, understanding exactly what it meant?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Because you liked the idea... you thought it would be fun?”

The girl doesn’t bat an eye, replying, “Yes.”

“You understood that it would also justify his sexual use of your body any time he wanted?”

“That was what I wanted the most.”

“And that he could ‘discipline’ you any way he chose?”

“Yes, I knew that. At first, I was afraid to go that far, but Samuel was insistent, not that I didn’t agree,” she hastens to add. “He promised to use discretion.”

“But that promise is not even mentioned in this document.”

“I trusted him.”

“And did he use discretion?”

“I think so.”

“Did he ever punish you... and I don’t mean in a sexual way, but like the time he spanked you in front of his guests.”

“Yes. Many times. He even built a whipping post...”

“A whipping post!” Sydney’s voice rises to a shrill cry.

“But it’s hard, ma’am to differentiate between punishment and sex. There was very little difference in my mind.”

“But sometimes there was a difference?”

“Sometimes.”

“Tell me about those times.”

She blushes in a self-effacing way that exposes her shame. “When he was angry with me for failing in my studies, or he accused me of being lazy, he would...” She gulps nervously, and because she is trained to obey, spits out the graphic truth, “he would haul me by the hair from my loft bedroom and drag me down the stairs to the whipping post in the courtyard. He’d make me strip off my clothes and hug the wood while he thrashed my shoulders and ass with a leather strap. Sometimes he bound my wrists to the rings at the top of the stake, or lashed me to the post with ropes. He’d beat me for several minutes until his anger disappeared. If I was bound, he sometimes left me tied to the post until he finally decided to free me.”

“How long would that be?”

“I’m not sure. An hour I suppose.”

“You say there was little difference between this punishment and sex? I don’t understand.”

“Being beaten has always aroused me... since I first spied on Samuel and his guests. As much as it hurts, the sensation of pain turns my body on fire.”

“I guess I don’t understand that.”

“I can’t imagine anyone would unless they experience it themselves.”

“No, I suppose not.” She sighs. “So then, this agreement with you and Mr. Janes was satisfactory, even in its extremes?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Sydney finds the discussion exhausting. Her body heat has soared inside the close confines of the interview room. If only there were a window and she could taste the fresh air outside. There are so many more things that she has to ask the girl, but can she—Sydney—take more in one day? The girl seems unaffected by the interview, poised and passive, except when she closes in on a feeling she associates with her guardian. Then her emotions rise and fall as she touches on the sensitive or bittersweet memory. But even these emotions pass, leaving her in the same stoic, unaffected state of calm she displayed before her feelings were roused.

“I think we’ve covered a good deal today,” Sydney finally decides. “We’ll recess until Thursday. I can’t be here tomorrow, but I want you to continue to think about your arrangement with Mr. Janes.”

“Do I have to?”

“Do you have to? No.”

“I miss him. But I am tired of crying,” she says, looking especially haunted.

“Well then, don’t think of him. Let your mind rest. Focus on the rest of your life and what you would like to see happen.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Sydney calls for the matron and releases the girl into her custody.

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“I’ve never met anyone like her,” Sydney admits to Astrid.

“I can understand that,” Astrid sighs. “These girls are all the same, and yet a little different, too. They have personalities and quirks just like everyone. But there is something that drives them that I don’t think anyone understands—unless you’re in their shoes. There’s a quality they share.”

“I could never relinquish myself. And I’m still not convinced that it isn’t just cruel conditioning that makes them believe the things their guardians tell them.”

“All the cases I’ve seen, I’ve never proven that for myself—that’s why I think you’re wasting your time.”

“Oh, I’ve just started. I have a lot more I need to ask the girl.”

“Just be careful of your motives.”

“My motives?”

“You seem to be as driven as these indentured girls are.”

“I’m determined to get to the truth, that’s all.”

“I hope so.”

She sees the doubt in Astrid’s eyes, and wants to defend herself against that. But it would be pointless to argue, as it might only prove the woman right.

## Chapter Four

In the transfer sector in the dead of night...

The haunting vision of the girl in bondage at the whipping post won’t quit Sydney’s mind, no matter how she tries to focus on other cases or even her own life—her friends, her boyfriend, her sketching.

When her boyfriend, Jacob, returns home, he’s horny, and she tries to push him away with playful banter. But he is insistent—which makes her think of Melinda’s Samuel and how insistent he must have been to win the girl’s compliance. Jacob moves in behind her as she’s opening the drapes to the evening sunset. A bright vermilion glow washes over her body, while Jacob’s hands run eagerly over her breasts, and along her belly. He kisses her earlobe, then tongues the rim in a leisurely tease. Every nerve in her catches fire. She can feel her arousal announce itself between her legs, starting as a brilliant warmth and the crude desire to be touched. She begs the touch of his hand in the way her hips undulate in a lurid way, grazing his crotch. She presses her ass into him, feeling the erection that was ready the moment he walked in the door.

He begins to remove her clothes in front of the open window, exposing their lovemaking to the street two floors below, where a theatre crowd might at any moment fill the street. She writhes against her lover, thinking of Melinda, garishly exposed in front of an audience of thrill-seeking perverts. She wishes she’d been there, and can only make up the scene in her mind and hope that it comes close to the truth. ‘Unbelievable’ was her first thought, when Melinda answered her questions with the astounding revelations. She wishes she could shun the pictures in her brain, but she can’t.

Jacob’s hand expertly unbuttons her blouse, until, with a gentle tug, he pulls it from her body. He grasps her breasts, through the lacy material of her bra. Then his fingers dive inside the cuts, moving toward her nipples, where a gentle squeeze makes her arousal skyrocket, as if fireworks are going off inside her. Every nerve in her tightens in reply.

“Oh, you horrible man,” she groans in a delicious contralto that vibrates through her body and into his.

He must wonder why she's so responsive tonight, when on other occasions, they dance around the subject of sex, and she often puts him off. He pulls her skirt off her hips, surprised to note that she doesn't lead him away from the window, away from the threat of being exposed to the pedestrians on the street. There's a bit of a roar now from below as the theatre empties for the night, and the men and women scatter toward their cars and the subway station down the block. He wonders what she'll do when someone sees her, but the thought of a public exhibition only arouses him more. His desire presses urgently, and so he urgently tugs her panties down, until they fall to the floor at her feet. Then he bends her over, until she's leaning out the window. His dick lunges into her snatch. So warm, so wet. She squeezes him in invitation, while he begins to smash his groin roughly into her ass.

Her groans increase, mounting with fervor. She's throws aside the trappings of decency. She wants to be seen; it is the only thought in her head, as she leans further forward, out the open window.

"Yeessssssss," she hisses, while rolling her hips. Jacob's cock thrusts hard inside her. She latches on with her strong inner muscles bearing down almost angrily, as if she could squeeze the cock in two. With equal intensity, her hands grip the window frame. Her fingernails dig into the white painted wood. "Fuck me," her low voice roars. "Gawd, yes!" she screams—advertising the scene, begging the busy street to take notice of the sexual theatrics above. Her bare breasts bounce like buoys on water, jerked and tossed by the erratic fucking motion from behind. He squeezes her ass cheeks in answer to her anger... dispensing his own brand of pain. She seethes, and asks for more, hissing, "Yesssssss."

When he can't take more, his cock fills with cum and pumps to a finish that explodes with his unchecked cry. "Yes, dammit, babe, yes!"

She closes her eyes, imagining that a dozen passersby have stopped to stare two floors above at the bouncing boobs, and the ebullient woman taking it in front of an open window. Will they applaud? she asks herself in the unguarded moment of lusty abandon. She can hear their silent cheers as she listens to her lover coming, and then hears her own ecstatic reply to climax. She moans quietly, then opens her mouth, "Ah, ah, ah ah oooo...hummmm," as the searing sexual finale jars bone and flesh.

Jacob pulls her from the window into his arms, and holds her in the dark of the room. There are no cheers from down below, but maybe her audience isn't the rowdy kind to cheer and gawk. She'll never know. What she knows is the powerful force that fed the crude rutting fuck. She recognizes its source, and a trickle of fear tiptoes down her spine, making every bone in her rattle one more time before she settles into an uneasy calm.

Even sexually satiated, Sydney can't sleep. Her mouth is parched, her lips dry. She rises for a drink of water, and for a while, she sits by the window and looks out at the empty street. That *other* half of the city calls to her—to the seedy place where she works and to the girl who is her number one case.

Seeing her lover sleeping soundly, she throws on jeans and a T-shirt, and heads out the door, descending to the parking garage. She drives to the back lot behind the Detention building, where she'll find the 24-hour attendant there to let her into the transfer sector. She outranks him so she won't need to explain herself, even if she looks self-conscious being there at such a late hour dressed in casual clothes.

"An admission?" he asks with a jovial smile, just to pass the time. His job must be excruciatingly boring and her appearance a welcome one.



“Not that I know of. I’m checking on a detainee.”

He holds the door for her as she walks the corridor, stepping gingerly. The waxed linoleum gleams from a recent shine. But everything in the dank hallway has a sick yellow cast, which is painful to the eye. On the other side of the double doors, the color changes to grey, the color of concrete, of ancient stone castles and their dungeons, the color of Old World prisons—which this is not, although it might as well be one.

Listening, she’s alarmed. She hears sounds she can’t identify, the whimpering of a woman, a few catcalls from female detainees, and the sound of men’s voices in heated debate. She stops at the end of the corridor and opens the door to the containment quarters. The chaotic noise is suddenly much louder. She peers into the dimly lit stacks—three floors of cells surrounding a central court on the first floor. This is when she shudders most, and the tickle at the back of her neck becomes uncomfortable.

The night is nothing like the day—which is dark enough in this dreary island in-between servitude and whatever comes next. Melinda is housed here until Sydney decides her fate. The counselor is not sure which cell, but for the moment, the thought of visiting her charge disappears. She stands frozen in place as she takes in the appalling scene in the middle of the central court.

Three male guards have one of the detainees in the center of their circle. The girl is naked with her back to Sydney, although the wary counselor immediately senses who it is. Fear keeps her rooted in place as she watches the three men—a tall, lanky kid not more than twenty-five, a stocky sergeant who’s pushing fifty, and a lean fellow of average build with a clean-shaven face and the look of a radical right-winger written in his perfectly sculpted expression of scorn. This last one holds a leather tawse that he uses lightly on the girl’s behind. He’s worked her enough to have her ass a blazing scarlet. She jerks anew each time he smacks her ass again—even though these strikes could hardly smart. They are just reminders of the power he wields and his will to use it.

“You gonna be a good girl?” the stocky man asks her.

“Yes, sir.”

“Then bend over and touch the floor, slut,” he orders.

She obeys without question—perfect conditioning making her fall forward and catch herself with her palms. She keeps her legs straight and her knees locked as she maintains the awkward pose.

The right-winger with the leather hauls off and strikes her hard on her extended ass cheeks, whipping her soundly for a long sixty seconds duration. The girl whimpers softly. Then the guard strikes the insides of her thighs with stinging cuts, forcing her to open her stance wide. She wiggles her feet further apart, but he strikes her again in the same place because it’s not enough. When she gracelessly wiggles her body to please him, he moves on her with a verbal rebuke that stings as much as the strike of his leather.

“Voluntaries are whores. Say it’s so,” the man snaps at her, grabbing her hair in his hand and jerking her face toward him.

“It’s so, sir,” she answers, gasping for breath.

He leans over and peers at her, sneering, “Then tell me what you are, slut.”

“I’m a whore, sir,” she rattles off quickly to please him.



“Yes, that is what you are.”

The men begin to fondle her privates.

“You like that, don’t you?”

Even from where Sydney stands in the distance, she sees the glint of tears that stream down the girl’s cheeks.

The man jerks her head when she doesn’t answer fast enough. “Tell me, slut.”

The other men play with her at will, with fingers jabbing both holes in her crotch.

“Yes, sir, I like it, sir,” she gives him the answer he wants. And apparently, it’s true. She’s begun to sway her hips erotically, responding to the arousal she can’t ignore.

It’s in her nature to respond to even the grossest stimulation, Sydney’s decides as she observes the harrowing scene. She should act! Now! Stop these degenerate brutes. But a dark, inner compulsion to see this through prevents her from moving forward.

“Yeah, you like it, bitch,” the stocky man agrees, as he forces at least three digits into the girl’s asshole, ramming them so hard that she can hardly stay on her feet.

“Don’t you dare fall,” the right-winger warns, as he jerks her hair again. The torture continues for several minutes more, then the man forces her to the brutal cement. “On your knees. She falls to her side, but regains herself, remaining on her knees as she looks up into the eyes of the three hateful men.

“You want to suck dick, don’t you, girlie,” the stocky sergeant says as he pulls his cock from his pants.

“Yes, sir.”

“Tell me more,” he snickers. “Tell me how you want it.”

“I want to please your cock, sir. I want to lick it with my tongue and take your cum down my throat.”

“Ooo, she is a slut,” the lanky lad grows excited. He rubs the crotch of his pants as he waits his turn, while the right-wing bastard circles the scene, strutting proudly.

The sergeant shoves his prick in the girl’s mouth, as she opens wide to receive his thick meat and work the stalk with a hard, sucking motion. She uses one hand to jack him hard, while the other gently squeezes his balls from below. When the fellow finally splashes his seed all over her face, she peers up at him with a supplicant expression, as if she’s looking for approval.

Sydney’s stomach turns sour at the sight. But she still cannot move—not until she sees the man with the tawse push the sergeant aside and begin battering her breasts.

The girl winces as each strike rebounds off her jumping flesh.

“Ask for it, slut!” he demands.

“Another, sir,” she quietly answers.

“Louder, let all your friends in the stacks hear what you want!”

“Another, sir!” she shouts.

“That’s better,” he snickers as he whacks her hard.

Sydney sees the girl begin to cry as she zealously tries to please the man. This is too much!

“You bastard, stop it now!” the counselor swiftly moves to the central court with her indignation heralding her entrance. All eyes turn her way—those that watch her like hawks from the cells above, and those at eye level—the three men and the girl in the middle.

“Who the hell are you?” the right-winger meets Sydney’s angry face with a self-righteous one of his own.

She flashes her badge. “I’m Melinda’s counselor. And you will not ever touch her again, is that clear?”

“Who the hell’s Melinda?” he scowls.

“This girl is Melinda,” she takes the girl’s arm and gently pulls her to her feet.

“She’s lot 21, ma’am, and that’s all she is,” he says, with his face just inches from the angry woman. “I have every right to do whatever I want to these sinning sluts. If she obeyed our rules here, she’d be sleeping in her cell now. But just like all the sluts that come here, she needs a reminder of who she is.”

“It’s clear to me that what you’re doing here, satisfying your prurient desires, has nothing to do with discipline. You can be sure that the officer in charge will have my full report of your behavior.”

“Ooo, listen to that fancy talk,” he retorts.

“You make your report, but they won’t care, honey,” the stocky sergeant tells her.

She turns on him, pointing and accusing finger. “Watch your tongue. And the next time I see Melinda in the building naked, someone *will* get fired.”

They look at her blankly, half in awe, having snickering, but not sure of themselves, as they watch Sydney Wingate and her charge leave the stacks.

Sydney takes the girl to the runaway barracks on the far side of the building and checks her in for the night.

“Don’t talk to anyone about tonight, Melinda,” she advises her bewildered charge. “Not anyone. I don’t care how they press you. If they have questions, you tell them to talk to Ms. Wingate. Got that?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Not a word. They have no right, no authority to use your body... they think they might, but they don’t. And *you* have every right to resist.”

“I don’t know how to resist,” she says.

“Yes, I know that,” Sydney replies, patiently. “But you must. Is that clear?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

She’s afraid the girl will tell her that she liked the scene in the central court, but Sydney can’t handle that kind of information at 3 am in the morning. Her head aches, her bones ache, her heart aches, her spirit aches. Her anger is like a noxious pit of poison destroying any good and peaceful thought in her. If it weren’t for her loyalty to the girl, she’d quit the damn job, split, take off somewhere far from the atrocities of *modern man*... if that were possible. She’d pray to forget what troubles and so arouses her about this brutal twist in humanity’s complex riddle. She’d pray to forget, although she probably never could. You can run from a place, but not a thought, or a feeling as deep and feral as this one.

## Chapter Five

Mr. Janes

Melinda arrives in Sydney’s office on Thursday morning dressed in a simple blue and white shift that, while not at all attractive, is much more feminine than the prison navy. The girl seems lighter in spirit, her eyes less haunted, her face less drawn. She looks around the room, perhaps intrigued by the new surroundings, which are far more pleasing to the eye than the grey walls of the interview room in the transfer sector. The room is painted in a pleasing pale yellow, and Sydney has decorated the office with pastoral pictures framed in gold. There is a bouquet of blue and yellow summer flowers on her desk and a philodendron by the open window, where a cool breeze enters, fluttering the dark green drapes. The room breathes with life, exuding a delicate sensuality, reflective of its owner’s character.

The girl sits in an office chair that has been upholstered in a floral print. Although the placement of their chairs is similar to that of their previous meeting, in these surroundings, they look more like two friends talking than counselor and detainee.

“I hope your new accommodations are more pleasing than the transfer sector stacks?” Sydney starts.

“My room is very nice,” the girl answers. “There are no bars.”

“And you’re eating in the dining hall with the other girls?” she smiles, pleased.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“You know, you can call me Sydney,” she reminds the shy young woman.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“But you’re more comfortable with the formal distance,” Sydney guesses.

“It’s more natural, ma’am.”

“No, it’s not natural. In my eyes, you are my equal.”

“But, in my eyes, I’m not.”

Sydney’s amazed again by the girl’s alarming self-appraisal. “I understand that. But I want you to see yourself that way... feel yourself as my equal. Can you at least try that?”

“If it pleases you.”

“Yes, that would please me greatly,” Sydney says firmly. She’s afraid they could go on in this vein forever, never getting anywhere. She changes the subject, moving on to other matters. “About the other night in the stacks. I have to make a report to the Transfer Council and I need to know from you what happened. I suppose you’d rather not relive that horror, but if you could just explain briefly.”

The girl’s stoic expression doesn’t change as she begins to speak, although Sydney detects a subtle rise in her emotions, much the way they were roused when she talked about Samuel Janes and their sexual beginning.

“They made me crawl on the floor to the dining hall, then they tied my hands behind my back while I ate.”

“How did you eat?”

“With my face in the bowl.”

Sydney’s face registers her horror. “Is this the custom in the stacks?”

“I don’t think so. The other girls weren’t treated that way.”

“Why do you suppose they singled you out?”

“The man with the short hair liked taunting me. It didn’t surprise me. I’ve seen it happen before. Sadistic men like to rattle powerless women. It makes them feel important.”

“Is this what Samuel would do?”

“No. Not to feel important; he didn’t need to. He only taunted me to test me, to make me strong. Which is probably why the guards picked on me. I don’t cry easily, and I don’t let them get to me and they sense that.”

“I see. And so you crawled to the dining hall and ate your food without the use of your hands. What else?”

“They made me crawl back to the stacks while they beat me with their sticks and the leather tawse. They wanted to break me down, make me beg and cry, but I refused. When the rest of the girls were in

their cells, they kept making me circle the second deck, haranguing me, assaulting me. My knees were finally scraped so badly that I could hardly move. I finally objected and asked if I could please walk. They said that my request was insubordinate, and took me into the center court and punished my ass.

Sydney gazes at the girl's knees, seeing that they are still bruised and lightly scabbed.

"And then they raped you?"

"Yes, ma'am. If you want to call it that."

"What would you call it?"

"I don't know. But it's what I do, so it wasn't that hard."

"And you'll tell me you enjoyed it, I suppose?"

"No. I didn't feel much of anything. I never do, unless it's with Samuel." The familiar sadness appears in her eyes again.

"Tell me more about Mr. Janes, Melinda. We talked about the contract you signed with him, giving him ownership of you. This was what you wanted? You weren't coerced in any way?"

"No, ma'am. I was in love with Samuel. I loved the way I felt when we were together. *I wanted* him to possess me."

"And what was that feeling that was so compelling?"

"I felt whole, honored for what was inside my heart. He looked inside me and knew me, without my having to say anything. It may have surprised him, too. But I think he was pleased, because... I was more than my mother could ever be to him."

"How was that?"

"I was younger... a virgin he could own completely. With my mother there were always complications. She came with years of baggage, old lovers coming back to claim her. He hated the competition. Samuel could be a very jealous man."

"But Mr. Janes shared you with other men. Is that right?"

"He did, often. But he was always in control of every situation and every man who used me. He jealously guarded me just as he tried to guard my mother."

"And she, being older than Mr. Janes, wasn't as easy to control?"

"That's right. She would leave him for days at a time. He would be furious and go storming around the loft. I stayed clear of him as best I could, hiding in my room."

"And when your mother finally returned?"

"Sometimes he'd get a call from the police or one of her friends, saying that she needed to be picked up. She'd been arrested for vagrancy, or indecent exposure, or she'd worn out her welcome with her

friends, and they were going to put her on the street if he didn't come get her. Samuel always rescued her ... but she paid the price for that."

"What price?"

"One time, she'd been gone for days, maybe a week. The police finally brought her back to the house. Her prettiest dress was ripped to shreds. Samuel sent her to my room; he was too furious to deal with her and needed to cool off. He locked us both in my room and left the house.

"Mama was crying for a while. I asked her what happened... and she surprised me by smiling as she remembered her nights away. She'd run into one of her old lovers, Bobby Hal, at the grocery store. I remembered him, thinking he was very sexy and mama had been silly to leave him... I don't think she ever really knew what she was doing. I guess they seduced each other while picking out grapefruit and she spent the next week in Bobby's apartment. He kept her tied to the bed so she wouldn't leave—something I'm sure mama liked. He raped her constantly—something I'm sure mama liked, too. But that was her excuse to Samuel, so he wouldn't punish her too badly—she'd been tied to the bed and couldn't get away."

"But he still punished her?"

"Yes. She disappeared for another several days, and when I saw her again, she explained that Samuel had chained her in a closet, depriving her food and attention, until she wanted him again, really wanted him. He made her crave him."

"And—that worked?"

"Samuel's punishments always worked."

"They worked for your mother and they worked for you?"

"Yes, of course. Although, I was easier than my mother. I didn't run away. I didn't get drunk and violent. I didn't get arrested and I almost never sassed him."

The eerie refrain keeps repeating in Sydney's brain, that the girl may not have been conditioned deliberately, but molded by the circumstances of her upbringing, just as all people are. Perhaps her response to her environment—or her acquiescence to it—is simply natural for what she experienced.

"How did things change for you after you signed the contract with Mr. Janes?"

The girl thinks a minute then breaks out into a giggling smile.

"He quit calling me by my name... I was like a thing to him, but not in a bad way. More like a pet. He'd take me out on the town, dress me up in sleazy clothes... I remember..." she enjoys remembering, "one time, I was wearing a very short, black leather skirt, a pair of thigh high boots with stiletto heels, and a tiny cropped T-shirt that barely covered my nipples. We went to the Royal Tea Room for "high-tea". The stuffy ladies looked at me like I was a prostitute he'd just picked up off the street. I thought sure that they would kick us out, but the maitre'd was an old friend of Samuel's, one of his fucking buddies—they used to stay out all night and have competitions on how many girls they could screw in a night. . . " She giggles again, her face lighting like an angel's, her eyes shining like two matched stars, ". . . Corey led us to a table in the corner of the restaurant, sort of out of the way. He leaned in and whispered for Samuel to behave himself. Of course, Samuel had no intention of behaving himself. He liked making a scene. I

think it was a rush to do the absolutely outrageous, stopping just before he'd gone too far. He would have preferred a table in the center of the tearoom, but he made do with the more discreet one in the corner. I was sitting in a high-backed leather chair with my back to the dining room, so it was difficult for most of the diners to see me. That just made Samuel bolder with his plan. He ordered me to strip. I thought I'd die of embarrassment and told him I couldn't. He said if I didn't obey him, he'd pull me over his knee and spank me right there. So, I took off the T-shirt and the skirt; I wasn't wearing any underwear.

"Samuel must have let the waiter in on our game... while I was sitting stark naked in the that leather chair—except for the boots... they would have been impossible to take off—the fellow served Samuel tea, hardly taking notice of me. While Samuel ate his meal, he ordered me to masturbate. I was so horny when I first touched myself, that I could have gotten off in less than a minute, but Samuel made me back off and take my time. I was panting so hard, my body bursting with desire, I was sure that any minute, I'd implode and disintegrate.

"He finally leaned over and put his hand to my mouth, making me suck his fingers. I thought of his cock, and pretended I was running my tongue over the head. His eyes were locked on mine. I swear I could feel his dick pulsing in his pants. Finally, in his very detached style, he told me to come without making a sound. 'Not even a whisper,' he said. I started to writhe like a snake on my fucking hand. The chair creaked as I twisted—I was afraid it was rocking back and forth, but Samuel told me later that was just my imagination. I swallowed my groan of pleasure, although I really wanted to scream out loud.

"Samuel smiled at me as I came and that inspired me. Pleasing him was all that mattered. Once I climaxed, he told me to get dressed. We left, meandering through the dining room toward the back door. He wanted the guests to see me again in my post-coital splendor. He liked rubbing their prudish faces in the sexuality they shunned. We exited into the alley behind the tearoom. It was dark by then. Samuel pressed me against the brick façade and began to play with my cunt—he planned to fuck me right there. When I told him I had to pee, he made me squat by the wall, lift my skirt and take care of my business like a stray dog. When I was finished, we moved deeper into the alley, until we were directly under a burning light bulb at someone's back door. He bent me over there, and told me to put my palms against the wall for balance. Then he raised my skirt and pounded my sex with his erection. He usually came inside me, but that night, he sprayed his cum all over my ass. The sticky mess pasted the skirt to my skin. All the way home in the car, we laughed like we were kids ... and later at home we made love like we were equals.

"The next day, he asked me if I felt guilty about the night before. I admitted that it felt naughty. He said I'd have to be punished for that. I thought he was just joking and I laughed at him, but he was serious. He hung me in the corner of the hideaway for over an hour... maybe it was two. He had this pulley system installed, with a crank on the side of the room that can hoist a dangling body high into the air. I started out flat on my feet with my arms high above me, then every few minutes, he cranked me up a little higher, until finally even my toes couldn't reach the floor. I hung like that for just a few minutes. But it was dark, and he left the room and I was scared to death that he wouldn't come back. I was crying when he finally returned and lowered me to my feet. He scolded me for being afraid. He said I should trust that he would never do anything to hurt me."

The girl stops talking; her face is weary and sad. She's moved through a hundred spaces in the course of the long monologue, from laughter, to amusement, to sadness, arousal, glee and then sadness again as her memories linger on the man she lost. She stares around the room, her eyes taking in the paintings, the drapes, the flowers on Sydney's desk.

"I like your office," she finally says, breaking the silence even before Sydney can find a way to

comfortably do so.

“Thank you,” the counselor answers.

“It reminds me of the loft.”

“Really?”

“Just the upstairs balcony... I think it’s the landscapes. Did you know that Samuel painted landscapes?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“He did.”

“I dabble in art, too,” Sydney tells her.

“Then these are yours?”

“No. I’m not that good yet.”

“Samuel says that you never get good at anything until you say you’re good, and you believe it.”

The change in the subject matter seems to be an appropriate segue for their goodbye. The girl may understand silence and personal interaction as well as her trained counselor. It takes someone who observes well, and Melinda duBois was inadvertently trained to observe. Though she’s obviously kept most of her observations to herself, it doesn’t mean that she hasn’t come to her own conclusions or formed opinions about what she sees.

Sydney imagines that these sessions are bringing her out of her shell, allowing her an opportunity to express herself, which may be the way to her redemption from the life of slavery she’s dangerously close to making real the rest of her life.

Sydney buzzes the matron to come retrieve the girl and return her to her room.

“I’ll be taking Lot 21 to the transfer sector,” the woman informs the pair when she arrives.

“You’ll what?” Sydney exclaims.

“There are a couple of new runaways for the juvenile section. She’s gotta go back.”

“She will not go back!”

“Ain’t my decision, ma’am, I just do what I’m told.”

“And who told you this?”

“Mr. Stevens.”



“Well, you can go then. I’ll take care of her from here.”

The woman shrugs and leaves, while Sydney fumes.

“It’s all right, ma’am, I can go back there.”

She’s surprised the girl has the guts to interject her thoughts

“And what do you suppose they will do to you if you go back?”

“Nothing I can’t handle.”

“You shouldn’t have to *handle* anything. You shouldn’t even be there. That horror shouldn’t even exist. This is an evil system, Melinda. I’d end it right now, if I could. But since that’s not going to happen, I’ll make sure you don’t have to suffer for its sins.”

“Maybe they are my sins, ma’am. I liked my life with Samuel.”

“Because you loved him, Melinda. Are you going to love the men who raped you... I doubt it.”

The girl doesn’t object, but returns to her stoic, uninvolved behavior, knowing that she won’t change this woman’s mind.

“Tuck Stevens, what the hell is going on, putting Melinda duBois back in the Stacks?”

“It’s where she’s supposed to be housed.”

“Are you forgetting the way she was abused?”

“Something that happens from time to time. Too bad you had to see it.”

“Thank God I saw it and stopped it! But you know as well as I do, if she goes back there, they’ll make things even worse.”

“Well, she can’t stay with the runaways. And you wouldn’t want to put her in the prison. So where do you suppose she’ll sleep? Huh?”

“How about with me?”

“What? You daft?”

“I have a guest room.”

“She’s a ward of the State, Sydney. No way she’ll be let out in the general public. Forget it, Syd. Put her back where she belongs and I’ll make sure that she’s not violated again.”

“How can you be sure? Are you going to baby-sit the stacks all night?”

“The men were reprimanded. It won’t happen again. At least not while she’s there.”

“I wish I had your faith.”

“And if she does get hassled, it’s part of the game we can’t stop. Quit making this so personal.”

“I can’t quit. I won’t.”

“Then you’re going to be an unhappy woman, Sydney Wingate.”

That was nothing new.

## Chapter Six

### Research

“Jacob.” She tries to get his attention between a movie promo and a fast food ad, as they sit side by side on her apartment sofa, staring at the TV screen mesmerized by the fast-moving images. He flips through several more channels before she tries again. “Jacob, I need to talk...”

“About what?” He pays scant attention.

“I have this case...”

“You mean the girl, the one you won’t stop talking about?”

“Yes, it’s about her, but she’s not what I want to talk about.”

He seems relieved.

“I want to do some research into kinky lifestyles. I need to understand better what makes her perverted sex life so appealing.”

“What kind of research? Biker bars, whips and chains, a little bondage? I could probably arrange that. Might be fun.” He snickers, though his eyes remain focused forward, watching a football season preview.

“Jacob I’m serious about this. I want you to take me to the Underground Market.”

He finally breaks his rapt gaze and stares her in bewildered surprise. “No,” he shakes his head as he tries to digest what she’s asking for, “you don’t want to go there.”

“Why not?”

“It’s really sicko, that’s why.”

“You know because you’ve been there?”

"I've heard stories, Syd."

"What kind of stories?"

"It's heavy S&M stuff, dark, dirty, peopled by the kind you shun, dear."

"Which is exactly why I need to go there."

"I can't even spank your butt a couple times and you're telling me to stop."

"What about the night in front of the window?" she reminds him.

"Hell, I don't know about that night... something clicked in you, but I haven't seen much sign of it since."

"Maybe not, but the feelings haven't gone away," she says.

"You'll hate it, Syd. I know you. You'll turn up your nose in the first fifteen seconds and walk out the door."

"No, I won't. I promise."

He laughs. "Yeah. And we dress up in leather. Is that it? Who's gonna be the bottom, and who's the top?"

The terminology throws her for a second, until the logic of it hits her. "I'll be the sub, you be Dom, that's the way it is between us anyway."

"Really? You think so? You think I'm in charge?"

She thinks for a minute. "Yes, you are... most of the time."

"Most of the time, when you willingly give in, which is usually when you've had a couple of drinks, but almost never when you're sober."

"Jacob, please indulge me. I have to know what's there. I'll go by myself if you won't take me."

"Like hell you will! You try to pass yourself off as a sub, you'll have them stacked in the aisles trying to get to you. You wouldn't like that at all!"

"See, you are in charge." She smiles sweetly, knowingly, allowing her lush sensuality to pour out on him, as she runs her hand along his crotch. She feels the heat in him grow, his cock becoming erect. "You like the idea, don't you? Admit it."

"Of course, I like the idea, but not if you're going to be running away from what you see."

"I can't run away, Jacob. I can't. This hits me in the face every day I see Melinda. I need to understand her, and..." She can tell what he's thinking... "Yes, it's gotten way too personal... and yes, it's about me as much as it's about her. Just take me to the Underground Market. I don't want to have to go alone."

He sits back stunned, appraising her with quick-witted blue-grey eyes and a look of wonder and concern. "How about the Gentleman's Club on East 32nd, they dabble in S&M, or Bikermania, their sex room is loaded with bondage furniture, whips on the wall?"

"They aren't the real thing, Jacob."

"So, you think there's real commerce in slaves in the Underground Market?"

"Oh, I'm sure some of it's fake, but what I hear in the Center is that the Market is where the Guardians find their women and the arrangements get their start. That's where I need to go."

"So, you're going to observe, or you want to blend in?"

"I want to blend in. I want to see what happens, see if it's easy to get led, or if it takes some special kind of woman to submit."

"I already have that answer, Syd. It's a deep-seated need in some women; you either have it or you don't."

"And what makes you so sure?"

"Because that's the way we are about sex... if you're gay, lesbian, straight, kinky or conventional. I think you have a basic make-up and it's not going to change on a whim."

"But how would you know you 'had it', if something didn't bring it out?"

"You're considering this for yourself?"

"No..." she shakes her head adamantly, but then just as adamantly recants, almost surprised to hear herself admitting, "I mean I don't know."

He looks a bit stunned. "Okay, I'll take you if it's that important. But you'll go as my submissive, and you won't do anything unless I approve. That clear?"

"Perfectly."

Her inner wildness and desire began long before she presents her plan to Jacob, but it rages like a fire out of control when he finally agrees to take her to the Underground Market. And what fuels the conflagration almost beyond bearing—he makes her wait three days before he takes her. He says that in the meantime she can practice being submissive. She thinks it's diabolical of him to make her wait so long.

She mentions the Underground Market to Melinda in their next session.

"Did Mr. Janes ever take you to the 'slave brothels'? I believe that's what they are called."

"You mean the Underground, don't you?" she asks, as if she already knows what's in Sydney's mind.

“Yes.”

The girl’s eyes twinkle with a sweetness that Sydney sees more often every time they meet. It’s a matter of trust between them. “You want another story?” the girl asks.

“I want the truth.”

“Sure. We went there a couple of times.”

“Right after your agreement?”

“No, the first time, the only time that was really important, was after we’d been together almost two years.” The girl’s eyes darken eerily, just as a cloud hides the sun outside and the light coming through the window dims.

“And why was it so important?” Sydney asks. She doesn’t want to telegraph the driving desire that fuels her questions. But she does hope that peeking inside the Underground through the girl’s memories might give her enough detail to settle her fears.

“I thought he was going to sell me,” she starts.

“Why was that?”

She looks a little puzzled by the question. “It’s where women like me are exchanged and sold, ma’am.”

“I thought that might just be rumors.”

“I don’t know if cash actually passes hands in the Underground, but girls are bought and sold there. The buyers and sellers make up their own rules, which make properties like me vulnerable to quick transfers of guardianship. For some, it’s just a game; you go home with the same man that brought you. But the game is just as easily real, and the transactions permanent.”

“And you knew that then? The first time you went?”

“Yes. I’d heard Samuel talk about the exchanges with his friends, like it was something everyone did. Like they were selling used cars or auctioning houses. You’re property the moment you walk in the door and property when you leave. They make you register at the door, declare yourself, or you don’t get in. It’s not for show ponies...” she suddenly stops, seeing Sydney’s mystified expression. “Show ponies, the girls that look good, who wear next to nothing and show off their bodies... tease, torment, play... but would never be serious servants, slaves or even submissive for a night. No girl is allowed inside without a man in control of her.”

“No male properties?”

“Not at the Underground Market. There’s another place for them—but, of course, I was never taken there.”

“So, you thought that Mr. Janes was going to sell you, but he didn’t?”

“Not exactly. I was traded for a weekend. He was going out of town on business—I learned

later—and so he wanted to leave me in safe hands. He offered me at auction for a price that was never disclosed to me.”

“And you were purchased for the weekend?”

“I was purchased thinking I’d never go back to the man I loved.”

“You must have been scared.”

“I was very sad. I wept... and I got punished for that.”

“And how was the purchase handled?”

“There’s a general auction every night to set the mood. Most of the buyers keep their goods for a few hours and then give them back when the guardians want them returned. All that is playtime, what goes on in the outside room. The arrangement for me was conducted in one of the private rooms. Samuel was really gruff and almost morbid that night. I tried to get him to explain his plans, but he refused, and got really angry with me for asking. So, I shut up and did what I was told.”

The girl seems agitated and uneasy, which has its effect on Sydney, making her wonder if she should forget her research plans. “I was forced to strip in the greeting room with about fifty men watching closely. Then the overseer clamped a metal collar around my neck and attached cuffs to my wrists. My legs were hobbled by a wooden bar and my ankles fitted in heavy cuffs. I could hardly walk. I was forced to shuffle through the gawkers toward the back of the place, while a guy poked my ass with a pointed stick. Samuel had disappeared and I was nearly in tears because I had no idea what was going to happen to me.”

She speaks in a breathless, anxious voice, looking as terrified as she might have that night. Yet, she is no less compelling for the terror she transmits. There is something about her restlessness that Sydney loves. “Continue on,” the counselor finds herself prompting her charge in a voice that reeks with authority. Her compassion for her is spent. She feels the answers she wants barreling toward her like a locomotive, and she needs to know now, without hesitation, what the girl will tell her next.

“The private room was stifling hot,” she starts again, “filled with at least eight men surrounding a small round stage. I thought I’d be hoisted to the platform, but that didn’t happen until I was passed around from man to man and fondled, violated by their hands, by dildos and probes shoved into my vagina and rectum. They were silent ghouls, doing their business without saying a word. The eighth man pointed for me to crawl to the stage, which was difficult with my legs and feet hobbled. It wasn’t graceful, but I managed to finally stand on the platform, where I was told to slowly turn so they could get a good look at me. The man in charge then went from one man to the next, quietly discussing my price. I couldn’t hear what was said, but an incredible energy was directed toward me. My body responded as it usually does. My thighs quaked, and my vagina oozed with my juices.” As she speaks, she stares blankly in the direction of Sydney’s desk, but it’s clear that her eyes are not focused and her mind is inside her memory.

“And you hated it or loved it?” Sydney jolts the girl awake after a long pause.

She looks at Sydney, bewildered. “I was hurt. I was confused. I was angry.”

“But you were aroused.”

“Yes, I was aroused. I’m not capable of stopping my physical response. That’s why I need men like Samuel to control me. But I didn’t want those men, I wanted Samuel.”

Sydney has never seen her charge quite so agitated, so angry, but she presses on with a wintry cool in her normally sympathetic voice, “What happened next?”

“The men left, except for the one that ran the sale. He pulled me off the stage and returned me to the main arena, where I was packaged for transfer. It’s a deliberately humiliating ritual. I peed first—because there was no knowing when I’d have a chance to pee again. The man in charge of me pointed to a drain in the concrete floor where I was to relieve myself in front of the crowd that stood around me. Their eyes pressed against my flesh. I felt feverish, like I burning from the outside in.

I spotted Samuel in the crowd. I hoped he’d give me strength but he just stared at me with no emotion, no encouragement at all. Even so, I couldn’t take my eyes from him. My pulse raced, and my breathing became so labored and my head so dizzy that I was sure I’d faint. I wanted some sign from him that this would pass, that I’d be with him again. But there was nothing from him except a cold wind in his gaze that cut me like a steel blade. I wanted to hate him, but I couldn’t. I could be sad and afraid that I’d never see him again, but I could never hate him.”

Sydney doubts the girl’s statement, for she feels the hate pouring from her stoic, acquiescent soul. That hate moves with terrifying passion through the counselor, bringing up all that she knows is wrong about these horrific practices. But the hate is more than that; it’s fueled by a sexual lust so strong that she could find her orgasmic edge in minutes, were she in a different setting. Maybe it is not real hate, but a deep feral longing that has no real name—a longing that beats like a Komodo drum, resonating in the basest part of human kind... that driven, determined power spawned from years of fierce wars and sadistic exploits. Maybe this is what they both feel now, as the girl describes this ghastly moment. The girl was aroused then, and Sydney’s sure she is aroused now, no different from her reaction to the telling of the incident.

“What happened next?”

“I was gagged, my cunt and ass were stuffed with thick dildos and I was chained to a handcart. Before I was wheeled away, Samuel confronted me. His eyes were ablaze at first, then they went cold again. ‘Just a warning, girl, you’ll behave yourself for this guardian, or face a tougher abuse that I ever gave you.’ Then he turned his back on me and walked away. My eyes burned with tears. There wasn’t a single reason for me to believe this wasn’t a permanent arrangement.

“I was angry for a time, realizing that I’d actually given him the right to transfer my guardianship to any man he chose. I didn’t have to do that. But I’d been swept up in the fantasy of this astounding love. There was always something oddly erotic in leaving that possibility available. But I never believed he’d actually sell me, and his betrayal almost made me sick. Everything in me ached with regret and the pain of my loss. This was more unbearable than his death.”

“But *it wasn’t* a permanent agreement,” Sydney reminds her.

“No. It was a simple exchange. I’d been purchased by a man who needed a servant for the weekend. He was giving a party and needed another worker bee to wait on his guests and to offer as a sexual toy. I slaved for twenty hours a day—just barely four hours of sleep at night for those three days—doing everything from scrubbing floors to washing windows to waiting tables to offering my ass, cunt and mouth on demand. I grew so weary that I couldn’t think. I reacted to each command thoughtlessly—which was probably a good thing, since the entire time I was under the impression that



this was a permanent change in my life. When I was cognizant, I kept wondering if I could keep up the grueling pace.

“The second night, my cunt and ass were so sore that I was sure that I couldn’t handle another dick or dildo without being permanently damaged. At the time, the man who purchased me took me aside to ask if I was all right. I reported the uncomfortable situation, and he immediately inspected me in front of several guests. He decided that my body was just fine. I simply needed some Vitamin E oil to soothe the chaffed areas, and I could get right back to work. I think the real problem was the condoms and the plastic dildos, since the chafing was always worse after those sessions. Naked erections never seemed to be a problem, but the man’s houseguests wanted protection from whores they assumed were ‘compromised’.” She sneers with disgust, rolling her eyes. “We all are, you know.”

As she tells the story, her passions have calmed, and when she turns this last phrase sarcastically, the anger she might have once felt in that situation simply isn’t there. She’s merely recounting a fact about herself that she’s learned to accept. Sydney calms as well. Then the girl continues without prompting in a softer rhythm more reminiscent of her first stories.

“At the end of the third night, near midnight, I believe, I was at the feet of the master. My mind and body were so weary that I was having trouble not nodding off. When I did, the man jerked my hair, and twisted my head around so that I was looking into his soulless eyes. ‘Wasted so soon?’ he asked, like I was hardly worth the money he paid. I told him I was sorry, I’d try to go on. He said, ‘No need now. Your time’s up.’ He pushed me off him and one of his women dragged me off and told me to sit by the back door. I still had no idea what was going to happen to me. I waited there for at least two hours... I remember that because the clock at the far end of the hallway chimed every quarter hour and I marked them off, just for something to pass the time. Finally, there was a knock on the back door and a taxi driver was let inside. He was given an address and me—like I was just a package to be delivered. He looked at me worried. I was wearing a skin-tight, black sequined halter dress, which might as well have been nothing at all the way it plunged in front and rode up on my hips. Then he said something like it was dark, so he supposed it wouldn’t matter.

“The temperature was in the forties, and I thought I’d freeze. But I felt better once I realized where he was taking me. I arrived back at Samuel’s loft at three in morning and slipped inside his unlocked door like a thief. He was there, in the living room waiting for me with a glass of brandy in his hand. He ordered me to drink it in one gulp. I managed, and though it burned all the way down my throat, I wasn’t cold anymore. I handed him the glass, and he began to interrogate me about my weekend.

“‘You were sure I’d abandoned you, weren’t you?’ His eyes charged me like a raging bull.

“I answered truthfully because I was sure he knew the answer without my saying anything. When I said yes, his face clouded over in a heartless expression of disgust. ‘All the time we’ve spent and you’d believe I’d sell you off for good? I deign to worship you and you can give me no more faith than this?’

“I felt like a piece of trash, because I knew he was right. I sank to my knees and crawled to him, pleading for him to forgive me. ‘Forgiveness in this house comes with prices,’ he said. There wasn’t an ounce of kindness in his voice.

“I was willing to pay his prices, and he knew that. As tired as I was, I was suddenly wide-awake again. I followed him on hands and knees into the hideaway, where he strung me up and played target practice with his bullwhip—this was also a matter of trust. The whip danced millimeters from my flesh without actually touching—unless he wanted it to. When it actually struck my skin, the cracker would nearly fillet my flesh. I was left with welts, ones that still scar me. But I treasure those scars even now



because they were Samuel's gifts to me."

Her mood shifts again as she speaks of the man she worshiped.

"As he whipped me, the endorphins rushed my body like marauding Huns. I heard myself beg for more and receive it. I exalted in the punishment and the fact that I could redeem myself in my lover's eyes and heart. When he finally took me down and plunged his erection in my mouth, I satisfied his pent up urge. I'd been delivered from my sins, from my lack of faith, from my betrayal of the trust we shared."

Remarkably, the girl's dour expression and passionate anger have completely disappeared. Her spirit is lifted by talking about the man she loves... the man who abused her body in the name of love, who played cruel mind games in the name of love, who held her spirit hostage, torturing it for his sadistic pleasure in the name of love.

This is the proof, the twisted horror Sydney is looking for to condemn the man, the relationship and the entire practice of voluntary servitude. She finally has it documented in the girl's own words; no one would dispute her conclusions. And yet, Sydney finds the practice so gripping, so thrillingly enticing in the basest part of her being that she can't let it go. She has enough evidence to pull this poor girl out of the gutter for good, but she won't. At least not yet.

Sydney leaves the Detention Building roused and unsettled, her body in an agitated roar. If only Jacob were home... but he won't be returning from his business trip until after midnight, long after she'll be tucked in bed asleep. She parks her car in a downtown garage, thinking she'll go to a deli close by and grab a sandwich. It's dusk, and the neon lights in storefront signs begin to flicker on in an array of colors that blur before her eyes, the way the pedestrians blur before her, and the cars that whiz past and the smells and sounds of the city attack her in a savage blurring mélange of sensation. Everything conspires to raise her agitation to a feverish pitch.

She finally ducks into a tiny wood-front tavern crammed between a glitzy restaurant and a dress shop that's closed for the night. The dimly lit establishment is quiet and coolly humid, a pleasant change from the oppressive commotion of bodies, cars and noisy sounds on the street. A few men stand at the bar downing their beer and conversing with the bartender—on the way home from work she assumes. A couple sips martinis at a table in the front, while another couple in jeans and white T-shirts—dressed down for this posh neighborhood—drinks mugs of heavy German beer. Sydney looks toward the back of the tavern, seeing the rest of the place empty. She walks past the standing customers and sits on a stool at the far end of the sleek bar.

"A vodka martini with an olive," she tells the bartender. She's never had one in her life, but saying it sounds impressive, as if she knows what she's doing.

She can't keep thoughts of Melinda from bombarding her mind... the way the girl allows men to take her without a thought about her welfare. She exists on trust, an innate part of her make-up. She's right; she needs someone to protect her from her naiveté, but is that any reason to turn herself into a mindless slave? What kind of positive trade-off can there really be? What kind of life is it to put your body, your choices in bondage?

Hopefully, she can make sense of this twisted world. Sydney squirms on the barstool, feeling the bare back of her thighs resting on the leather. She parts her legs without even thinking, allowing her skirt to ride up on her leg so that the lacy top of her nylon and her garters show. She looks down and smiles to herself. *Imagine, pulling that antiquated lingerie from the drawer!* That morning, she dressed with the express purpose of feeling sexual—it's been years since the idea even crossed her mind. Now, it

seems that she doesn't have any choice. The powerful fire the girl has raised in her will not be squelched, and she doesn't want it to go away.

"Hey, lovely lady," a man two stools down draws her attention.

"Hi," She turns and answers in a friendly way. Her mellifluous voice oozes desire. She forgets her training as a modern woman, fending off all but the most attractive man with a cold shoulder and an arrogant glare. But this one's not bad at all. He's tall, blond, with a close buzz-cut and expensive clothes. His suit is fresh and his tie only slightly loosened. He's the All-American boy grown up, and he's hitting on her.

"Drinking alone?" he asks, without moving over.

"You want to join me?" She can't recall when she's been so forward with a stranger.

He bridges the gap, with his gaze closing in on her eyes. He must feel her arousal drawing him to her.

"You come here often?" he asks.

"First time. Have a lot on my mind and thought I'd walk a bit. This seemed like a pleasant enough place to catch my breath."

He smiles.

"Don't worry, I won't tell you my troubles," she adds with a laugh.

"I'd probably listen," he says, without it sounding like a pick-up line.

She fingers the stem of her martini glass. "You ever have anonymous sex?" she suddenly asks.

His eyes open a bit wider. "Boy you go straight to the point, lady, or are you just teasing me?"

"I don't know, why don't you try me?" Her lips part, and she licks them lightly with her tongue.

"And how would that happen, without risking offending you?" he asks.

"Humm, let's see." The thought of fucking him is suddenly the only thought in her mind. She reaches out and takes his hand, placing it between her legs, where her skirt rides high and he can practically feel her panties. "This doesn't offend me," she says.

He's curious, gleeful as hell, and willing to keep going. His fingers move a little deeper into her crotch, until they gently toy with the silk gusset separating them from her warm sex. She squirms, giggling delightfully. "Would you believe I've never done anything like this before?"

"Neither have I," he replies.

"I have a boyfriend," she warns him.

"And I have a girlfriend," he replies.

She smiles. "So, this is just casual, just sex, just once?"

He smiles back, slyly. "Like you said, anonymous."

They come together like long lost friends, fired by a moment that will only last minutes and then disappear into a memory they will hardly remember a month later. But for the moment, there's no one else in the world, no worry more important than what they feel sexually.

"No hotel rooms, no apartments... nothing where I'll get trapped," she tells him.

"Wise girl," he says with eyebrows raised. "But you're still playing with fire."

"Do I have anything to worry about?" she asks.

"No. But what do your instincts say?"

"They say you're a decent guy taking advantage of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and don't think about it so much or you'll ruin the moment."

"I do like you, Ms. Anonymous."

He's found the edge of her panties right in front of her vagina. A sharp, sweet, burning sensation draws him in. Her anxious body craves even the slight touch of his finger on the sensitive opening. Raw with need, she opens her legs a little more, while trying to keep her lap discreetly under the broad edge of the gleaming bar. He turns, so she's practically facing him; the position discreet, intimate and relatively safe. But then being 'safe' isn't exactly what this is about.

Encouraged by her eyes, her lips, her words and her open thighs, he adroitly moves his fingers around the edge of her panties, finding the softest flesh of a woman's body and the silky pubic hair that protects it. Her scent wafts from the spot, which is now potently perfumed by her sexual arousal.

"I could come on your fingers," she quietly seethes.

"And that would be it?" His brows furrow in disappointment.

"Oh, you want something more, don't you?" she teasingly concludes.

"There is a tiny courtyard in the back of this place. It'll be deserted now."

"You know that for a fact?"

"It's under renovation and the workers have gone for the night."

She lets him play with her pussy for a while, as her molten eyes seduce him more. When she places her hand on his crotch and feels the hardness there, a long, sizable line of an expanding erection, throbbing hotly.

"Oh, my! What have we here?" She presses her hand along the rigid staff and squeezes for a time, feeling it pulse against her palm when she eases her grip. Her pussy clenches as she imagines this thick erection sliding along the muscled walls of her hungry interior. His warmth passes from his crotch to her hand, spreads up through her arm and settles in her tingling belly—more fuel for an arousal so powerful, she feels it clawing for its climax. "You say the courtyard's vacant?"

“Of curious eyes.”

She removes her hand and twirls around on the stool, hopping off. Gulping the last of their drinks, they pay their tab and head for the exit in back, where they furtively slip into the courtyard.

He laughs as he closes the door behind them. They gaze at the high brick walls that face the street... the ivy that clings to them and the blue sky above. Inside the small courtyard, the tables have been pushed to one side, while the remains of paint cans, drop clothes and lumber take up the other side. Deciding quickly on her plan, Sydney pulls her anonymous lover with her to a small alcove in the brick façade. She turns around with her back to the wall, and then climbs on his eager body. Their mouths meet for a sloppy, vigorous kiss, as he tears at her clothes and she tears at his. They are worlds away, thinking only of their passionate, anonymous clash—and yet, they are well aware that just over the top of the six-foot wall, and just inside the tavern door, the world goes on around them. They are hardly safe from its possible intrusion, but that only intensifies the furtive thrill.

Already seeing the splendid finish in sight, Sydney’s body drives toward one end. Jerking her lover’s zipper down, she reaches inside his suit pants to find the object of her lust.

“Ooo, how pretty,” she seethingly gasps, as she draws the beautiful penis from inside. She drops to her knees and covers the smooth head with her mouth, while dancing her tongue over his musky flesh. She drinks his aroma and finds his scent appealing, mellow, carnal, with a hint of the civility, which seems to be a natural element of his make-up. He’s just a regular guy, reasonably handsome and daring enough to fuck a sexy stranger on a lark.

When he pulls her to her feet, she raises her skirt. He does the rest, pushing her panties aside, and plunging his waiting erection into the steamy portal between her thighs. They grope freely, as the fucking commences, as their hips writhe in unison, and he draws in and out of the tightly squeezing channel. His hand mauls her breasts through her blouse; her fingers claw his back. And the eternal kiss goes on as the fuck gets hotter, and the crescendo builds. His both hands reach low, cupping her ass and parting her cheeks, allowing a finger inside the cleft to jab at her nether hole.

“Oh, damn!” she cries in a whispered voice. “Yes, do that more!” she purrs.

It’s hard to contain the physical reply. She should be screaming; instead, she mews and hums in a lilting refrain. He keeps his zealous groans to a reasonable minimum.

“Harder,” she tells him.

He slams her hard against the wall, while jamming his fingers even deeper into her ass. She feels the conflict of the double penetration, loving every harrowing moment of his fierce demands of her.

“Oh, God, come!” she roars in a muted way, but with as much passion as she would have screaming aloud.

He’s close. At the precipice and falling off, about to explode, his body taut, obsessed, driven by the sexy, risky circumstances that surround their exuberant clash. He issues a low grunt and suddenly ejaculates inside her spasming cunt. She comes an instant later, grasping, clawing brutally, panting, heaving, clinging, clenching. Her spasms grind hard inside her, each one a more powerful statement of her need.

“Damn, yessssssss,” she hisses as she hangs on to him to the very end. They remain pressed tightly together until the last of their orgasm recedes. When they finally peel their bodies away, they lean back against the brick that harbors them, catching their breath.

“Perfect time for a cigarette,” he says with a sigh.

“If I only smoked,” she says.

“Well, I do.” He pulls a Marlboro from his suit pocket, lights it with a match and takes a long drag. He offers her the same and she lets herself indulge—remembering that she used to bum them from her friends in her barhopping days. An even better reason today. A small act of celebration.

“Thank you,” she says, “for being indecent enough to do this.” She hopes it won’t get awkward now.

“You made my day,” he replies

She looks around, belatedly self-conscious. “You think anyone heard us?”

“What if they did?”

She smiles, “Yeah, besides, it’s over now and I feel much better.”

“Can I buy you another drink?”

“No, I think I’ll head home.”

“Walk you to your car?”

She shakes her head, “It’s just down the street.”

“Ah, don’t trust me now, huh?”

“Oh, no, it’s not that. I don’t want to impose.”

He squashes his cigarette butt on the cement floor and opens the tavern door for her to pass through. She moves to the front of the bar and turns back, waving goodbye, as she hurriedly makes her retreat out the front door.

## Chapter Seven

### Underground

Jacob postpones their visit to the Underground Market one more day.

“Saturday’s a better night,” he tells her Friday evening when he’s dead tired and too weary to make the effort.

"You have no idea how hard it is waiting," she says despondently, while thinking of the quickie in the bar.

"Good for you to experience a little delayed gratification, my dear," he says with an evil twinkle in his eye. "I suspect that a good submissive woman knows how to wait, graciously patient."

"Sure." If he only knew how impatient she's been. "Well, if we're not going tonight, I'm stopping by to see Melinda."

"Why this late?"

"They put her back in the stacks. Said they reassigned some of the guards that assaulted her, but I don't trust any of them."

"And you think your sporadic presence is going to keep them from going after her?"

"Maybe."

"Or maybe, you're trying to assuage your guilt over messing with the situation in the first place?"

"I did the right thing, Jacob. Any decent human being would have if they came upon what I saw. The system is screwed if it fails to fix it. Regardless, I'll still do what's right."

She leaves him to his paper, his remote control, his pizza and beer.

The stacks are eerily quiet at ten pm. The air is cool, strangely fresh, as if there's a draft of air from the outside filtering through the venting system. The guard on duty is one she doesn't recognize. At least he looks respectable and above the kind of behavior she witnessed days before.

"I want to see Melinda duBois."

He looks at her quizzically.

She purses her lips. "You know her as Lot 21."

"Oh, yeah, the pretty blonde on the second tier." He stares up in the direction of her cell. "She's there, readin', I think."

"Should I have you bring her down?"

"Nah, you can go up there yourself. This isn't prison." He smirks. They both know it really is.

She takes the metal stairs to the second floor and finds the girl's cell.

"Melinda," Sydney whispers through the barred door. Beyond the bars, her room is a freshly painted white. She's tacked several magazine pictures to the wall over her bed. There's a sink, toilet and several shelves with a few scattered items, a magazine and a few books. This is all she owns.

The girl has her back to her and turns hearing Sydney speak. She's puzzled by her counselor's unexpected visit.

"I'm just checking up on you. May I come in?"

"Sure, they don't lock the doors."

Sydney steps inside and closes the bars, as if she's closing out the rest of the world, but the privacy is only minimal. The closed cell door sends a cold chill up her spine.

The walls are close and confining, but likely something the girl has experienced many times, Sydney reasons.

"And how are you tonight?" They sit on the bed side by side.

"I'm fine, ma'am."

"No one has assaulted you?"

"No, ma'am."

It seems the wrong time of day to delve into the type of probing questions that she asks in their regular sessions. The silence between them becomes awkward as the girl stares blankly forward and Sydney struggles for something to say.

"I have a few more things we need to consider before we agree on your next placement," Sydney suddenly says simply to fill the uncomfortable void. "I appreciate your patience."

"Yes, ma'am."

The girl is as stoic and reposed as when she first met her. Sydney wonders what she's thinking, but is afraid to ask.

"Is there anything you need?"

The girl doesn't know what to ask for and shakes her head. "They've given me a blanket and a toothbrush and toothpaste. I had a comb and my books when I came."

"What are you reading?"

"She pulls the thick book from her bed and opens the cover. "*Les Miserables*. I like the classics. I read this a long time ago. It was one of Samuel's favorites."

"He had a lot of books?"

"Hundreds in his library. I think I may have read them all... the fiction anyway."

"I wonder what happened to them?"

"His sister Sophie," she explains.

“His sister inherited his estate?”

She nods.

“And it doesn’t bother you that he didn’t leave you anything?”

“He left me with my memories of him; that’s all that matters.”

“No, Melinda... other things matter, too!” Sydney exclaims, feeling her emotions rise. “Don’t you understand that?”

The girl’s face screws up painfully. “I’m so sorry, Sydney. You’re angry with me.”

*It’s the first time she’s called her counselor by her name.*

“No, not at all,” Sydney lies. “I’m just frustrated with this wretched system.” She covers the girl’s hand with hers, feeling the impatience well up inside her, while the girl remains calm. “You need to think seriously about your life, and about what you really want for yourself. There’s a big world beyond the kind of circumscribed existence Mr. Janes created for you. I’d think you’d want to taste that, too.”

The girl starts to speak.

“Shush. Don’t answer me now. Just think about it.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Sydney leaves the building minutes later, as confused by Melinda duBois as she was when they first met.

d

They decide to wear leather for their visit to the Underground Market. Something simple and discreet. Jacob has a pair of leather pants and a jacket from his Harley days some years before. They still fit and Sydney adores the way he looks, the way the leather moves with his body and clings closely to his skin. She decides on a short skirt she’s had in her closet for several years. She found a leather halter to match at a leather store she’d been passing every day on her way to work. She adds a trendy fetish piece: a collar with chains that loop deep into her cleavage. When she models the outfit in the morning, Jacob approves, smiling broadly, eyebrows raised with lust.

“I don’t look too contrived?”

“I’m not sure what ‘contrived’ would be in that environment. But you do look great.”

Her breasts burst from the halter, looking far bigger than they really are. She tugs at the sides self-consciously.

“Stop that!” he barks. “I like the slutty look. Remember, this is the Underground. I’ll bet you’ll be



seeing a lot more flesh tonight than you're showing me now."

She gazes down. "Yes. I imagine so."

"And remember, you're my property. No one does anything to you that I don't approve of first."

She feels a gentle warmth stirring in her tummy hearing him speak that way. "Yes, *sir*," she smiles.

"Hey, good practice," he smiles back. He changes into his soccer clothes and takes off for his soccer game, leaving her alone to dwell on the night ahead.

Jacob plays soccer with his buddies every Saturday morning. She'd hoped he'd be more attentive on this particular day, aware of what she faces that night. But he seems immune to the danger and trepidation she feels. She won't mention it. He'd only tell her he won't take her, if he thinks she's freaking out.

d

They park on the street several doors down from the building that houses the Underground Market. The neighborhood consists of a dozen blocks of brick apartment houses and old frame dwellings, a typical blue-collar community, but with a few secrets hidden in its bowels. The unmarked door to the Underground is right on the street, down a flight of stairs, a weathered green-painted wood with a buzzer at its side. You have to know the building number to identify the location; so many of the buildings in the neighborhood look the same. And you'd have to know to push aside the overgrown ivy clinging to the walls in order to find that hidden buzzer. Jacob has his information correct and goes straight to the door and buzzer without needing to search.

"Have you been here before?" Sydney asks suspiciously.

"Never. I swear. But I have a friend who's here every Saturday night. He's been looking for his first girl."

"His 'first' girl?"

"His first property."

"And he hasn't found her?"

"Apparently, it's not as easy as it seems, unless you have a lot of money. Like anywhere else in the real world, money will buy you just about anything."

They hear the buzzer on the inside, and a few moments later, the door opens and a burly, tattooed man with a big belly, scruffy beard and unkempt hair answers with a growl.

"I'm a friend of the Fire Lord," Jacob tells him.

The man flashes Jacob a toothy grin, while ignoring Sydney. "Collar your girl and put her on the

floor,” he says.

The door closes and they’re led inside, into what Sydney assumes is the ‘greeting room’ Melinda mentioned. Jacob pushes her to her knees, whispering, “You sure you want to do this?”

“I have to,” she whispers back, while noting a cruel grimace on the doorman’s face.

Jacob fishes through his leather pack for Sydney’s collar and chains, and with an efficient move, as if he performs the rite daily, turns her into his property.

“She go by a name or number?” the doorman asks.

Jacob, resourceful as he is, is thinking on his feet and quickly replies, “21.” Even he is thinking of Melinda.

“Gotta see if that one’s free,” the man says, while consulting his clipboard. “Used to have a ‘21’ here a while back, but her guardian died a few weeks ago. Yeah, you can claim the number, but it’s only temporary until you’re registered. She isn’t registered, is she?”

“No,” Jacob answers.

Sydney shudders when she hears the obvious reference to Melinda duBois. Knowing this, she has a whole list of questions to ask the man. But she’s been made into a humbled pet, a slave, a submissive servant, at the very least. Like all the other women she sees in the cavernous place, she’s sworn to silence.

The doorman fishes through a bag, pulls out a tag and marks it with a magic marker, “21.” The tag hooks to the back of her collar. “She better be good, this one. Our other 21 was a gem.” He says this with a tenderhearted sweetness that belies the man’s gruff looks.

Sydney feels silly following Jacob on her hands and knees, although the behavior appears to be a normal practice in the Underground. A few females serve their owners on foot, but only those with the specific task of serving food and drinks. After they make their deliveries, they dutifully drop to their knees and wait. Their heads are bowed, their attitude yielding.

Jacob sits at the bar, getting his bearings and gazing around, accepting a drink from a nearly naked serving wench with great waggling breasts, and nipples pierced with dangling bells. Sydney can see very little in this position, and when she’s tempted to break form, sit up and look for herself, Jacob scowls at her and pushes her down with his booted foot at the back of her head.

Sydney’s first reaction is defiance. She wants to fight against the heavy weight of Jacob’s leg, but when she tries to push against him, he drives his foot even harder. Still defiant, she continues to resist. With no warning, Jacob lifts his boot, yanks her up by the hair, and whispers in her ear, “Get in character, 21,” he hisses. “This is what you want, this is what you’ll get, until I’m ready to leave.” She feels a power from her good-natured lover that she’s never felt before. It’s not hot like anger, but something cold and animal, that seems to have a direct effect on the sexual arousal beating in her groin with drum-like finality. She thinks again, remembering her place and relinquishes the feeling of anger. Her body wilts into a pose of surrender, while Jacob uses her back as a footrest.

Jacob downs his beer as he appraises his options. Decision made, he snaps a leash to Sydney’s collar, gets up and pulls her with him into the back of the Underground. Her knees are already sore from

crawling; they'll be bruised by morning. She's nearly in tears, but it's not from the resistance plaguing her, but a feeling that any second, she'll actually succumb to the waves of pure sensation that only tease her now. She wants to fly from this onerous place before she's sucked in.

The crowd in the greeting room joins them in a semi-circle before what could be an altar or an auction block. She sees it surreptitiously from the corner of her eye, until Jacob jerks her head up right and she's allowed to sit back on her heels, as she sees other females are permitted. Jacob draws her wrists above her head in a vice-like grip, as he fools with something with his other hand. Sydney discovers what he's doing when he wraps her wrists with rope that dangles down from above. A dozen other females are similarly bound.

Sydney, Jacob, and other pairs of Dominant males and submissive females make up the outer circle before the altar. An inner circle of men pace from one female to another, making appraisals, and asking brief questions of the man who stands behind her—her owner.

"She for sale?" one man asks Jacob, as he scrutinizes her with the thoroughness of an accountant.

"Not yet. She's being trained." Jacob answers as if he has his answers planned in advance.

"Pretty. Nice tits. May I?" He taps his baton against Sydney's leather covered breasts.

In a move that takes Sydney by surprise, Jacob rips the necktie of her halter in one swift jerk, and the leather bra falls forward exposing her breasts. She blushes, yet is strangely titillated by the exposure.

"Humm, very pretty," the man decides, as he gently raps the tender sides of 21's tits.

"She take pain?"

"That's what she's being trained for, but her experience is minimal."

"Mind if I give her a taste?"

"By all means, do."

The fellow rears back and lets his baton fly forward, and a sudden searing pain tears through Sydney's body. Her face screws up as if she's going to cry, but when her body buckles under her, she finds her arms jerked back by the rope holding her wrists.

Jacob kicks her rump with his boot, "Not very good, 21," he chides her.

"Sorry, sir," she recovers quickly, forced to assume the upright posture unless she wants to feel the awful strain in her arms.

"You gotcher your work cut out for you," the fellow says with a snicker and moves on to the next girl.

Sydney can see the harsh red line along the white of her breasts. She shudders deeply, wishing she could feel the way Melinda would about this amazing scene. But there is so much input all at once, there's no way to decipher these feelings, understand her physical response, and, most importantly, decide if this is what she enjoys or despises.

Another man approaches. This one is dressed elegantly, in a draping white silk shirt tucked loosely into black leather pants. He lacks only a sword on his waist belt to place him in the bygone era of ruthless pirates. "Novice," he states, gazing at Sydney. "I don't appreciate women who don't know their own mind, like this one." He takes her chin in his hand and gazes deeply into her eyes.

*How would he know me? she wonders.*

He runs his fingers through her hair, gently, and sneers in an enigmatic way that makes her wonder what he's thinking. "In my underground, girl, you divert your eyes submissively. Properties don't look men in the eye unless they are given permission."

She finds herself shamed by the rebuke, and is glad to bow her head to avert his contempt.

"You're a novice, too, aren't you?" he speaks to Jacob. "I haven't seen you here before."

"Novice to the Underground, yes. But I imagine we'll be coming back."

"That's good. Most men eventually find what they are looking for. I'm Oliver Sykes, the proprietor here."

Sydney senses that the men shake hands, though she can't tell for sure with her eyes obediently looking down.

"Pleased to meet you," Jacob replies.

"If you're interested in putting her through a decent game, I'd be more than happy to oblige you with my whip." He stares down at the quivering Sydney. "I see her shudder. There's nothing quite so delightful as a novice's first going over. The pain. The emergent sexuality. The shame, the humility, all charge sadistic loins like ours."

"Yes, they do... Sykes, is it?"

"Sykes is fine."

"I'm gauging 21's readiness," Jacob tells him, as if he knows exactly what he is doing.

"Well then, perhaps after you've presented her here, you should cage her for a while and look around on your own. You can lock her in the vault; we have both sensory deprivation bondage and the animal cages at your disposal."

"Oh, she'll go in an animal cage," Jacob readily retorts.

"Perfect. Make her stare and wonder." Sykes words are laced with guile, while emerging from his stocky, muscled body is a rumbling lust that seems to swirl all about her.

He reaches down and grabs one of her nipples, pulling. "Her tits need more pain, I can see that. You enjoy yourself and your 21, and do come back when you're ready to share her."

"I will."

Sighing deeply, the man strolls away as if he were walking through a park on a sunny, Sunday

afternoon, not a care in the world.

The bare-breasted Sydney is inspected by a dozen men. Most waltz by silently, others ask a few questions of Jacob, who has created a standard reply—his ‘girl’ is getting her feet wet, implying that this easy bondage exhibition is likely enough for her first visit. The last man to pass by takes more time than the rest, then hands Jacob his card.

“If you’re interested in selling, the price would be fair and generous. But I’d only take her as an indentured servant with official papers.”

“She’s actually not for sale,” Jacob tells him.

“I understand that, but eventually you will think about it. Keep my card.”

“Thank you, I will,” Jacob returns, as Sydney shudders again. She knows that she and Jacob are playing a game, that their presence here is a lie, but what if it were not? What if she were Melinda, listening to the men above her talk in third person, as if she had no mind at all, and certainly had no say in what happened to her. How would she feel then?

Once the inspections are finished, the bigger drama of the arena continues. Apparently, Sydney and several other women like her are withdrawn from the further proceedings, though they remain there to watch. The rest of the kneeling females and a few others who join them become participants in a kind of lottery. Their men drop tile markers into a clay container that is passed from one to the next. The mood in the room is expectant, anxious, frightening. She can feel the worry around her, see how the other women bite their lips nervously and how their naked bodies quiver in expectation. Whether there is excitement amongst their fear is difficult to tell. But the erotic overtones are certain in this ultimate mind game. Sydney sympathetically shrinks in fear, even though she knows she is not at risk of being chosen.

Sykes chooses a tile from the clay jar and begins his rounds again—stopping briefly in front of the women still participating in the game. He makes them sweat it out as their anticipation builds, smiling, sneering, giving some a fixed eye filled with scorn. Then, with daunting swiftness, he focuses directly on a bounteously voluptuous woman with a round face, pink cheeks and honey-colored hair. She’s naked except for her collar, the cuffs that hold her arms above her head and an elaborate chain mail tunic that shimmies softly as her body quakes.

“You belong to me, girl,” Sykes says with a growl.

The girl shakes her head and begins to cry. Looking plaintively to her owner behind her, she receives a sudden sting on her cheek in rebuke. “How ironic,” her master says. There’s a faint snicker on his lip. “Go on,” he says, freeing her wrists.

“But, sir...” She pleads with him to no avail. He jerks her hard, tossing Sykes the weighty chain leash that connects to her collar.

“If she doesn’t behave herself, sell her off!” he says as if he doesn’t care.

“NO!” she cries.

With no malice, but complete dominion over this property, Sykes takes charge. He forces a gag into the girl’s mouth and swiftly buckles it around her neck to muffle her unwanted cries. The gag is unlike anything Sydney has ever seen; a wide round leather-covered circle fits inside her mouth, holding it wide

open. Saliva drips off her lips involuntarily. She's never seen anything quite so repulsive.

"You behave and I won't piss in your hole," Sykes warns.

The girl's eyes shoot open in wonder, while her face consorts in a plea for sympathy—which the man ignores.

"Grab hold of your wits, child, and remember your place, what you chose with a willing heart. What you love!"

He drags her forward to the stage, where he removes the chain mail tunic and ties her limbs by her ankles and wrists to four corners of a square wooden frame. The frame is fixed inside a circular steel machine that will rotate three hundred and sixty degrees, if that's his choice.

The girl whimpers softly as the scene plays out. But as Sykes starts the torture with his single-tail whip, he delivers the girl into a state of pained ecstasy. Every nerve in her body quakes as he wraps the whip around her limbs and then draws it back and flicks the tail against her tender parts. He starts in hard on her buttocks, which he flails to a raw, welted red. Then he does the same with her upper back and shoulders, before he swivels the frame on its axis below so she's facing forward, facing the same kind of ruthless whipping on her balloon-like breasts. They quiver and jump with each crack of leather, and quickly begin to color as one strike hits atop another. When he moves in close, his fingers twist her distended nipples until she shrieks.

He whispers something private in her ear and she appears to wilt and her body ease for a time. Then, suddenly she dances like a puppet as he teasingly works his fingers about her sex.

Her juices drip from her pussy, just as her tears fall down her cheeks. The surrounding audience focuses on her cum-ravaged body, breathless with anticipation. Just one moment away from exploding into climax, abruptly, without warning, a wickedly grinning Skyes removes himself from the stage.

"You don't deserve the pleasure, girl."

She is left for another master to take over, and the edge of her sweet ecstasy is lost. The girl breathes quietly for a time as she despondently waits for another man to finish what Sykes would not.

It will be a long night for her, Sydney realizes. She's been chosen by lots, the victim of the hour, of the whims of any man who will use her. Because of who she is in this uncommon world, she will see this to its end—not because she wants to, although she may, but because this is how she serves the man who owns her. Her servitude was her choice some time ago, and this night and every other night she is obliged to obey. That is her game.

Three men venture forward next, each with weapons of their choice, which they liberally use to send the girl into another state of impending orgasmic bliss. They seem less interested in form than in showing off their skill with the floggers and whips they wield. The punishment comes in erratic fits and starts, leaving the girl confused and distraught because she can find no pleasure behind this abuse. When the three get tired of her, they walk away, and are replaced by other masters, who have the right to wreak their passions on this chosen one. Some work hefty dildos into her cunt and ass. Others torture her more tenderly, though always stopping just before her body can let go. She's denied a dozen times by men who can feel her body's response with theirs and are content to see her suffer with expectation and no glorious end.



Her owner, the man who gave her up, leaves her for a long while—Sydney sees him courting another female across the room. For a while, the pair disappears down one of the corridors and returns some time later, just as Jacob is leading his 21 away. What will happen next is only Sydney's guess. With the chosen girl still suffering on stage, her muffled gasps and cries filling the air for a while then dwindling away, Jacob locks Sydney into one of the animal cages behind the stage, where it is nearly impossible to see anything going on in the adjacent room. He then wanders off to observe the Underground on his own.

What is she supposed to feel, locked in a cage and left alone? And is it really a game anymore? And what is Jacob thinking? His immediate grasp of the dungeon scene seems astounding. She would swear he's played in this arena before, and yet, she knows he hasn't.

Sydney feels the bars around her, remembering her visit with Melinda. *Yes, Melinda. That's what this is about—understanding Melinda and her motives for her life...* She grabs back her consciousness as it threatens to slide dangerously into confusion and panic. Remembering what she's here for, she reins in her feelings. This is not about Sydney Wingate. It's about a woman caught in the middle of two lives, the one she knows, the comfortable one she remembers, the familiar one she still longs for and the one that awaits her now, an uncertain mystery.

How would Melinda feel crouched in this cage, looking out on the buying and selling, the torture and the curious sex that drives this Underground Market? At one time, she was here, long before this night. She was sold in a twisted test of loyalty to her owner. How many other women are faced with the kind of fear Melinda felt that night? Certainly, the girl on stage is petrified at being chosen as 'slave of the hour.'

What about the other times Melinda came with Mr. Janes to the Underground? Perhaps one night he caged her in this very box, and like Jacob, waltzed haughtily around the nether world greeting his cohorts with lusty grimaces. Did she relish her captivity? Did it arouse body and feed her desire? Or did she wait in wonder, fighting the fear that gripped her heart?

As the long minutes tick by, Sydney watches the activity through her own eyes, disentangling herself from the emotions that threaten to surface again. She remembers her place—not as a submissive woman owned by Jacob, but as Melinda duBois' counselor, conducting research. Her critical eye views the scenes before her, the torture, the rape, the abuse... she listens to the awesome sounds of crying and distress and how they mutate into the beautiful melody of sexual release... she feels the prickly sensation of power that rises in her loins when a whip shatters the air with a terrifying crack, or the thundering command of a master's fearsome voice demands obedience from an obliging submissive. Her heart races, her belly trembles... and she fights to hold the feelings in check... again and again... so she can form reasonable conclusions based on what she sees. Oh, but maybe that's a ridiculous idea! There is nothing *reasonable* about this place and the people who are drawn to its doors.

Sydney understands the aura, the mystery, the emotion that drives this place on a night like this. But what of the morning after... and the day that follows... and all the days after that? Does the erotic jolt, the fire that burns the loins, the unknown that invites the exploration into the dark remain a constant? Does the desire for abject servitude contain the same intrigue? How could it possibly be this rich and deviantly splendid every minute of every day? What do these women do with the long hours of their lives when they are not in this heightened world of sexual expectancy and dangerous thrill?

Maybe this *is not* the place to learn the secret of this absurd lifestyle. Maybe it is in those other moments, the quieter ones when the submissive female serves her master in other more ordinary ways.

As if her purpose for being here this night has finally been revealed, Sydney feels some calm replace

the current of agitation in her body, considering this new thought. In the minutes of captivity that remain she settles down and breathes deeply the incense and aura of the cavernous lair. While she waits for Jacob, her thoughts return to her own physical responses. She can't deny the effect it has on her... her insides tingle with a hunger she doesn't understand, but at least for the moment she accepts. After all, it must not be that unusual if so many are drawn to this place and to the lifestyle that feeds its strange rituals.

Jacob returns, surprising her. She jumps when she hears his voice behind her. When she turns, she bumps her head on the bars.

"Ouch!"

"I can see this isn't your cup of tea," he says.

"Actually, it was quite revealing," she's willing to admit when he unlocks the door.

"You can tell me about it later," he replies, dourly, maintaining the dominant temperament he adopted as soon as they walked through the door.

She crawls with him through the Underground, where the voluptuous woman still endures the sting of whips and various tortures. She seems to have crashed through the pain to the other side Sydney has been told about, where the physical endorphins rush the body and any new sensation transforms pain into pleasure. What the girl feared has become a scenario she will not forget for a long time.

Arriving back at the main door, Jacob pulls her halter up and ties it around her neck again. He leaves her collar in place, but detaches the leash, and then brings her to her feet. She's surprised when he tosses a cape over her shoulders to cover her slutty clothes. A brass clasp holds it in place, and as she emerges into the nighttime quiet of the blue-collar neighborhood, she allows the fresh air to wash over her like a cleansing rain.

Jacob doesn't say a word on the ride home, or as they return to the apartment they share. He saves his comments for the bedroom, where his sexual energy is as strong as hers, and driven to the end they agree to silently. He comes at her from behind, his hands roving her body and discovering the small welt that remains from the Dom's brutal baton. She flinches when he touches the spot, and a glorious sensation flows outward from the place. He moves to her nipples, pinching them softly and then a little more firmly as his desire builds.

She gasps, her body in awe of what she feels. Her pussy throbs in wait, but he's not ready for penetration, despite the impressive size of his erection. He'll take this uncommon moment to its limit, give her more than she can handle in arousal and *then* take her. His hands float over her body with the same authority he's wielded over her all night. But she still can't decide if she likes his being in charge. She doesn't know how to let go and wishes he'd just impale her on his prick and get the fucking over with.

Instead, he ties her arms to the bed frame above, positions her face up and begins his torture again. He laps at her clitoris, running his tongue over the sensitive bud, then makes a slow journey to each nipple, where he eats with relish, biting and tugging, making her gasp deep within as she absorbs the gentle pain. He slaps her breasts and she jerks annoyed at first—this is NOT what he's supposed to do. But he doesn't seem to care what she thinks. When she murmurs her dissatisfaction, he says: "Like it, bitch, this is what you asked for!"



*No, no it's not!* She answers in her mind. She wouldn't dare say a disrespectful, disobedient word, not after the night they've shared. She realizes that she's not safe yet from what she feels. She may never be safe again from the fantasy, the allure, and the physical response of the darker side of sex.

Having enough of her delicate front side, Jacob pushes her over, on to her stomach and assaults her pretty ass. They simultaneously think of the woman on the stage, whose bounteous white buttocks turn an abrasive shade of scarlet with the bites and slaps and whips that burnished her flesh.

In like fashion, Jacob spans her ass with a hairbrush until she screams for him to stop. With these hellish desires running freely through him, he realizes that restraining his strong impulses isn't as easy as it might look. He's become acquainted with a darker, meaner side of himself that he rarely feels. But it's in him, as fixed as the compassion, devotion, tenderness and love he's always offered the woman he loves.

When he stops the spanking, he picks up a horsehair flogger his bondage friend had loaned him for the night. Its impact may only be minimal, but to Sydney's flushed skin it's a fine aphrodisiac. She wants more.

She's moaning, flailing back and forth against the bed, feeling her slightly roughed clitoris teased by the bunched up covers between her thighs. She fucks them to expand her arousal, while her ass bobs up and down. Jacob continues exuberantly, flailing her with the horsehair and then a leather deerskin flogger, which adds as much stimulation with its aroma as it does its soft feel. She prays for something harder and more intense, not the back of the hairbrush, not wood, but leather that caresses her deeply. Her wanting goes unheeded.

Deciding he's had enough foreplay, Jacob throws down the flogger and dives into her undulating ass, lifting her backside to her knees, so her cleft is at cock height. He brusquely plunges into her wet pussy with a hearty shove and drives his erection home with increasing force.

"You wanna get fucked, don't you?"

"Gawd, yes!" she hisses.

He starts to finger her asshole.

"Damn, what a tight little hole. Want that fucked, too!" He shoves his fingers deeper.

"Oh, honey, I don't..." Her fear rises up to slap the pleasure away.

"Easy, baby, you can do this," he goads her. He pulls his finger from her dry hole and coats it with her body juices so the opening is slick.

She fights to make her body relax. But the sensation is awesome, unlike anything she's felt before.

He slaps her ass when she clenches, and doesn't stop until she finally lets go.

"That's it, baby, don't fight me."

She relaxes with the sound of his soothing words, letting the crude sensations begin to please her.

"That's it." He draws his fingers in and out in a regular rhythm, softly encouraging her. Her ass begins to undulate. "Ooo, you perfect slut, that's it."

He shoves his fingers deeper... this time three riding next door to his thrusting erection.

Deciding that she's wet and loose enough for the real thing, Jacob pulls his aching member from her pussy and aims higher for her ass. He lunges slowly, with enough restraint to keep from hurting her. "Relax, baby, it's going all the way inside." Is he hurting her? He can't be sure. It's difficult for either of them to tell what she feels.

But as he eases in and out, there's no pain. Sydney responds, groaning. Like something just burst inside her body, the crude sensation of anal sex feeds the lust that's simmered in her body all night long.

"Oh, gawd, yes," she sighs, as she feels the heavy weight of his turgid organ expand her body beyond its normal boundaries.

"You're doing fine, love," he says.

But then, he's waited long enough and he can't hold back what he feels. With a sudden, sadistic shove, he rams his erection into her dark channel, until his groin finally nestles against her soft rear cheeks.

"My, gawwwwwwwwwd!" she gasps, practically falling forward.

He pulls her back hard. "Take it, Syd!" he says, as he begins to pump her ass.

"Oh, my gawd, yes! Yes! Do it!"

She wiggles her impaled ass, squeezing his erection with her inner muscles. A mix of anger and triumph dance through her body.

"Do it, you bastard!"

"Oh, you'll get done!" he snaps, as he slaps her bottom a few more times.

The fucking gets rough. He clutches her cheeks and rides her hard. Then reaching around her hips, he finds her swollen clit and twists it pinching brutally.

"Damn it, yes! Fuck me, Jacob, baby, fuck me!" She doesn't know what comes over her, but the words come out and he responds just as she demands.

He slaps her more... and she demands more like she's in charge. But he gives when he wants and hurts her when it pleases him. He slaps, pinches and fucks her ass, as the two jockey back and forth in their fanatical ride.

For Sydney, she's thinking submissively like the girl on stage—or, more importantly, the girl in the cage, the girl she was for a time that night when the Underground Market and its sadistic masochistic climate fed her lust, not her horror or revulsion.

"Oh, yes, harder!" she screams.

And he fucks her harder.

She feels her climax mount with each powerful stroke of Jacob's cock, with every biting pinch to her clit, with every crashing slap of his hand against her buttocks. Then she suddenly feels him about to climax. As if his pistoning organ uses a turbo charger, he fires her with a pulsating rush of energy.

She grinds her hips into Jacob's groin, roaring, "Oh gawd! I'm cumming." He grabs hold firmly then and lets the finish take its course, pumping her back channel with his cum until there's nothing left to give her.

"Yes, slut," he hisses in an affirmation of her current state. It's an accusation, a statement of fact and a genuine compliment, as he feels the pleasure sweep through him. He's not complaining or judging, just feeling what he feels about his girlfriend now, different than he's felt about her before.

She hears him say the word and smiles within, because she feels it, too, a gratifying realization. For the moment, nothing matters, but this raunchy ass fuck, how he pounds her hard, and comes like the bastard he's become that night. There's a certain allure to a man who can take a woman to these low places and make her love it. And she does love it... so much she hates the thought of it ever ending.

Afterwards, exhausted, he pulls off of her and slumps to the bed beside her, where Sydney collapses to her side, her arms still outstretched and tethered to the headboard. She can't hold him as she usually would, and must be content for him to snuggle against her as they recuperate.

"You got your fill?" he finally asks.

"Fill of what, exactly?"

"Being the submissive," he says sarcastically, "what else?"

She thinks a bit. "I wonder, is this being submissive, or just having a really nasty good time?"

"I don't know. What's it feel like to you?"

"Haven't really decided. It might take some time to figure out."

"Well then, answer this... Would you have stayed at the Underground if I'd given you the chance?"

"I don't know."

"Would you have wanted it harder?"

"I don't know that either."

He smiles a bit condescendingly. "Ah, so, I see that in classic Sydney fashion, you're going *to think* about it."

"Oh, you! Please don't spoil it!"

He laughs.

He lies back contentedly against the twisted sheets, with his head on the pillow. She stares at him,

remembering how he's been all evening long. "You did enjoy yourself, didn't you?" she asks.

"Of course I did. It's a drama, a game, brings out all my basest instincts. It's kind of fun for a while. Might even like to try it again, what do you think?"

"Maybe. As long as you have no plans to sell me?"

He laughs again. "No. I wouldn't sell you. You're too damn interesting. I can't figure how any guy would sell a woman off who would perform the way that those lovelies do. But that's their world, not ours."

"Not *yours* maybe."

He looks at her quizzically. "You not admitting something here?"

"No, Jacob, I couldn't live like that twenty four hours a day. But I have to live in that world to know Melinda. And I think there's more that I don't yet understand. This isn't over."

"That doesn't surprise me. But do yourself a favor..."

"What's that?"

"Accept the fact that your experimentation is as much about *you* as it is about the girl."

She knows he's right, but doesn't say so. It's not necessary.

"You could untie me, though."

He snickers, then rises from the bed. "Or, I could just leave you here." He takes off for the bathroom.

"Jacob no!" she yells at him.

"Humm, how submissive are you sounding now?"

"Not a bit!"

He looks out from the bathroom, smiling broadly. "Don't worry... I'll untie you... when I'm good and ready."

She fumes, but she's smiling inwardly. It has been an extraordinary night.

## Chapter Eight

### Inspection

“Sydney, how’s your pet project coming?” Tuck meets her in the hallway of the Detention Center with an affable grin for his casual inquiry.

“I’m still making my decision.”

His big face twists in consternation. “You gotta let go of her, Syd. One way or another. We have others coming through the system that’ll need her bed, *and* your attention. I’ll give you a week.”

“You said I had all the time I needed.”

“I thought you’d be done with her in a few days, once you got used to the idea. It’s been . . . what?”

“I don’t know how long it’s been. And I don’t care. I won’t be rushed.”

“Okay, so, what’s the big hang-up?”

“I need to understand what kind of life I’d be condemning her to,” Sydney answers pointedly, trying to remain calm.

“Condemning? You need a more open mind. Remember, it was her choice.”

Feeling her frustration rise, she doesn’t want to share her opinions with Tuck. He can’t, won’t understand her point of view. “Tell you what . . . I’ll have a decision for you by next Monday. That work?”

“Sure.” He smiles and walks off, waving.

That’s all he really wanted. An answer. Now she’s stuck with a commitment to the damned process and she won’t be able to save Melinda duBois by simply not deciding.

Sydney meets with the girl in her office, her agenda clear.

“I thought I told the matron to get rid of the collar?” she says. She looks at the thick chain around Melinda’s neck, unable to mask her irritation.

“It’s really all right,” the girl answers in her soft deferential voice.

“No, it’s not all right,” Sydney seethes.

Why this so upsets her now, she isn’t sure. The girl seems confused, too. She’s willing to placate, adjust, accept. Sydney is not. No, she’s not particularly submissive—unless she gets the benefit of a sexual payoff. Although, it’s likely that her sudden attention to the small matter of the chain has everything to do with the decision that is bearing down on her all too fast.

In a sweep of indignant, self-important emotion, she moves to the girl, who is sitting in the chair before her desk as she always does—her body upright with her hands passively in her lap.

Fiddling with the back of the chain, Sydney pulls it loose, unlocks the clasp and tugs it off, tossing it to her desk where it noisily clatters against the wood.

“How long has it been since you’ve not worn a collar like this?”

The girl has to think back. “I guess it would have to be before I signed my contract. Wearing the collar is a requirement I’m obliged to keep.”

“Like being barefoot, normally naked, sitting on stools, not chairs?” Sydney rattles off sarcastically. These are facts she’s well aware of.

“Yes, like that,” the girl confirms.

She steps back seeing Melinda without the collar, looking surprisingly naked, but more normal. She’s back in blue prison denim, but now looks a little less like the chattel she’s been.

Feelings of power, authority and lust seem to burst through Sydney’s veins—an inexplicable fact that would likely have disturbed her a few weeks ago. But she ignores the condemnation she immediately feels and moves on in a direction she hadn’t anticipated going—even though it has threatened since the assignment began. It’s an essential part of the screening process.

“Stand up and take off your dress, Melinda,” she finds herself ordering in an unusually tight voice.

The girl doesn’t blink and her obedience is seamless. She is naked in seconds. They might have given her a dress to wear, but they gave her no underwear, and getting naked is a simple process.

“Lower your eyes,” she instructs the girl, just because she can’t look at her directly.

Pushing the chair aside, Sydney waltzes around her charge, eying every inch of the lovely frame—looking for marks, particularly the permanent ones that identified her as Mr. Janes’ property.

She quickly notes the obligatory tattoo and a slight indentation in her ankle where the metal band used to be. It must have been removed when she was brought to the transfer sector. In addition, she sees fresh marks on the girl’s ass that shouldn’t be there—a dozen red stripes that couldn’t be more than a day old.

“What are these?” she says, touching the raw skin.

The girl shivers almost imperceptibly, but enough so that Sydney feels it in her fingers.

“I was caned last night.”

“You didn’t tell me this.”

“You didn’t ask, ma’am.”

“That’s no excuse.” She feels the coldness of a prison matron take hold of her heart.

“I’m sorry.”

“Sorry is not enough. You were told to let me know if you were abused again, and you didn’t.” Ironically, she wants to strike her, beat her. The passion overwhelms her trembling body. She shudders, attempts to shake off the traumatic moment, but the feeling isn’t going away.

“Who did this to you?” she asks.

“Last night, I was taken from my cell into a private office in the transfer sector and caned by the night guard. He said I’d failed to do my job satisfactorily.”

“What job was that?”

“I was to swab the bathroom and showers.”

“And was he right?”

“I forgot the showers.”

“On purpose?”

“Um. No, ma’am.” Her stoic composure wavers.

“You’re lying,” Sydney accuses her.

“Ma’am, I’m sorry, I’m really sorry,” she breaks down. “You’re right. I deserved it.”

“And you wanted it?”

“Yes, I think I did.” She’s crying softly, her head rightfully bowed, as she brushes away her tears with the back of her hand.

“And you thought you’d keep this from me?”

“I thought you’d be upset.”

“You’re damned right I’m upset. I’m upset with you and your whole damned way of thinking, Melinda duBois. You bring out the worst in me.”

“I’m sorry.” She continues to weep.

“Stop crying! You have absolutely nothing to cry about.”

The girl instantly jerks upright and draws in her breath, doing her best to obey.

“Right now, this is not about you. It’s about *me* finishing my report on you for the judge. I have an inspection to do. I suppose that today’s as good a day as any.”

Sydney grabs the chain collar she discarded on her desk and draws it over her charge’s head, then she grabs the loose end and leads the girl into the hallway, stopping to ask the attendant where she can find an empty exam room.

“Just down the hall, Room 13. There’s a sawhorse and a table.”

“Thank you.”

Sydney yanks the chain a little harder than she has to, but she is inspired by her anger and her

powerful, unabated lust.

Inside Room 13, she quickly appraises the possibilities and shoves the girl toward a wooden sawhorse. The top bar is padded in vinyl and on the far side of it is a bar for an inspected lot to use for balance. "Over the sawhorse and grab the bar," she orders.

Her Lot 21 obeys. This is easy for her to do, since she's obviously done it many times before. She poses with a wide stance, which opens her rear cleft for easy inspection. Her breasts dangle freely, while her naked nipples stiffen into purplish buds.

Sydney stands back, sensing the excitement that floods her body. She walks around the bent over girl, looking for distinguishing marks she might have missed before. Noting a glint of something shiny from between the girl's thighs, she moves in and fingers deep into Melinda's cleft, finding for her effort, a thick silver ring, which has been previously hidden from view.

"Did Mr. Janes put this here?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She gives it a good tug, then steps back to see the ring dangling freely.

"What did he use it for?"

"It was the permanent mark he wanted for me."

"And that was all?"

"He used to hang lead weights from it to stretch my privates."

Sydney sees that the ring has been pierced through both of the girl's inner labia—which have been neatly tucked inside the outer ones. With her legs wide, the plump outer labia open, allowing the inner ones to descend a good inch below the others. They open, too, even with the weight of the ring tugging them down. Her clitoris sits proudly between the purple folds. Sydney shudders with the thought of adding additional weight to further distend the thin flaps; the look is nasty yet alluring even without the weight. She gives the ring another firm tug, feeling an intense energy pour over her. The girl's sex is moist and glistening.

"Are you aroused by this, Melinda?" she asks her.

"Yes, ma'am," she answers without hesitation.

Sydney begins to toy with her more directly, tugging her labia, then running a finger along the sensitive cleft, inserting a pointed, red polished fingernail into her wet vagina. She feels the girl tremble more. She feels the moisture gather and seep from the opening, and how it softly pulses from the stimulation.

"This is an exam that I'm ordered to do by your judge, Melinda. It's not for sexual purposes," what a lie that is! "but is meant strictly to authenticate your physical attributes for the court records. Don't get carried away."

"Yes, ma'am." What she advises the girl should hold true for herself. And yet, her fingers float over



the soft recesses of the girl's private treasure. She relishes what she feels without a trace of guilt.

"I guess that you were once shaved here," she suggests, as she feels the soft matt of downy-colored hair that now covers the entire pudenda.

"Yes, ma'am."

She runs her fingers the length of the cleft from the moist interior of the girl's vagina to her anus. She thinks of Jacob's fingers expanding her own rear entrance, and draws from that a desire that urges her forward.

"You were used anally?" Sydney already knows this, but asks anyway, since her dominant self seems to feed on the interrogation.

"Yes, ma'am."

"You were used here often?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She pokes a sharp fingernail into the opening, knowing it must be painful, then watches how the usually docile girl suddenly jerks. "And yet, you're still quite tight."

"Yes, ma'am."

The exam room is complete with all the necessary items for a body cavity examination. Fishing through a drawer along the wall of cabinets, she finds a pair of latex gloves and pulls them over her hands with an ominous snap. Although there's a tube of lubricant in the drawer, there's enough copious flow of natural juices from the girl's vagina to grease her ass. This is no longer an official task. Sydney is driven by a ferocious lust that rises like a great storm cloud.

The girl probably knows that her counselor is more than officially engaged in the act. And perhaps that's as it should be. Perhaps, it's time to stop being equals and play out the roles they were destined for.

Sydney bathes her fingers in the plentiful juices of Lots 21's vagina—*yes, there are some advantages in thinking of the girl as just a number*. Then she swabs the liquid along the open cleft, concentrating on the tight rosebud anus, that, like her own, requires some encouragement to open. With a persistence that rivals Jacob's, she prods a latex-covered finger into the taut place, pushing steadily. When the opening begins to expand, she adds a second finger and works both into the girl's rectum. Adding a third finger, she thrusts more decisively, forcing all three inside until they can go no further. She has no idea what she is supposed to learn from this examination, but it is part of the outlined procedure she shuddered at months before. This was why she's balked, one of many reasons why she refused to conduct these interviews. She considered the process demeaning, lecherous and unnecessary.

And now? She participates with an inner glee and a hunger that shames her, and yet goads her passionately forward.

"Ugh," the girl grunts softly when Sydney jabs her fingers a little harder.

"I'd think you'd be more used to this, Melinda."

“Sorry, ma’am. It’s been some time.”

“Did you find anal sex satisfactory?”

She bangs her fingers into the girl’s ass—forcing the fourth into the expanding opening up to her knuckles. The girl gasps, trying desperately to answer the question posed, while Sydney revels in Lot 21’s obvious discomfort.

“Did you find anal sex satisfactory?” she has to repeat.

“It was required of me, ma’am.”

“Did you enjoy it?” she repeats her request with different words, and does her best to force her hand even further into the girl’s rectum. It does not quite breach the gap entirely.

“Ugh... ah... Yes, ma’am... U-Usually.”

“And when didn’t you enjoy it?” She eases off briefly.

“When I wasn’t ready for it,” the girl replies.

“You were anally raped?” she asks, twisting her fingers, as she forces them deeper.

“Sometimes.”

“Mr. Janes raped you?”

“No. Never...” she breathes in a hiss. “He c-could never rape me because I belonged to him. Ooo...”

“But did he force himself on you sexually?”

“Yes.”

“But you wouldn’t call it rape?”

“No, ma’am,” she breathes in wincing as she does.

Sydney’s inspired by these pained and gasping replies.

“Did he hurt you when he used your ass?”

“Sometimes... Oh, dear...”

“But you wouldn’t call it rape?”

“No, ma’am,” her answers become more difficult, her voice more strained.

“Did he ever make you bleed?”

"I don't know. No. Yes, yes, but just twice that I remember."

"Did it take sometime for you to heal?"

"Yes. Yes, I think so."

It must be difficult for her to think when she's becoming so deeply aroused. But Sydney will make her think and make her answer. "Tell me about the worst occasion."

"I-I can't remember..." she huffs, pants. Her body strains as the intensity builds.

"Yes, you can remember."

"I'm sorry," she answers with a pathetic whimper.

"Don't you dare cry, girl! I asked you a question; all you have to do is answer me with the truth. Or do I have to punish you, the way you were punished last night?"

"No, please, ma'am."

"Maybe that's the only thing you understand, Melinda, physical abuse? It gives you pain. It gives you pleasure. What more could you want?"

"I'm just..." she starts.

"Is that what you need? To be punished?"

"No, ma'am," her voice is barely audible.

"Answer me in a clear voice."

"No, Ma'am!" she declares loudly.

"That's better. Now answer my question. Tell me about the worst time you were anally raped by Mr. Janes."

"It really wasn't rape."

"I don't care what you call it, tell me what happened when he made you bleed."

The girl takes a moment to collect herself, while Sydney eases the constant drilling for a time. She senses that the girl's rectum is about to give way and allow her whole hand in. But maybe that would be too much for her charge to handle at one time. Maybe there is a limit to what her sadistic inclinations can demand of the girl.

"What happened when he made you bleed?" she repeats in a firm, but softer voice.

"It was some time into the contract period. I had been used rectally many times, but not for several weeks. I was busy studying and when I told him that I had too much to do to take a break, he backed off. He wouldn't pressure me. But after a while, he said that I took advantage of the situation."

"How was that?"

"I could rebuff his advances on occasion... nothing really defiant," she sighs, still straining, "just a natural response to being interrupted in my studies. My studies were important to him, too. That's why I could use them as an excuse."

"Why would you *want* an excuse if you loved him so much?"

"I did love him, but then, I'd get focused on my work... and it was difficult to take a break."

"You liked the freedom, didn't you?"

"It wasn't really freedom."

"But studying set you apart from him. You used it because sometimes you did get tired of giving in all the time?"

"No," she answers haltingly.

Sydney goads her with a sudden, sharp and twisting jab of her hand. "I want honest answers, or I will see to it that you're whipped tonight in your cell. Is that clear?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"So answer me... you got tired of being at his constant beck and call."

"Sometimes."

"And so what happened?"

"I put him off, telling him I was tired and that I had a test the next day to study for. It was a lie. I also used it as an excuse to get out of my chores. I was so tired, I could hardly keep my eyes open. The weekend had been especially intense... one of Samuel's parties. That was just after he learned he was sick and he wanted to deny it. Hosting a nasty party was his way of thumbing his nose at God..."

Diving into her memories as she has so many times for her counselor, the girl recounts her tale in sultry, breathy whispers. Sydney is moved to withdraw her hand from 21's ass, so the girl can tell the story without the annoyance. She walks back and forth behind her, sometimes tenderly touching her bottom and the smooth skin of her back. Her fingers occasionally brush against her hair. There is a motherly, but authoritative feel to her attention. She's not intending to comfort her, the touch is more inquisitive, since she's never touched a woman in this way. The wild agitation that drove her until this point seems to calm. She still feels firm and dictatorial, but she has the girl where she wants her, and perhaps she doesn't need to be so brutal.

"I was used by his friends, ass fucked until I was so sore that I begged him to let me rest. He clutched my neck and stared at me with the eyes of a wild man. I was scared as his fingers tightened around my throat..."

"That he'd kill you?"

"No, ma'am, there were a dozen people in the room that would have stopped him. But he liked the show of his power in front of his friends. For revenge, he caged me in the corner of the hideaway and left

me until Monday morning, when he finally let me go free. I had class at eight o'clock."

"He let you go when?"

"At seven forty-five. I threw on sweats and sandals and ran to get to the history building on time."

Sydney feels such intense sadness from the girl that she wants to stop her, but this time, the girl is compelled by the memory to continue to the end. Perhaps the act will be cathartic, Sydney thinks.

"Three days later, when Samuel had recovered from the party, he wanted me again and I used my study excuse. My ass was still sore from the weekend, that was true, but my mouth was saying things I would never have dared before. I was lying. I'd sworn I'd never do that. All evening, Samuel let me do my work, thinking I had an important test the next day. I let him believe that, hoping he'd never know the truth. But when I got home that afternoon from class, he was there, in a fit, furious with me, accusing me, grabbing me by the throat again, with no one around to protect me. He demanded the truth. I broke down and told him everything, about my lie, that I'd failed to do my chores. He pushed me out the door and told me to strip naked. I couldn't imagine that... right there on the street—the loft house opened right on the sidewalk... and the sidewalk was always busy. He reminded me that I was property... his indentured slave, and that I had no right to wear *his* clothes. 'Besides', he said, 'no one on the street would care.' As soon as I removed my shirt, they'd see I was a marked woman.

"I finally started to strip, while Samuel looked at me through the door. Once I was naked, he handed me my collar and told me to go next door and tell Vincent that I was his present for the night, as long as he used my ass. Vincent was a forty-year-old painter, a pervert that I'd pose for when Samuel wanted to fuck with my mind. He liked to paint pictures of me masturbating. He'd make me play with myself for hours without coming.

"Just to get in from the cold—it was almost freezing outside—I rushed to Vincent's loft and told him what Samuel asked me to do. The man was happy to appease my owner and abuse me. He'd always been told not to touch me. But with a free invitation, he was merciless. I wasn't in his loft fifteen minutes when he fucked my ass the first time. I may have started bleeding then. I know every time after that, the soreness was hellish until I could connect with the pain and change it."

"You could do that even under the circumstances?"

"Yes, ma'am. Sometimes."

Inspired by the story, Sydney begins another invasion of the girl's behind, finding in herself the determination to finish what she initially started. With a fresh glove on her right hand, she coats it with lubricant from the tube.

"Keep talking," Sydney orders, as she suddenly jabs her fingers back into the girl's rectum.

"Um.. ugh... Vincent..." the wincing 21 tries to begin.

The opening has become taut again, but this time it expands more easily. "Vincent's erection is very large," she says. "I'd never had a ten-inch prick in my behind, but I did that night, four times. He was also, ugh... very horny. At two a.m. after the last fuck, he started to kiss me and I pushed him away. 'What's Samuel going to say?' he asked me. I said that Samuel wouldn't want me to kiss anyone but him. He got pissed and pushed me out the door and told me to go home. I was a *'passable slut'*, he said, but I needed a lot of work.

“No one was on the street at that hour, but I still raced back to the loft and banged on the door. A much calmer Samuel let me inside. He inspected my ass and said that Vincent did a good job, that I should be grateful for his fucking me. I told him that I hated it. He asked me if I came... and how many times. I came every time, I told him. He slapped me because I’d lied—telling him I hated it. Then he held me for a long time while I cried. Later in bed, he used me as Vincent used me. But all I could think of was how happy I felt that *he* was inside me and not Vincent. It was the worst time for me, but it ended well.”

Sydney feels a tremendous sigh as the girl finishes the story. And perhaps to both their surprise, the tight anal channel beings to open with little urging, as if the memory causes her body to reply the way it did for the hugely endowed artist. The girl’s muscles slacken, and with Sydney pressing steadily, her whole hand slips inside the deep interior of 21’s ass. Something powerful explodes between them; a wildness brews that they both feel. Sydney fucks the girl for a short time relishing the feeling of dominion over her. Then finally, in a maneuver that stuns the girl but seems completely appropriate to Sydney, the counselor brusquely withdraws her hand, removes the glove and tosses it in the trash, saying crisply:

“Stand up, Melinda, and show me your genitals.”

The examination proceeds like a routine physical exam—albeit an unusual one by any standards other than the current day practice that allows, even requires, these perverted displays of female indentured servants.

Still reeling from the emotion of her story and the physical demand of her counselor’s fist, the girl finds her balance compromised for several seconds as she tries to obey the unexpected order to stand up.

“I don’t have all day, 21,” Sydney snaps, when the girl takes too much time.

The counselor ignores the hurt she sees on 21’s face, and focuses on the dangling ring that she can now see from a more direct point of view. The girl holds her labia open wide so Sydney can clearly see that girl’s inner folds have been purposely, effectively stretched far beyond their normal size. Her imagination spins off in pictures of crude variations of these body alterations. If the girl were hers, she’d continue the stretching, she’d increase the weight and pierce her outer labia as well. Thinking these sadistic thoughts, her lust builds in bizarre ways that even she cannot fathom.

Reaching between 21’s thighs, the counselor tugs the ring, and notes with satisfaction the anguished reply.

She strolls around the girl another several times, appraising the youthful body that is relatively free of blemish—rare in cases like hers. Having all the information she needs, Sydney turns, makes note of her findings in her report, then nods the girl toward the door.

“We’ll return to my office where you’ll find your dress—unless, of course, you’d rather not bother.”

The girl looks at her stunned again by her counselor’s strange behavior. “I suppose I should get dressed, ma’am. They’ll ask when I return to my cell.”

“No doubt.”

Sydney leaves the room first with 21 following closely on her heels.

“That’s all for today,” she tells her. Then looking straight into the girl’s impassive eyes, she adds, “You can expect the dispensation of your case to take place next Monday.”

21 stares at her blankly.

“I’ll be making my decision then.”

The girl seems surprised and doesn’t move from the spot.

Sydney is exhausted after the provocative exam and needs some time to be alone.

“You can go,” she tells her coldly as she briefly looks up from her report. Even the coolness of her behavior arouses her. Is this what drives this demented system? The cruel power of command and authority? The sadistic thrill of seeing the poor victim squirm? Is this what Tuck and Astrid feel when they rubberstamp each Lot that passes through their office for official review? Is this what lulls the better angels of human compassion to sleep in this skewed world? Is this cold dominion more powerful in the human psyche than what is just and right and reasonable? She’s beginning to understand.

A bewildered but submissive Lot 21 pads out the door on her bare feet, her denim dress hastily thrown over her naked body.

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“I inspected my 21 today,” Sydney announces to Jacob over dinner.

“21 now? What happened to *Melinda* ?” he says passing her the mashed potatoes.

“I can see why the numbers are so important. It’s easier to dehumanize them when you’re treating them as animals.”

“You say that with something other than your usual scorn for the process.”

“I found it invigorating.”

“My, isn’t that surprising?”

“I suppose if you can find your sadistic side, so can I. And as far as the girl goes, I suspect she enjoyed it on some level.”

“So, you conducted the complete examination?”

“I fisted her ass, yes, if that’s what you’re wanting to know.”

“Well, you do surprise me. It wasn’t two weeks ago you said you’d never go that far. You figured you’d fake it.”

“Maybe I’m beginning to understand her choice... not that I’d ever agree that it’s the right thing for any woman, I’m understanding what she gets from it. I’m understanding the sadistic urge, and even the masochistic one.”

“Really?” His eyes get a little brighter. “You want to experiment a little more with that one?”

“Wouldn’t you just be tickled pink if I did?”

“I wouldn’t mind.”

“Don’t count on it,” she says wryly.

“Oh, not with you,” he says pointedly, “I’d be a foolish man to count on anything like that.”

This disturbs her, but she won’t let him know that.

“But tell me... how did it feel *to fuck* a woman?” He caresses his words as if he’s trying to seduce.

“I didn’t *fuck* her,” she returns, bluntly.

“Oh, shoving your fist in her ass isn’t fucking... what is it then?”

“Well, it was sort of that way... I was doing it to observe her submissive responses, see if they were true, natural.”

“And they were?”

“Very.”

He thinks about this for a moment. “Then I guess your stint with Lot 21 is about over.”

“Oh, there are a few more stones to uncover, but yes, I’ve about finished gathering data... I want to talk to her about more everyday things—forgetting the sex. It’s an idea that came to me after my night in the Underground.”

“I’d be interested to hear your report... or have you already made up your mind?”

“No, I haven’t. Not yet,” she tells him, feeling a little despondent over that fact.

“Well, Tuck should be grateful that he has a counselor willing to go the extra mile to make the right decision.”

“Tuck’s only interested in the answer. He doesn’t care what it is or how I make it.”

She feels as if she’s back at the beginning of her dilemma. All this time, and she seems no closer to the answer. She might as well toss a dart at the options to make her choice.



## The Guardian

“Sydney!” the section secretary stops her just before she enters her office.

She turns. “Yes?”

“You have a visitor.”

“Who is it?”

“He says he’s Melinda’s next Guardian.”

“Oh, really? Hmmm.”

“Cocky guy,” her eyes light up, “really handsome too.” Then she whispers softly. “My panties were wet just listening him to him talk.”

Sydney laughs snidely. “I guess I’d better be on guard.”

She enters her office at a brisk clip, looking professional and formal... finding herself just slightly surprised to see the scrumptiously attractive man lounging in her visitor’s chair, leaning back, shamelessly resting his feet on her desk.

When he hears her enter, he turns enough to catch her glance, then slowly lifts his feet and sits up. As the stunned Sydney makes her way to her desk, the man half rises from the chair and holds out his hand for her to shake. He smiles like the obvious scoundrel he is, introducing himself as, “Larry Standish.”

Oh, scoundrel he might be, but what a handsome scoundrel... with charm enough to soak any woman’s panties! Sydney thinks back to her secretary’s lurid appraisal as she notes her own physical response to her visitor.

“Yes, I’m Sydney Wingate, and you’re lounging in my office for what reason?” she asks with a reasonable but firm edge in her voice.

“Oh, am I a little too informal for these surroundings?” he looks about, questioningly. “Here, I thought you were trying to give your clients—the unfortunate inmates in this dank prison—a taste of the finer things in life... in what’s obviously a well thought out casual, but feminine atmosphere—note the way drapes match the walls and the art...” His voice rasping sarcastically, he gestures with a cunning smile. “Nice job.”

“Mr. Standish, I’d like an answer to my question.”

“Please, call me Larry.”

“Okay, Larry, an answer to my question.”

“About why I’m here?”

“Yes, about the purpose for your visit.”

“Well, maybe you should just take your seat and get comfortable, so we can get better acquainted.”

“Why would I do that?”

“So, I can answer your question, of course.”

He’s glib, charismatic, his eyes dart like flies, while they are just as capable of zeroing in and staring with frightening intensity. But she does like his look: the slim black pants, the knee-high boots and the unstructured shirt—as if he just stepped from the silver screen, although she can’t quite remember which swashbuckling character he brings to mind.

“You know you’re very pretty,” he says.

“Well, thank you.”

“Hey, when I come here, I expect the usual sour-faced crone on the other side of the desk.” He has a way of snickering constantly with a boyish turned-up lip that’s very appealing. His eyes are blue, intensely blue; they cut and dance and never quite settle down. He’s restless, ruthless, she suspects, and obviously a sexual man. “Sydney Wingate, you are a sight for sore eyes in a place like this. How you’d get this job anyway?”

“I’m not usually assigned to the transfer sector, but there’s been a heavy influx of detainees that need to be processed.”

“Well then, I can certainly ease the overcrowding. I’ve been planning on Lot 21 for quite some time.”

“And how would that be? She just came here a month ago.”

“I was familiar with Samuel Janes...a few recommendations were made... word gets around in my circle of influence.”

“I see. So, exactly what is it that you want to know?”

“I’d like to know when she’ll be released for reassignment. I’m ready to execute a contract, today even. Of course, there is the required interview, *which* I’ve been trying to schedule for two weeks. It seems, however, that her very pretty and very concerned counselor has taken all her free time.”

“Her counselor, Mr. Standish, is doing her job thoroughly, which may be different from what you’ve experienced in your previous dealings with the transfer sector. But it is the way I’m going to handle Melinda duBois.”

“Obviously,” he agrees. “You’re a woman of substance, of high moral character, who has probably avoided these cases for several years, who thinks these indentured contracts are little more than the institutionalized enslavement of women, but who, this time, couldn’t escape the inevitable assignment. You’re only trying to do your job with a degree of compassion and reason that is rarely given these girls. Am I right?”

“I don’t care, Mr. Standish—”

“Larry, please.”

She uses the quick interruption to take a deep breath. Her emotions are so charged that it takes every force of will she has to keep them contained. But she does so effectively, having had plenty of practice in recent weeks. “I don’t care, Larry, what you think you know about me, the girl, or this system. You probably know a lot more than I do. But I’m not going to be intimidated by your glib charm, your wit, or that smile. Melinda is not ready for the interview because it is not clear that she will be reassigned. There is a distinct possibility that she’ll be released of all contractual arrangements. Her term with Mr. Janes had expired and would have been up for review whether he died or not. It’s my job to determine if a permanent, voluntary arrangement is in her best interests.”

“Have you asked the girl?” he interjects. His entire persona changes in an instant as he levels the question, eyes boring into her like beetles into wood.

“Yes, I’ve asked the girl.”

“Then she obviously wants reassignment, otherwise she wouldn’t still be in the system, and you wouldn’t be taking all this time to change her mind.”

She’s a little stunned by his accurate assessment. “You think you have all the facts, don’t you?”

“You said it yourself, lady, I know a hell of a lot more about this than you ever will.”

“Which is exactly why you’re on that side of the desk and I’m on this side. You’ve made up your mind... mine is still open. What I’ve seen in this girl is a long-term, systematic indoctrination that created a sex slave to a single man—to whom she was very attached. Whether she’s emotionally prepared to enter into another arrangement is for me to determine. Whether she really wants to is not clear. Her life with Mr. Janes was all she knew. To simply hand her over to you because she made a bold choice out of love and infatuation several years ago seems highly premature—and why I’ve held up her reassignment for as long as I have. I have no doubt that some women can just move from one arrangement, one man to another, but I don’t know that it’s in Melinda duBois’ best interests. You can have your interview when and if I decide that she’s to be reassigned.”

His smirk is as sweet as it is playfully contemptuous. “Oh, she’s right for the system all right, Sydney. What you don’t know is that I do know about these females, and Lot 21 is no different from all the other voluntaries. It turns them on to be abused. She’ll be creaming her panties—if she wore them—before my interview is over. And once she’s in my hands, she’ll think she’s died and gone to heaven. You may not believe a word I say, but it’s true.”

“Oh, you are a smug bastard!”

“I try to be, Ms. Wingate,” he grins broadly. “That’s the beauty of the man I am. At least with me, she’ll be abused with love... no different than with Janes.”

“From my estimation, a good deal of what she had with Mr. Janes was sadistically evil...”

“Exactly my point,” he jumps back in, and practically out of his chair, leaning in toward Sydney, so that she’s backed up in her seat, recoiling from the intensity of his powerful energy. “It’s what makes the

bitch tick, what turns her crank, what feeds her soul... They don't let girls as young as she make contracts with men like Janes and me if they don't first pass the psychological tests. She had it then, she has it now. You bring her in here for ten minutes and I'll prove it."

His lecture is so shrewd, so compellingly presented that it feels to Sydney as if they are standing just inches apart. As it is, he continues to lean into her desk, little more than two feet away... well into her physical space, with the alarming effect of shattering her poise. Something she cannot afford—not with this man.

She takes a deep breath, gathering her wits. She's faced men like Larry Standish before; certainly she can handle him, too. Pushing her agitation aside, she coolly answers, "I'm sure you can turn her on, Mr. Standish. It's obvious that you are adept at wooing women..."

"Ooo, so, I've had my effect on you, too?" he smirks.

"Would you like that to be the case?"

"Humph. You know what, lady, you're scared of all this."

"What do you mean 'scared'?"

"You're scared of girls who know their own mind like your Lot 21."

"Really?"

"Yeah, you are... you envy her. There's a part of you that wants to be in her place."

"How can you make that claim when you don't know me?"

"I maintain that every woman has a kernel of submission deep in their bones and blood, as dear to them as their desire to be loved. Some accept it... many refuse, and most just ride the fence and play both sides depending on who they are with. You ride the fence, Ms. Sydney Wingate."

"You think you have all the answers, don't you? Well, we're not talking about me or the nature of dominance and submission. We're here about Melinda duBois. The way I see her dilemma... yes, what you can do to her sexually may 'jerk her chain'... but there might be a good deal more this girl would like to experience in her life other than mindless sex. The fact is, she can be a sexual submissive in the outside world, but she can't be a writer, or a dancer, or a car mechanic, or a school teacher, or a nurse, or a secretary or whatever else may be tugging at her heart. There may be a lot of things she'd like to be, but if she's thrown back into your world, it will never happen, because that's how you and your kind operate. You use girls for your benefit, and forget what may be lingering, even lost inside their hearts."

His mood darkens and he shakes his head. "So, you think you know my world."

"No. But I know enough to know that she'll have more liberty and independence if she doesn't live in yours—even if it turns out that she makes the choice again to serve a man as his submissive."

He rises from the chair and pushes it aside. "I sure hope you understand what you're doing, lady. You take a girl like her away from her life and assume she can function in the outside world, you might well regret the results. She doesn't think like you, like the 21st century independent woman you work so hard to be. And you *will* fuck her up more with your do-gooder ideas than giving her to me would ever

hurt her.” He chuckles darkly, gazing down at the prettily upholstered chair he just vacated. “I’ll bet you let her sit in this cozy chair, made her wear a dress. I’ll bet you’re planning to take her to lunch at one of your swanky bistros? You’re just so sure you can change her.”

“You’ve said enough, Mr. Standish,” Sydney flatly retorts.

The confrontation is running out of gas. Sydney for one is exhausted, and Larry Standish looks a little less cocky than he did when she first walked in the door. He didn’t expect the formidable Ms. Wingate.

“You know what...” he pauses, “you want to do the right thing by this girl... you come to my house for dinner tonight and get a first hand look at my nasty lifestyle... see if it’s so bad.” He notes Sydney’s shocked expression with a snicker of satisfaction. “If you had any guts you’d do it. Oh, but I know you. You’ll find some excuse to play it safe inside your hallowed walls and justify the decision you’ve already made.”

“Mock me all you want. I’m not changing my mind for you and I’m not going to your house for dinner,” she states with her eyes level and her emotions perfectly contained. It’s clear that neither one is going to budge.

Larry Standish finally backs off, lowering his guard as he does.

He appraises her with an unusually unaffected gaze, without the playful contempt or mockery or false concern. “You’re good, Sydney,” he finally says. “Even if your concerns are misguided, I’d guess that you have the girl’s best interests in mind. Maybe you *should* visit my home, and see what it means to live in my world. It’s not the Underground Market, it’s not an S&M bar, it’s a home, a life that works as well as anything I’ve seen on the outside—for the right individuals. If you really care about your Melinda... and the ones that follow her, you’ll do yourself the favor. I’ll be in touch.” He smiles again in a crafty way that jars her fraying nerves. “I understand you have until Monday,” he adds in passing, as he reaches her office door. “I guess then, you will have to make a decision. I’ll be waiting.”

*He knows about Monday! How could that possibly be?*

Before she has the chance to answer the insolent rogue, he’s gone, leaving her feeling as if she’s been caught in a riptide and is only now coming back to the surface, gasping for breath.

She stares at the closed door... the man’s presence, even his scent still lingers in the air. And how does he know about Monday? Of course, Tuck. He’s been dealing with Tuck for years. They are like thieves embroiled in a malevolent game.

Melinda is scheduled for that afternoon—the final interview, Sydney hopes. But there is the memory of Larry Standish pestering her like an annoying fly.

She sits in her office after lunch, waiting for two o’clock and her appointment with Melinda... Lot 21. She wonders about herself and why this case became such an important cause. The sense of it still eludes her.

Her phone rings. She answers, hearing the last voice she expected on the other end.

“So, how about dinner with me tonight at the house?” Larry Standish invites her again. “I’ll pick you up at six... if you’re really daring you can spend the night. I’ll have you back at work by nine in the morning.”

“I thought I already told you no. Why would you ask me now?”

“I figured if I gave you some breathing room, you might reconsider.”

“I see.”

“You said you had an open mind, Sydney. I think you do. And if I’m right, you’ll find what you experience pretty fascinating. So, what’s your answer?”

“You don’t give me much time to decide.”

“True. But at least you’re giving it some consideration this time. Don’t forget, time is running out on you and Lot 21.”

“I suppose being overbearing and rude comes natural for you?” she quips.

“If being direct is overbearing and rude, then that’s me. I’ll pick you up at six.”

“I haven’t accepted your invitation!”

“Sure you have. You’re arguing because you’re planning to go, but your fiendish femininity won’t let you just say ‘yes’.”

“You’re a total ass!”

“But a charming one. Be on the street at six, Miss Sydney. I don’t like to be kept waiting.”

She has no idea what to say, and finally too flustered to think of anything else, she spits out, “Okay, I’ll be there for dinner, but that’s all. I’m not spending the night!”

“Right. You can go home afterwards unless, of course, you change your mind... again.”

“I doubt that.”

“We’ll see.”

The girl arrives just as Sydney puts down the phone, before she has time to settle herself and focus on her interview. She’s thinking of Larry Standish, the brash, reckless, captivating scoundrel. *And what has she done now? Dinner at his compound! Impossible... this can’t really be happening!* But it is. And despite the way the man has twisted her stomach in knots and started her sexual juices flowing like the Ganges, she has to focus now. She has to think about Melinda... yes, Melinda, who is sitting compliantly before her, waiting.

How amazing this girl’s composure, the steady, unwavering spirit that has the capacity to endure anything. Even under Sydney’s studied gaze, she is unfazed.

“You’ve been forthcoming, Melinda,” the counselor finally starts. I know these interviews aren’t easy, especially dealing with your relationship with Mr. Janes. But I do have a few more questions. I think I understand what your life with your guardian meant to you when you were engaged in a sexual scene, but what was it like day to day in your arrangement with Mr. Janes? Not at the parties, but when he was working and you were going to school. You were still going to school?”

“Yes, I was in school, taking classes at the University.”

“So how did that work? How did he treat you... like your mother’s child, a slave, a friend, a girlfriend?”

“I guess like a girlfriend, like a lover. But I didn’t have the independence that my mother had. He ruled me. I was his property, obliged to do anything he told me to do.” She fishes around for answers as if she’s not certain where to begin. “Most nights, I slept in Samuel’s bed. When I wasn’t in his bed, I slept on the floor beside it. When I wanted to get up in the morning, I had to ask his permission... I wore a rope around my neck that he’d tie to the bed frame.”

“You were leashed all night?” Sydney’s astounded.

“Oh, it wasn’t locked or anything, so if I had to get out in an emergency, I could. But I never had to. The rope felt as fixed if it were steel around my throat and I was chained.”

“What if you had to pee?”

“There was a chamber pot by the bed.”

“So, that’s how you slept, fettered. And in the morning...”

“When he released me in the morning, I made Samuel his breakfast. I took care of his clothes. I cleaned the loft. I did anything else he asked me to do. If I had classes, I went and returned directly to the loft as soon as they were over. Usually I studied or did house chores when I wasn’t in class, unless Samuel had something special that he wanted me to do.”

“And your friends?”

“My friends went away.”

“Because Samuel wanted them to go away?”

“No. Because I didn’t want them anymore.” She says it almost defensively. By now, she knows exactly what her counselor is thinking, what Sydney hates to hear her admit—which is almost everything that has to do with Mr. Janes and his iron-fisted control over her.

“Would Samuel have wanted you to have friends?” Sydney further probes.

“I don’t know; we never talked about it.”

“But why didn’t you want your friends anymore? It would seem that they would offer you a kind of outlet in the midst of Mr. Janes strict regimen.”



"I didn't really think of my life as a strict regimen. It seemed so natural."

"Then having friends would have been natural too."

"But my friends wouldn't have understood me, my contract, my choice to live with a guardian. I didn't think there was any point in having people around that I had to lie to about who I was and what I loved. Samuel had friends that knew about us; so, I spent my time with them instead and they became my friends."

"Close friends?"

She thinks a moment. "Just one, Lilly."

"Tell me about Lilly."

"She was one of the regulars at the parties, but she'd come around other times, too. Sometimes we had sex together, Lilly, Samuel and me. I learned to pleasure women from her, and she was the first to take my ass with her fist."

Sydney feels an odd sensation of jealousy hearing this, but shoves the emotion aside.

"She was very beautiful... very long dark hair, kind of elfish, nymph-like. Samuel liked to see us in bed together, her dark skin against my fair complexion, our hands moving over each other like fish at sea. He'd have us kiss with open mouths, our lips barely touching. Then he'd take pictures of our sex, when we would lap and suck each other's privates until we came."

Sydney feels the heat in her rise, as the picture of two women, the girl and Lilly, appears vividly in her imagination.

"Sometimes, he liked to have us on hands and knees at the end of the bed, side by side, her dark behind, my white one, like Yin and Yang. She'd cry deep guttural cries; I would whimper quietly. She'd buck like a horse and thrash all about, while I would barely move... the way Samuel liked it."

"This was when he was taking you sexually?"

"Or beating us."

"He did both?"

"Of course. Lilly was submissive, too."

"Did Samuel ever consider taking her into service?"

"No. Well, yes, I suppose he did at one time. But then he had my mother, and she was a handful." The girl smiles. "Lilly would have been a willful brat, and I'm sure it never would have worked out."

"And you were friends with Lilly beyond your sexual relationship?"

"I guess so. We talked about a lot of things. Sometimes she kept me company when Samuel was working late. And then, sometimes she asked Samuel if he would loan me to her."

“And he agreed to that?”

“Just twice. One afternoon, she took me to her apartment, a big place. The walls were painted yellow, trimmed with white. It was bright and full of sunshine and Lilly’s laughter. I thought I was in heaven. We made love on her big bed all afternoon, and napped when we were exhausted. Just before dusk, she brought me home. Samuel told me later, it was a mercy fuck. Her brother had died the day before—AIDS. Funny, she didn’t shed a tear while she was with me. It was as if her heart was full and thrilled. There wasn’t even a hint of sadness.” She looks down at her shift sadly, then takes a deep breath.

“That does sound odd that she wouldn’t have told you about her brother.”

“I didn’t even know that she*had* a brother. But Lilly was like that,” the girl says.

“I see. So, he loaned you to Lilly a second time. When was that?”

“She was always asking if she could take me home... in fact, she and Samuel joked about it all the time. But I never thought he’d let her. She said she wanted to play the bitch to me—since she’d never dommed a woman before. But that had me petrified and Samuel knew that.”

“Why is that?”

“Submissive women who don’t know what they are doing are dangerous with a whip in hand. They end up retaliating for all the bad masters they’ve had on the ass of one poor soul.”

“You talk like you’ve experienced that first hand.”

She smiles. “Enough to know that I hate novices, trainees and switches—those that don’t know what they are doing.”

Sydney thinks of herself in the role of Mistress she played in the exam room. Was the girl judging her then? She doesn’t dare ask.

“But eventually, Samuel gave in to her?” Sydney probes further.

“Yes, and Lilly was hell. As rough as I feared she’d be. She dressed up in black lace, and wore a hooded veil that covered her head. When she came for me, she led me from the loft to her car, making me crawl on my hands and knees—naked. Thankfully, it was midnight—and there was no one on the street to see me. Her game was weird, like she was pretending to be a witch. When we got to her apartment, she snapped a blindfold over my eyes and made me crawl up the stairs, while she tugged me along. Inside her apartment, she took the leash off and I had to navigate on my own, which was nearly impossible with all of her antique furniture. Every time I turned the wrong way, she told me what a bad puppy I was and sliced my ass with a baton. It was a game for her, but she was the only one who knew the rules. I was so confused that I began to cry—and she hated that and kept slicing my ass with her baton until I fell over on my side. I could feel her sneering at me from above.

“When she tired of that game, she sat on my back and pressed her pussy against me, rubbing it as if she were getting off. Then she dragged me to her bed and laid me on it face down, tying me to the four corners with my legs spread wide. She gave me a savage going over for nearly an hour. She whipped me hard, like all the hell in her had to be driven out, and this was the only way to make it happen. Then she sat in a chair off to the side and made snide comments about the degenerate state of my morals. I had a

right to be scared; I thought she'd gone crazy. This was not the Lilly I knew.

"I didn't say a word, because I was afraid that I'd provoke her more. But even my silence annoyed her. She told me that I was a stupid girl and that I deserved to be treated like a dog. She liked that idea so much that the rest of the night, that's exactly what she did. She led me by the collar, made me lap water from a bowl, and served me table scraps, awful stuff she pulled from her refrigerator. I'm not even sure it was good, but she forced me to eat it. When I had to pee, she made me do it on papers in the corner. I did all this still blindfolded. When she was finally too tired to go on, she fell asleep in the bed. I lay on the floor, praying that she'd stay asleep until I found a way to escape. But I couldn't escape. My hands had been tied behind my back—a lot more tightly than I expected. The ropes wouldn't budge, so I was stuck. With no other choice, I fell asleep where she left me with my head resting on a pile of clothes she'd left lying there.

"In the morning—actually it was very late morning when we both woke up—the curtains were open and sun was pouring into her yellow room. My hands had been untied. She drew me into bed with her as if the night had been a dream, and she didn't remember a thing. She made love to me the way she always did, and fussed over the horrible wounds on my ass—like she had no idea how they got there.

"I was too confused, and still too scared of her to correct her memory. She decided that I looked listless and pale. That I was coming down with something and I'd better go home. She fed me a plate of scrambled eggs. Then she loaned me a sundress and dropped me off at Samuel's door, telling me that she'd stop by the next day to see how I was doing. But she never stopped by. We didn't see her again for at least three months—only after she learned that Samuel was dying.

"I asked him why he let her take me. He said it would be good experience, just once, to know that lovely people are not always what they seem. I think he knew that I was falling in love with the pretty woman who visited the loft, and he wanted me to know Lilly's other side. I didn't love her anymore, but I was profoundly attached to her and very sorry that she stayed away so long."

As the girl catches her breath, she retreats emotionally and waits for another of Sydney's questions. The rise and fall of her emotions is a fascinating thing to watch, and it takes some time before Sydney's ready again. Until she is, the still silence in the room covers them both in a blanket of peace.

"What else can you tell me about your life with your guardian?"

"I don't know that you want to hear," the girl replies. "It was an uncomplicated life. Sometimes it seemed the rules were rigid. Dozens of natural acts like going to the bathroom, bathing, eating and sleeping were ruled by Samuel's whim. I wouldn't eat for several days, and then he'd make me big dinners, or take me out and treat me to a feast at a fancy restaurant. He'd order pizza in and we'd listen to old rock concerts on the radio. Sometimes I wore clothes, but sometimes I'd go naked for days. Sometimes he spanked me every morning before we had sex, others times he'd go for days without touching me. He'd hardly say a word. And he didn't want me to talk when he wanted silence. If I spoke too much and he got annoyed, he'd gag me. I rarely knew which way the wind blew with him. It was always a surprise."

"It seems to me that your life with Mr. Janes had very little you could count on."

"Oh, but I could always count on him to be there, and count on him to change things without telling me. I'm young and that excites me... or at least it did then."

"And would it now?"

“I really don’t know.”

Sydney sees the picture of the girl’s life as an indentured servant fairly clearly... and though it makes her shudder, she can accept that for Melinda duBois, it was a pleasing time that she obviously misses. What would it be like with Larry Standish? The two men would seem to be vastly different in their lifestyles and the demands they make on the women who serve them.

“I think you need to meet with your new guardian,” she suddenly concludes. “He is not necessarily the one that will be chosen for you—if one is chosen at all. But he’s anxious to see you and I think it would be a good idea to meet him before a decision is made.” This feels like a rash decision, but a necessary one.

The girl will not object. It’s not in her makeup to do so. But this time, she seems oddly shaken by her counselor’s unexpected announcement, and Sydney sees her stoic bones

quake—for just an instant.

## Chapter Ten

### The Interview

“So, you’re calling me?” Larry Standish exclaims.

Sydney hears the surprise in his voice.

“You want your interview with Melinda?”

“Of course.”

“How about this afternoon?”

“This afternoon!”

“Yes. It’s the only time I can fit in.”

“And our dinner?”

“What’s more important?”

“Gee, I don’t know,” he cockily replies.

“Well, if you don’t want the interview...”

“Yes, I want the interview. How about 4:00?”

“I’ll see you then.”

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She stands at the window and watches from a safe distance as the girl sits alone in the interview room. She holds her arms crossed in front of her and waits. There is just the chair and a table in front of it. The scene seems straight from a “B” movie interrogation scene, or one of hundreds of TV shows that have replicated these grim surroundings. She feels as if she’s staring through the simulated air of those dank and fabricated worlds. As if she’s in a dream and any second she’ll awaken, she can hardly feel her physical body. Is she so detached that she’s gone ‘out-of-body’ and is gazing down like the girl’s guardian angel?

Larry Standish enters the room and swaggers toward Lot 21, finally stopping just behind her.

“Turn around,” he says.

The girl starts and stops, unsure.

“Yes, turn your chair around and face me.” His voice is clear, the command crisp, but his mood is humane.

The girl obeys, and bites her lip as she stares into the man’s eyes. She’s sitting on her hands with her back to the table.

“You had a good man in Samuel Janes,” the guardian says.

“Yes, sir.”

“And you were in love with him?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You have it in your heart to love something new?”

“I think so, sir.”

He paces a bit. “You’re pretty, you’re intelligent. Why another indentured position to tie you down forever?”

She hesitates; she’s nervous. “It’s in my nature,” she says.

“You haven’t had it beaten out of you?”

“Perhaps I’ve had it beaten in to me.”

He smiles. “You are a smart girl. But I don’t like girls who are too smart for their britches. You get my meaning?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You wouldn’t be one like that, would you?”

“No, sir. I don’t think so, sir.”

“You don’t *think* so?” His voice rises in intensity.

“I would always obey you without question.”

“Because Samuel trained you well.”

“Yes, sir. He did.”

He observes her critically, honing in on her with a ruthless gaze that makes the watching Sydney shudder head to foot—she’s definitely back in her body feeling the strong physical jolt.

“But you sit like a free woman.”

“Sorry, sir.” The girl immediately raises her ass off the chair, flips the skirt off her bottom and sits again with her bare skin on the wood. Her hands are at her side now, gripping the edge of the chair.

“Is that what you think you are now? A free woman?”

“No, sir.”

“That’s right, 21, you’re not free. You’re in here. You’ve been incarcerated by the State, because you chose to give up your freedom for something better. And the fact is, you’ll always be slave to your demented desires and your need to have them fulfilled. Am I wrong?”

“No, Sir.”

He grins. “Hey, I’m batting a thousand today. Huh?” He struts and paces some more, and takes a deep breath standing with his back to her for a second. Then he whips around and with cruel eyes hits her bewildered gaze with a force so strong that Sydney sees the girl draw in her breath and hold it. Her tense shoulders rise and her chin trembles. “You’re a slut, girl. You believe that?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then open your thighs.”

The girl spreads her legs wide apart, which causes her skirt to hike high around her hips. From Sydney’s vantage point, she can see that her pussy is nearly uncovered. From where Standish stands, he can see right into the open cunt.

“So, you tell me. What’s the first thing I’m going to do when I get you home?”

“You’ll punish me,” she says.

“Damn right, I’ll punish you. I’ll punish all the crap out of you. . . all the lies the counselor lady has been feeding you about independence and choices, and taking back your life. That’s not what a girl like you wants or needs. I told her that. I told her that she was screwing you over to fill your head with a

bunch of nonsense. Do you believe that?"

"I listen to her because I have to."

"But do you believe her?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know?" He moves on her, leaning over her, with his hands on either side of her head resting on the table behind her. They are impossibly close.

She cranes her neck to see his face.

"I've followed her directions because that's what I do."

"The perfect submissive," he says with scorn.

"Not perfect, but trying, sir. That is what Samuel would tell me."

He backs off with a less mocking smile. Then he squats in front of her with his hand reaching between her legs, where Sydney suspects he's fooling with her sex. She sees the girl's body stiffen and relax several times, as the man adroitly fondles the sensitive flesh.

"You're very wet."

"Yes, sir."

"And why is that?"

"What you're doing arouses me."

"What I do, or what I say?"

"Both, sir, I think."

"Of course, both. Your entire body quivers for abuse."

"Yes, sir." She seems a bit breathless in response to his probing fingers and their effect on her.

"Come, slut. Come on my hand," he orders as he stares her down, as his hand forces itself deeper and this tease becomes too strong for her to shake off. "And look into my eyes."

She obeys him. In seconds her body explodes on his invading fingers, panting as the ripples of orgasmic energy swell inside her, crunch deep in her belly and then dissipate. He pulls his hand out of her snatch.

"Lick them clean, 21, lick them clean."

She obliges him obediently with a tongue that naturally curls around his sticky fingers as she tastes her own cum.



“And you could come again?” he asks, as he finally rises.

“I think so, sir.”

He snickered. “Maybe you’ll get your chance.” He paces more, nervously, as if his own energy has risen to an unpleasant peak that needs to be released. Fishing through a small satchel he carried with him, he draws out a thick, flesh-colored rubber dildo. “This is for your ass. Use it with care, I don’t want it damaged or soiled, girl.”

She reaches for it, questioningly. “In the chair, sir, or on the floor?”

“Samuel let you question him?” he snaps, as if her behavior offends him.

“Sometimes, sir. I’m...”

“You do what comes naturally and I’ll set you straight if I’m not happy, how’s that?”

They continue to stare each other down, as Larry Standish waits and the girl decides what she will do. Sydney is almost breathless watching. The wait becomes excruciating, as if every second drags on forever.

In time, the girl begins to ease. Her ragged breathing becomes deeper and more even. Her eyes spark. Standish notes this but remains immobile. He waits as if he knows exactly what the girl will do. The two seem to be thinking the same thing, dwelling on the same mental picture.

Seconds tick by, and the girl finally rises from her chair and turns around, kneeling on the hard seat with her knees spread to either side. She bends forward over the back of the chair, sticking her ass out with a provocative wave. Something naughty gleams in her eyes, which that reminds Sydney of an adult theatre sex kitten seducing her audience. Standish is not yet seduced, but then, he’ll be a hard sell. It’s part of the game they play.

After wetting the dildo with her tongue, the girl reaches around to her behind and begins to work the thick rod into her ass. She keeps her eyes focused on her would-be guardian as she breathes deep. With each breath, her body relaxes a little more and the rod disappears a little deeper into her bowels. Her body quakes as the hefty thing impales the widening orifice.

“Fuck yourself, slut,” Standish orders her. “I want you to come. Now!”

The girl’s ready for the command; she senses it coming. And despite the awkward positioning of her hand, she manages to hold on to the end of the dildo and thrust the rest of the rubber rod into her ass. She withdraws it and starts over. The first thrusts seem to be the most difficult, but as her body responds to the stimulation, her invaded rectum gives way to a more vigorous fucking. The intensity increases and the girl rises beyond herself, panting, cawing softly, her eyes glazing over, until she remembers to refocus on the man watching. Yet, she’s only half there now.

“You see this, Sydney Wingate?” Larry Standish suddenly calls toward the mirror.

One would think that he’d disturb the girl with his sudden outburst—not that she doesn’t know the truth, that her counselor has been watching the scene all along—but she’s immune to any interruption. The anal play has taken away her conscious thought. She’s entangled in her fantasy and her frenzied body, and the powerful orgasm that begins to rip through her being, making her quake with sharp,

forceful jerks.

“God, yes!” she seethes under her breath. The girl’s hips grind into the fake prick as her body juices drip from her cunt and onto the chair below her. Her muted exclamations are amplified by the sound system in the interrogation room, which feeds into the anteroom where Sydney watches.

“You see what she does... what I can make her do, Sydney Wingate?” Larry sneeringly asks. “You see?” His hand sweeps around, while the two watch Lot 21 continue to writhe, her naked body undulating on the air. It’s not just her ass engaged in the climax, but all the nerves and muscles in her straining body. She looks as if her empty cunt is grabbing for something that isn’t there. Soon, her eyes unfocus, the lids close, and an expression of sorrow fills her face with sadness and a wanting that goes deep, beyond this present scene. Her expression tells them that what she really needs requires a different kind of satisfaction than sheer physical release can offer her.

At last, she slumps completely forward, so that she’s supported by the table. The chair rocks back precariously. Larry Standish moves forward, gently pulling her down from the risky position and to the floor.

“Finish what you started, slut,” he says in a voice rich with human warmth.

Her eyes open. “Thank you, sir,” she says. She slowly withdraws the dildo from her ass. With loving regard, she licks the rod clean of every trace of herself. Then Standish nods at the chair as he takes the dildo from her. Understanding what he wants, she leans into the chair and licks her pussy juice from the wet seat.

“What are you, tell me?” he goads her.

“A slut, sir.”

“And are you worthy of being on the outside?”

“No, sir. I don’t think so, sir.” She sees his instantaneous look of displeasure. “No, no, I’m not.”

“You need a guardian to take care of you.”

“Yes, sir.”

“So, 21 slut, tell me exactly what you need. Tell me,” he points to the mirror, “and tell her. Don’t miss a thing.” He goes to her as she continues to crouch on the floor and jerks her by the hair, so she’s forced to look up at his face. “You need the reminder spoken from your own lips, and while you’re doing that, you’ll inform your dear counselor of exactly who you are and what you crave.”

21 trembles as she fixates on the man; her eyes are now clear and unwavering. “I want a man, sir, who can do what you’ve just done to me. I do so want the squalor and the debasement. My cunt screams for it. And I need to be punished hard. I need to be beaten. I need the marks to define me, and the pain, more pain. Samuel may be gone, but that doesn’t take away the need in me that tears me up every time I think of it. I’m so afraid I’ll never have it again.” She starts to cry.

Standish lets go her hair and slaps her face. “No tears, bitch. A slut like you needn’t bother, because you’ll get no sympathy from me.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You come to my house, you’ll be beaten first thing. You’ll live in chains for a month, while you adjust to my regimen. I’ll work every bit of sass from your system with twenty-hour a day shifts doing hard labor on my farm. You’ll be so tired that you’ll hardly be able to stand. But you will survive it, because that is what you do. Is that clear?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You’ll be used, tossed off to any man who passes through my door—if they’ll have a sorry slut like you. When they take you, you’ll give to them as if they are your long lost lover. You’ll please them with pretty smiles, with an eager tongue and cunt and ass. You’ll beg them to let you suck their dicks. You’ll beg them to ride your body hard. You’ll tell them how they turn you on, even if they repulse you. You’ll remember that you’re nothing but property, a nameless piece of flesh to be used and then thrown into the gutter. That’s what you love, what you’ve been pining for this last month, what wells up in you looking into my face and hearing the sound of my voice. You’ll thrive in my abusive world, because that is who you are. Do you disagree?”

“No, sir.”

“Does it arouse you?”

“Yes, sir, very much.” Her body quivers again, as if the words alone are enough to send her cunt careening toward another orgasm.

“Are you close to coming?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Is that what you want?”

“If that is what you want from me.”

He smiles, self-satisfied. Then his expression sours. “No, it’s not what I want,” he tells her. “I’ve given you two orgasms, I think three is more than you deserve, don’t you?”

It’s a question left to go unanswered.

“I’ll have the papers drawn up for you to sign. You can read them if you like, but I don’t negotiate terms. This is what Samuel wanted.”

“Yes, sir, I know that.”

“Well, then...” he stands up in dismissal, “until Ms. Wingate sends you on.”

He looks again toward the one-way mirror and smiles, then exits the room.

## Dinner At Eight

He drives a late model SUV, which is dusty from city grime and road-dirt.

“Sorry, I should have had it washed, but there wasn’t time,” Larry Standish says as he gallantly holds the passenger door open for the wary Ms. Wingate. The interview with Melinda is only an hour old, hardly time for the fires that blazed through the meeting to cool in either of them.

Sydney sits next to the sadistic scoundrel feeling his beastly sexuality invading her, as if he has a thousand teasing tentacles undulating across her flesh. It’s a natural thing for him. He’d be like this with any woman, she rationalizes. But that’s her mind speaking; her cunt doesn’t think. It only knows what it feels, and how she responds erotically in his presence. Thinking of Melinda and the scene in the interrogation room only makes her body burn more hotly.

In self-defense, she dwells on something else, as she stares aimlessly out the window watching the city streets go rapidly by. In a few minutes, they are on the interstate heading away from town and into the hilly country beyond.

“So, did I lie?” he finally asks, breaking their long silence.

“About what? Melinda?”

“Of course, about Melinda; excuse me, 21. You really shouldn’t be calling her by name, it doesn’t fit.”

She immediately recoils. “No! Stop. If you want to go over that territory again, you can just turn around and take me home now. I’m still not sure why I agreed to this evening with you.”

“You’re not even a little bit curious about what you’ll see?”

“Maybe.”

“Of course; there’s my endearing charm.” He flashes her a big grin.

“Yes, I imagine that has gotten you far.”

“Gotten me this far with you.”

“You have no interest in me. You just want the girl.”

“I have an interest in a lot of things you’d be surprised about,” he chuckles.

“Well, I have no interest in you, beyond my client. As cute as you may be, as charming and witty, you’re an undisputed sadist. I saw that clearly today, and I can’t see myself with a man who thrives on the kind of abuse you wreaked on Melinda duBois. Even if she liked it!”

“Really?” He looks a bit amazed, as if he doesn’t quite believe her.

“Certainly that can’t surprise you. You may think your little kinks are normal behavior, especially

since they've been legitimized, but only a fraction of society finds your lifestyle acceptable. I think if most would see what I've seen in the last month, they would be shocked. And if the right people got a really good look at what the government now sanctions, the contracts would disappear in weeks, and your convenient little scheme would become illegal."

"Well, haven't you climbed back on your high horse? That's pretty amazing, considering what you were feeling after my interview with 21."

"That was no interview."

He laughs. "It wasn't intended as an interview in the traditional sense, but it served the same purpose from my point of view. I know everything I need to know about the girl. Not that I didn't know it before. I still like getting my information first hand. And as far as you're concerned, you were so hot and bothered an hour ago, I could have put you to the floor and had you coming on my hand!"

"You have no idea what I was feeling!" she shakes her head, fuming.

"Now that's a lie, Ms. Wingate. I thought you could be honest about what you feel. That's what I counted on when I invited you to my home."

"I don't deny that there is a certain twisted thrill in what you do, but it's much the same as a violent movie that gets your heart racing. The problem is, Melinda duBois is a real person, and what you did was wasn't acting."

"You heard what she said afterwards."

Sydney's heart pounds, her stomach turns to knots and her head begins to throb. "Yes, and here we are arguing again."

She tries to calm and so does he.

"Okay," he finally says, "how about we agree not to argue tonight? You be my guest, observe what happens, but we stay away from philosophical discussions."

"And if I can't help myself?" she asks.

"Then, I'll turn around right now and take you home."

When he turns off the charm, he's instantly cold. He speaks in edicts, bluntly, and he means what he says. Which is very different from the men she's used to—but then, she has no experience in this kind of situation, or with a man who would own women as property and make no apologies for the fact.

"No. I said I'd have dinner with you, and I will. I'll contain my ire."

He smiles again and nods, pleased.

They drive for nearly an hour on the Interstate before turning off onto a side road, leading to an unrelenting stream of endless, monotonous hills and valleys and thick forests. The green and gold swim before Sydney's eyes until she's lost in the obscure maze. Her mind careens forward strangely. What's to say that Larry Standish is not a serial rapist, moving her rapidly toward her death? No one would ever know where she's gone, or ever find her in this vast ocean of rural space. Her imaginings shock her...

and she shakes herself from the pointless drama.

In time, the car slows to a crawl, turns north through a gate and meanders down a narrow driveway. They travel another quarter mile of woods before they finally stop in front of a sprawling white frame house set on a grassy rise. With the forest behind them, the house sits in the open, bathed by the rich pink light of the setting sun.

Sydney looks about stunned; this not what she expected. There are several cedar-sided barns to the left. Their rustic exteriors give off an appearance of age, but with a closer look, Sydney sees that they are still in very good shape. To the right, at the base of the rise is a large vegetable garden stretching for several yards along the flat terrain. There is no significant landscaping on the grassy knoll, where the vast house reclines like a languishing woman. A meadow of beech and prairie grasses sway in the breeze, making the structure look as if it's an island in the midst of a sea of dusty green. She's reminded of New England clapboard houses perched on tranquil cliffs overlooking the ocean.

Despite the simplicity of the setting, the air reeks with eroticism. It rustles through the atmosphere, though the leafy trees in the forest behind them, through the barns, and through bodies like a slow, rolling orgasm.

Is this because she expects Standish's home to reek with the erotic? That is not what she would imagine consciously. But maybe her anticipation comes from between her thighs, where she seems to regularly reply to the sadistic stimulation of men like Larry Standish and their kinky worlds.

He leads her through the grassy rushes, along a stone path to the top of the hill. The grass is cut closer to the house in a five-foot perimeter of manicured lawn. The rest is wild. Around the girth of the massive place is a wide porch; dormers dot the roofline at odd intervals. There seems to have been an erratic maze of additions to what was originally a white frame farmhouse. But regardless of its irregular lines, it all seems to fit the mood of the man beside her, and as a whole, give off the impression of a substantial, even stylish structure.

Greeting them is a voluptuous young woman in a long, flowing, amber-colored dress. The light from the fading sun shines through the gossamer material revealing the sumptuous outline of the woman's body. She carries herself like a goddess with a heart of gold.

"Good evening, sir," she says respectfully. Larry places his hand at her waist and kisses her on the lips. "Not your new girl?" She looks at Sydney.

He laughs. "No. 'fraid not. She just stands between me and the one I want."

A bit self-consciously, Sydney glances away, but is immediately startled by the sight she sees standing in the yard. She looks back at her host, nervously.

"Yes, it's a whipping post," Larry confirms. Then he addresses his girl, "Ms. Wingate, Sydney, will be here for dinner, dee. You'll see the table is properly set."

"Yes, sir."

"And how is the new one handling herself?" he asks as the three take the broad stairway to the porch, striding side by side. Larry and dee are arm in arm.

"I think she needs your attention, sir."

“Hmmm.” He thinks a moment. “Maybe that will work out. Sydney is here to see how we live. She might as well see it all.”

“May I be excused, sir?” dee asks, as she reaches for the door and moves out of Larry’s grasp.

He pulls her back, placing a hand on her rump and squeezing hard.

“Ooo, sir!” she giggles.

“Be off with you!” her gives her a hearty smack, which makes her entire flesh jiggle like an Old World whore’s. She might well have been a bawdy tavern wench in 17th century England. Perhaps Standish was born in the wrong time, too.

The interior of the house feels as enormous as its exterior. Much of the furniture is dark, ugly, and antique, although a few scattered pieces of exceptional quality are pleasing to the eye. Sofas, tables, a desk, piano and a grand breakfront crowd the foyer and the large living room. Beyond it toward the back of the house, the same heavy, cluttered style defines the dining room, where a huge table with more than a dozen chairs awaits the evening meal, although is has to be set.

They move into the living room, while Sydney stares back at the massive oaken staircase leading to the second floor. The far end of the foyer opens to a paneled hallway, which seems to stretch further than her eye can see.

“Sit,” Larry orders, drawing her attention back to him.

As if one of his obedient servants, she obeys, sinking into the brocade settee. As the flavor of the unusual house settles around her, an eerie feeling invades her body. She chooses to ignore it. She has to keep her wits about her.

“You’re surprised?” Larry asks.

“Yes, I have to admit, I am. This place is... amazing.”

“Yes, it is,” he stares around, “and you’ve only glanced at what’s here... there are plenty of nasty little secrets hidden in these walls to keep you intrigued for days.” His eyes shine gently, as he mockingly seduces his guest. “A little sherry?”

“I’ve never had sherry.”

“How about a martini, then?”

She thinks of her first martini in the bar, and the man she screwed on a whim.

“Yes, please. It will bring back fond memories.”

He tugs an old-fashioned bell pull hanging by his chair. “Really? Care to tell?”

“No. This one is my secret,” she smiles.

A young woman rushes in. “Sir?”



“Martinis for Sydney and me. Make them the usual way and bring the shaker.”

“Yes, sir.”

“So, tell me, how did you come to live here?”

“This is an unusual home... and perfect for my lifestyle choice. It’s convenient being secluded from the rest of the world. I have no fear of offending anyone. People who come through the gate are invited guests and they know what to expect.”

“That is convenient. And how did you find this...” she gazes around, “structural oddity?”

“Hmmm. That’s the first time someone’s called it that... but it’s been called worse. Would you believe that I won it?”

“Won it?”

“Pretty much. I was speculating on properties for a while with my dad’s money. Doing pretty well. I had an agreement with a contractor and he reneged. I sued and ended up winning the case. Part of the proceeds came in the form this property. We sit on twenty acres of fertile land. The house was a wreck. And of course, everyone figured that I’d be tearing the place down to make way for a new development. But I saw a golden opportunity to expand the lifestyle I’d already begun. So, I restored the house.”

“You hardly seem old enough to have that long a history.”

“I’m thirty-five. I started at eighteen. That’s a seventeen-year history. Not bad for a kid with no college. My street smarts have served me pretty well, though, and they introduced me to a life I thought was only fantasy.”

“I’m beginning to see. You were born in the wrong century... you and your girl, you called her dee.”

“dee’s my first girl, a voluntary slave. She’s been with me since I was twenty-two, which was when the reality I wanted hit me in the face. I had always fantasized about being a great land baron with dozens of gorgeous, charming girls doing my bidding. I think I born with the thought. It’s part of my first memories, and became the centerpiece of my frequent adolescent masturbation. I stumbled into an S&M club in New York when I was twenty, and that instantly grabbed my attention. I relished the power. And somehow, I knew exactly what I needed to do. That’s why I started dealing in property. I was thinking of this place long before it came to me. I’d actually planned to buy an estate about a hundred miles south of here, but when this fell into my hands, I decided, why not? It was cheaper to remodel, and it’s turned out reasonably well. We’re private, I have the land I need, and plenty of space to run my slaves.”

“Slaves, not servants?”

“Here they are slaves,” he admits, matter-of-factly. “Oh, there are very different contracts under which these girls serve, but I think of them all the same, and they know that. The feisty, domineering ones from the prison system may hate it, but that really isn’t my problem.”

He accepts the martini served by another of his slaves and gives the other to Sydney.

“You are a bit of an anomaly here,” he feels the need to explain, “there are very few women who



come here dressed in regular street clothes, and are allowed to sit on the furniture. If my girls fail to serve you, it's because they have been trained to serve men."

Sydney feels the effect of this information as a warm glow in her lower belly, as if it pleases her.

"And how many 'slaves'," she says the word cautiously because it makes her shiver, "do you have here?"

"I have a half dozen from the prison system working off their debts through me. Most of them live in the barns, work in the fields and around the house. One is a terrific cook, so she helps 'seven' in the kitchen. 'seven' is my voluntary. She's been with me forever. You've met dee, and that was trina serving drinks, also voluntary."

"I find it amazing that you'd take on being guardian to them all."

"It's in my nature—being the land baron." He sits back, puts his feet up on the hassock, sips his martini and sighs with a smile as sexy as any man's she's ever met.

"I guess you do fit the bill." She is amazed. "And you have sex with all these women?"

"No. Just the ones who want me, and occasionally the ones who like to be taken by force... I enjoy a good rape. But mostly, the sex here is consensual in the sense that it is part of the lifestyle these women and I share."

"The involuntary servants from the State?"

"Some want sex, but some will have nothing to do with me, or my friends. I don't hassle them, I just make them work twice as hard. The ones that do submit probably think I'll treat them better."

"And do you?"

He shrugs. "Probably, but I have a system with the prison slaves and it doesn't vary much. Maybe a more comfortable bed for a night, a better meal."

"So then the voluntaries are your sex slaves?"

"Not all of them... never with 'seven'—although she does appreciate a good pat on the rump occasionally."

He was shamelessly forthright about himself in her office, now he seems to burgeon with fire and sensuality, as he talks about himself here, becoming twice the man in Sydney's eyes. She is totally transfixed, drawn like a child to candy as the questions burst inside her mind.

"And the bondage, the whipping posts, the collars and chains?"

"Now there I rule. How my girls dress, how they are disciplined and the methods of containment I use ... I'm given wide discretion by the State. After all, the prison system puts people in chains, why shouldn't I, if I chose? And, I'm obliged by law to keep the women safely under my rule, my jurisdiction, safe from the public at large. My facilities and my dealings with them need to be as secure as if they were being handled in a traditional prison setting. Basically, my barns are a prison, a private one, but a prison nonetheless. I'm little more than an independent contractor. And in that way, the system works very

well.”

“And to keep them contained?”

“The girls live in cells. They are frequently hobbled and often wear chains. But, if they behave themselves, do their work and don’t give me any sass, in time, they’ll see the restrictions on their bondage lifted.”

“You hobble them when they work in the fields? That seems a little counterproductive.”

“No, they’re usually not hobbled for their work details. I have Kip to make sure they behave then. She came from the State, but has stayed as... shall we say, an ‘informal voluntary’? There’s no contract between us, but I doubt she’ll ever leave. She’s become the overseer of my prison brood. She wields a nasty bullwhip—which few women would ever attempt to challenge. Kip is one of my most interesting arrangements. She plays the dyke from hell twenty-four hours a day. She tells me the lesbian sex in the barns is pure heaven. I pretty much let her have her way with those girls who are interested. Then, when she gets too bitchy for her snug leather britches, I take her to my private whipping post, beat the piss out of her, gag her, rape her ass and leave her as mellow as a sleeping kitten. There aren’t many places in this world that a woman like Kip can get that kind of treatment. She gets both sides of the sadistic/masochistic coin in the proportions that she needs, I get my barns, my livestock and my gardens runs with an efficiency that would rival my abilities to do so, and we’re both happy.” He pauses. “You want to hear more?”

Sydney listens with rapt attention. Even the burning questions have been quieted as Larry Standish describes his life. “Yes, certainly.”

“Obviously, you want to know about the discipline. That is a real sticking point with you, that and the sex. You’ve seen the whipping post in the yard. There’s another in the barns and the one I mentioned in my private quarters. They are not there as relics from the past, or for ornamentation. I use them almost daily for common discipline. They are loved, despised, but most of all accepted on this property as the primary means of punishing unruly behavior, sassy mouths, laziness and general disobedience. They are not meant for S&M sex—although I have a few girls here for whom there can be no separation between being truly punished and a sexual result. Regardless, the whipping post is an icon here that signifies my displeasure. Any girl ordered to straddle the post knows I’m pissed. There are a few who try to defy me in the beginning, but my voluntaries and most of the girls in the barns eventually decide that avoiding my wrath is a good plan.”

“You’re saying that behind all that charm and wit, you’re not a nice man?” she jests.

“You saw me with 21.”

“I did. But I considered that a show, a role you played for Melinda and me. I’m still not sure if your performance was mostly tongue-in-cheek, or the real thing.”

“Well, then, maybe you should get another demonstration.”

She can’t tell him how this excites her. How she would beg for that demonstration, if it weren’t for the fact that she is trying to maintain the cool poise of an objective observer.

“That’s just it, I don’t really want a demonstration, I want to see how you’d respond if I weren’t here.”

“Well then, you might get a chance for that, too.”

One of his girls, the one who served the martinis stands at the dining room doorway, patiently waiting to be noticed.

“trina?”

“Yes, sir. It’s eight o’clock. Cook tells me that dinner is ready for you and your guest.”

“Thank you.” He nods to Sydney. “Shall we?”

He takes her by the arm as they stroll toward the dining room, where he sits at the head of the table and she sits to his right. The rest of the table is empty. He explains: “Slaves serve, then eat in the kitchen.”

## Chapter Twelve

### Demonstration

There is a purposeful atmosphere about the house, Sydney notes, as if it works like a finely tuned machine. The girls come and go... appearing out of the woodwork, disappearing like ghosts, interacting with their guardian in subtle, simple, understated ways, which suggest that they are particularly suited by their personalities for the roles they play. They are submissively inclined and have been well trained by their guardian. Perhaps the whipping post is a good incentive, or perhaps, they are simply doing what is natural for them. And for whatever reason, she can’t escape the simmering sexual that flows through the entire house like an underground stream.

“We’re going to the barns,” Larry Standish announces when he has finished dinner. He tosses his napkin on the table and pushes back his chair. “You’re finished, aren’t you?”

The delicious roast, vegetables and parsley potatoes slid down her throat like fine confections. “Yes, the walk would probably do me good; I’m a little stuffed.”

“I told you my cooks were good. I’ll tell ‘seven’ you enjoyed the meal.”

“Please do.”

Pleasantries over, he stands, waits for her to rise, then takes her hand and leads her to a side door that opens onto the porch. The night has closed in around them, the late summer theme of cicada, crickets and tree frogs sing their lonesome ballads, and it would seem that she has been transported into a sensuous, pastoral heaven, an idyllic Old World time far from the squalid city where she works. If only that were true, she would be on a romantic high with a man as handsome as Larry Standish escorting her through the grassy fields toward the barns. But then maybe her fantasy mocks the real Old World, and Larry Standish’s version, with whipping posts and barns for prisons, and serving wenches in scanty clothes is more authentic for that actual time.

They arrive at the barns to see a tall, sleek woman, wearing leather pants and an open leather vest

pacing in front of a communal shower. Six woman of varying shapes, from generously plump to sensuously slender, wash themselves beneath four showerheads, which spray a fine mist of liquid on their shiny bodies. The pacing woman carries a short whip in her hand and wears a decidedly fierce look on her sun-weathered face. She's a woman in charge. To Sydney's fascination, her leather vest is all that covers her torso. And without ties to keep the vest closed, her small brown breasts emerge almost every time she moves. The counselor can't help but stare for a moment at the pert nipples, so unlike her own larger ones, which look like tiny, frozen peas. Suddenly self-conscious, Sydney jerks her eyes away, but they only return a second later to complete her silent assessment.

Sydney decides that this must be Kip. She is exactly as she imagined the dykish woman Larry described. Her dishwater blonde hair is cut in a feathered style that frames her small, well-contained features. On some women, the haircut would soften a severe expression, but this one's eyes are sharp and piercing, enough to make Sydney quake for the split second the two stare each other down. The woman quickly turns her attention to Larry and Sydney is relieved.

"Any problem tonight?" Larry asks her.

"tiny, over here," the woman calls toward the showering women. One emerges from the six, and patters toward the waiting trio. Her wet body shivers as the water drains from the girl's curvaceous form, running in rivulets down her fleshy thighs. Her dark hair is a sheet of black plastered to her skin, while the dark pubic hair covering the triangle of her sexual apex sparkles with water clinging to the nest of curls. She blushes self-consciously and tries to cover her breasts and belly with her hands. But she's a bit too well endowed for that shy act to do much good.

"Stand up straight and put your hands behind your back," Kip barks.

"Yes, ma'am." The girl obeys, though she's obviously embarrassed exposing herself.

"Yes, *Kip*," Kip barks at her again, "I'm not your Mistress."

"She's the newest in the barns," Larry explains. "Just nineteen, caught shoplifting, handling drugs. She opted for three years here as face real prison. But we don't consider her much of a threat, do we?" He speaks to the girl directly.

"No, sir," the girl says. She looks like an innocent child to Sydney, like the runaways she counsels at the center.

"You're pointing her out to me for what reason?" Larry asks Kip.

"Turn around, girl."

The girl turns, showing her ass and the dozens of red marks that remain from a recent beating.

Larry steps forward. "Let me see your face," he whispers near the girl's ear.

"Yes, sir," she says turning back, looking scared, as if he's about to kill her.

"Tell me, why did Kip have to punish you?"

The girl trembles, her chin quakes. She casts eyes her down and to the side, a further indication of her shame.

“Look at me,” Larry orders, at the same time taking her chin in his hand so it’s nearly impossible to divert her gaze. “What did you do to deserve Kip’s whip?”

“Nothing, sir, really nothing. She’s...” her eyes dart toward the ruthless Domme. “I mean, I don’t really think she was fair.”

“And why is that?” He’s curiously indulgent of her, but anyone can see that she’s playing with a fire that’s about to flame in her direction. The other girls are out the shower, drying their bodies on towels, glancing warily in the direction of the confrontation, waiting for the fireworks to start.

“Because, because... I’m new. And I don’t belong here.”

“You signed the papers, honey,” he reminds her.

“I had to.”

He shakes his head. “No one coerced you. You could have done your time the normal way...”

“But I...”

“Enough. You have no case. You were convicted, sentenced and transferred to me, which means you deal with me and you deal with Kip. You’d better get used to it because that’s the way it’s gonna be for the next three years.”

She starts to cry.

“Put her on the post,” he coolly orders.

Excitement crackles through the air. Even the poor victim feels it as her lush body quivers. Although she struggles with Kip, the stronger, more intent woman is easily able to thrust the girl against the whipping post, where she has her hands cuffed to the highest ring within seconds. The girl is almost on tiptoe, straining at the shoulders. Her already punished behind is starting to show bruises from her previous session with Kip. Apparently, that fails to win her guardian’s compassion.

He moves adroitly to a line of punishment tools along the barn wall, pulls off the one he wants and makes up the distance between the bound girl and himself into three quick strides.

With his other charges watching, with Kip grimly staring at the whimpering girl, with Sydney’s eyes glued to the proceedings, Larry rears back with a thick wooden frat paddle. Bringing it forward, he smacks the thing on the girl’s buttocks with a crack that splits the air.

Sound reverberates off the walls.

The girl screams, and screams again as another Splat! rocks the air. Then the strikes come in a steady thunder. He counts them off methodically from one to twenty-one, when he finally stops and returns the paddle to the wall. The girl’s body is wracked with sobs, which slowly turn into whimpers, until, exhausted, she runs out of steam.

Larry returns to her, placing a hand on tiny’s behind and rubbing it softly. He runs his fingers between her legs, but she clamps her thighs shut tight when he gets too far inside her.

“Don’t you try to hide it,” he whispers softly. “I know you better than you think.”

She continues to whimper softly.

“Next time, girl, you’ll get forty... and you’ll be gagged.”

“Nooooo,” she painfully winces.

“Oh, yes,” he continues to speak softly, almost tenderly, his lips at her ear in a moment of intimate torment. “Just ask around, and they’ll tell you how cruel I can be. But you play by the rules,” he massages her wounded ass again, “and your sweet butt will stay spotless. Got that?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good girl.”

Sydney finds tiny utterly appealing at this moment, but not exactly in a sexual way. This novice raises the same sadistic ire in her that Melinda did in the inspection. She feels a kinship with Kip, as if the ruthless dyke is the epitome of her own inner darkness.

Larry backs away. “She’ll learn. She’s just scared,” he says as he stops in front of Kip. “A few more sessions at the post, she’ll get the message.”

“But you know how I hate whiners,” Kip comments wryly.

“That’s why you get to wield the whip. No better way to shut them up.”

“Yeah, but this one is bound for the house, not *my* barns.”

“*Your* barns?” he chides.

“Your barns, sir,” she rips off sarcastically.

“Looks as if I’m going to have to take you down,” he whispers so Sydney can barely hear and the others won’t.

“I defer to you,” Kip responds, with a sensuous darkness vibrating through her sleek frame.

His eyes snap with fire, a feeling that he transmits especially to Kip. Sydney feels it in her gut, as a wrenching, gnawing, feral feeling charges through her system. Her body is alive and wanting.

He laughs.

“You will want the little slut in the house, I’m sure of that,” Kip adds.

“You’re likely right. But first she needs to behave herself here, or she’s useless to me, no matter how she might enjoy my sadistic sexual games.”

Larry takes Sydney’s hand and the two move out of the barn, back into the night and toward the house. His slightly dazed guest stares at the moon, which has just emerged on the horizon, a golden

yellow hue that lights the sky with an ambient glow.

"I'd like to see you wrestle with Kip," she boldly says.

"It is pretty amazing. But no one's in on that but Kip and me. It gets damned personal. Like wrestling a tiger."

"But you always win?"

"I have to. If I didn't, she'd be gone because she couldn't respect me any longer. It's a damned way to live as I see it. But it's her style and I get to exercise another part of my sadistic bent, using little restraint." He seems more puffed up, more fired than ever.

"Well, I can see that Kip rules down there. I'd hate to tangle with her. I don't imagine you have a problem with your girls trying to escape?"

"I think maybe once we had a hellion make an attempt. The dogs got her before she reached the perimeter. If she had gotten any further, the fence would have stopped her. By law, we're required have an electric fence around the property. It won't kill, but it will stun."

"This is a place of hellish surprises."

"No worse than a real prison."

"No, this is worse than a prison, because on the surface, it seems so... civil? I'm not sure that's the word, but coming here you'd think you'd find a very normal society."

"But that's what I like about my life; the veneer of civility hiding my cruelty."

She shivers, crossing her arms in front, hugging herself for comfort. "So, I suppose you have other things to show me?" she changes the subject.

"I have a girl I need to deal with. A voluntary. It could get brutal. If you don't want to watch, that's fine. But I think what you'll see is what you're really looking for."

"I don't want a show."

His mood darkens. "Trust me. It won't be. I have too much at stake in these matters to treat them lightly at this point or divert my attention to a do-gooder counselor. She's my life, you're not. You're just a guest."

"That certainly puts me in my place."

"I think if anyone is playing games, Ms. Sydney, it's you."

There is no argument from his guest. Reaching the house he can rebuff her further comment. He holds the door for her... one at the far end of the porch that opens at the end of the long paneled hallway connected to the foyer. From there, they move into what, at first, looks like an office or library. Sydney's further inspection of the room suggests this is not an office at all. There are at least a half-dozen leather chairs lining the dark walls of the hexagon-shaped room. There is no desk, what would be expected in a gentleman's study. There is a table off to one side, but it seems fairly incidental perhaps, for serving food.



What's most astounding about the room is the fixture that hangs from the center—which, at the moment, is tucked into the dome-shaped ceiling. One glance at the thick bar, the chains and the leather straps, and Sydney knows this must be a suspension device, much like the ones she saw in the Underground Market. She shudders at the thought of what will happen here as she watches.

"You can sit there," he refers to a bench beside the door.

*Why there, she wonders? Why at the door, sitting on an uncomfortable bench and not in one of the leather chairs?*

Of course, she doesn't argue with her host. Instinct tells her that the man is not in the mood to argue. He'd as easily order her out as have her ruin the session with unimportant questions.

Taking her seat, she immediately concludes that this seat is intended for his slaves. It's almost impossible for Sydney to arrange herself on the bench in any ladylike way. But she manages to clamp her thighs shut tight and sit at the edge of the wood, facing sideways. Her thoughts return to the interview room in the transfer sector, where a humiliatingly low stool was the only seat available for Melinda duBois to sit in.

As she arranges herself, and Larry Standish paces the room, a far door opens, with dee escorting a leashed and struggling woman into the center of the circular space. A mane of thick red hair frames the fraught girl's scowling expression. She is barely manageable, except that dee holds a baton in her hand, which she apparently has no problem using. There are at least a dozen thin red marks on the girl's muscled thighs. When dee finally drags the girl to the center of the room, she stops, takes a deep breath and she calmly asks:

"Will you be needing my further assistance, sir?"

"No. I don't think so. Ms. Wingate can help if I need someone."

The redhead calms now in the presence of her guardian. She's willing to remain peacefully, if not nervously, in the center of the room.

"Then you'll ring when you need me, sir?"

"I will." Unfazed by her tussle with the girl, dee floats out of the room like a sensuous nymph.

As dee leaves, the door beside Sydney opens, and two men enter the room, taking seats in the leather chairs. Once Larry greets them and they've settled, the guardian turns and zeros in on his waiting slave.

"Face me, girl," he orders her.

For a split second before she turns his way, Sydney can see the defiant look in the redhead's eyes and the grim way she holds her mouth. As she stands with her back to the her, Sydney can appreciate her physical allure. Her shoulders are fairly broad, her waist trim, and her hips flare in a lovely shape that produces a very ample bottom. Her thighs, while muscled, are reasonably slender, and her breasts what she was able to see of them, are perfectly proportioned. Sydney can see why Larry would be attracted to this lovely female, although there's obviously a serious problem his new 'voluntary', which makes Sydney wonder if she's 'voluntary' at all.



“So, you’re having problems with the routine, my little gilda?” Larry Standish asks her. They stand just inches apart.

“It’s not what you said it would be,” the girl spits out sassily.

“And you’re hardly the submissive one you advertised, are you?”

“I am who I says I am, but I ain’t gonna let your other floozies boss me around.” Sydney’s surprised to hear a cockney English accent.

Larry laughs and turns to his small audience. “Floozies huh?”

The two men laugh in amusement, while Larry paces in front of the girl.

“You’re makin’ fun ‘o me.” The girl’s chin quivers, a fact Sydney can see when gilda turns her head, closely following her guardian’s movement.

“Indeed,” he says. He moves in close much the way Sydney saw him do with tiny in the barn. His hand is at her crotch playing. “You need taking down, girl. The more you fuss, the more I’ll torment you. If it’s abuse you like, that’s what you’ll get. If you want to avoid it, behave.”

“I...” she starts.

“Hush!” he cuts her off. “First thing you do is stop your senseless chatter. You don’t, you’ll wear a gag your first month in this house—and that can get pretty nasty by the time it’s taken out. Got that?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You don’t speak unless you’re spoken to.”

“Yes, sir.”

He paces again, his mind lost in his thoughts, while the girl’s eyes still follow him closely.

Sydney can feel gilda’s energy soar; she even seems to sway a bit as if she’s moved by the powerful man before her. Perhaps this verbal abuse is exactly what she’s looking for. He stops abruptly. “You know, I can take you back to the streets where I found you. Is that what you want?”

“No, sir.”

“No? You don’t want to live in that squalor, begging shillings from dirty tricks you can hardly stand to screw. You said you wanted ‘clean gents’. That so?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And a bed to sleep in and food to eat. You’d do anything that was asked of you. Or did I hear you incorrectly?”

“No, sir. That was right.”

“I told you that I start my servants out with a little firm control in the beginning so that they know

exactly what to expect. You said that would be no problem. You'd do anything to escape your life. You remember that?"

"Yes, sir."

"I even told you I was a sadist... that the dark part of me enjoyed the humiliation of women, the physical abuse, especially when women like it. Your eyes lit with stars when I said that," he chuckles. "Just as they are lighting up now."

The shivering redhead visibly gulps.

"Are you wet?"

"Yes, sir." A blush begins to rise on her cheek.

"Because this turns you on."

"Yes, sir."

"Then what the hell is the matter with you," he scowls, "that you're telling me *'it's not what I said'*?"

"Well, no sir," she trembles terribly. "It wasn't exactly, sir... until now. I guess I was a bit impatient."

"Impatient. I see." He smiles. "You don't like to be ignored?"

"No, I guess not, sir," she smiles.

He turns to the men again. "She doesn't like to be ignored. How about that?"

"I means, I was..." she jumps in, then abruptly stops as Larry Standish whisks around and meets her eye with a brutal bite in his. "Sorry, sir."

"She's useless, Larry," one of the men chimes.

"No, sir, I'm not useless! I swear!"

"I'd gag her, but right now, I want her mouth available," Larry hisses.

"I..." she starts again, then clamps her mouth shut tight as her guardian flashes her another lethal stare. Every muscle in her body quivers, giving off an explosive sexual energy that makes Sydney's lower body quiver in response. She wonders if the girl's about to come spontaneously from merely the input of this impassioned exchange.

"Incorrigible, Larry," his other guest declares.

Larry moves within inches again, going nose to nose. "You say you need to be trained to take men in your ass?"

"Oh, I'm scared 'o that, sir," she steps back.

“Well, then, it’s time to fix that.”

“Oh, but, here? Now?” She’s aghast.

He slaps her face with his open palm.

“What is this? Unless your mouth is stuffed with cock, you can’t stop talking?”

“No, sir,” she quickly replies. Her mouth opens again to speak... but this time, she stops herself.

“That’s better,” he acknowledges her effort. “I told you when we interviewed that you’d be tested and tried and trained in my home. That there were things that would scare you... but that was half the fun of it. You said you’d do anything to be safe.”

The girl has turned enough for Sydney to see the tears forming in her eyes.

“Well, you’re safe here. No harm will come to you. And as promised, you’ll thank me with your obedience and your body. It’s time to start thanking me.”

“Yes, sir,” the redhead says in breathless awe. It has taken so little for him to have the intractable young gilda under his control. But she’s finally surrendered, looking completely bowled over by his power.

As his hand gently grazes the area of her public mound, she trembles.

*Is that her sex juice that makes her inner thighs glisten? Sydney wonders.*

“Tommy, let’s use the fucking bench for her cunt,” he says without taking his eye from his frightened slave. Tommy, a beefy blonde man who’s lustily eyed the girl since he arrived, jumps on the suggestion, and pulls a stool from the side of the room into the center. Initially, the piece seems reasonably innocuous. But fishing about underneath it, Tommy lifts out an adjustable blunt rod to which he attaches a thick rubber dildo. The attachment is angled forward at the end of the stool, in the perfect position for a doggy-style fucking.

“Get on your haunches and back in,” Larry orders his new slave. He carries a quirt in his hand; its split leather jiggles ominously as it dangles toward the ground.

The girl’s eyes open wide; she’s too petrified to move. With a quick flick of his wrist, Larry snaps the quirt against the tender side of the girl’s left thigh. “Get moving.”

“Yeouch!” She rubs her legs to sooth the pain.

“I said get on your haunches!”

She instantly leaps forward and kneels on the padded surface, while Tommy, who is kneeling beside the stool, adjusts the dildo for the height of her cunt. As the girl backs up, the thick rod slides easily into her wet pussy. For a few moments, she seems lost in what must be a pleasant sensation. But she’s quickly brought back to reality with another snap of the quirt directly on her buttocks. She’s positioned with her ass toward Sydney and just to the side, so the counselor has the perfect view of the submissively posed slave.

“You say your ass is virgin?” Larry asks, as he grabs a dollop of thick cream from a jar nearby and smears it over her tight rosebud opening.

“Yes, sir,” she trembles. “Someun’ tried it once, an’ I screamed so much, ‘e stopped.”

“Well, no one is going to stop today, little gilda, no matter how hard you scream. Which means, you’re going to have to relax. Bear down a bit as his penis enters and breathe. You do that, it will hardly hurt.”

“Yes, sir... but...”

“No ‘buts’, slut!” He snaps the quirt against her ass again. And this time, he continues punishing her until her entire behind is the color of a bright sunset. She twists and jerks as the blows rain down, which only serves to make her body fuck the staff inside her. By the time he stops the punishment, it’s difficult to know if she’s more aroused or more in pain.

“Use her mouth and shut her up,” Larry motions to the man still sitting. The tall fellow ambles from his chair and quickly pulls a long, fully erect cock from inside his jeans. He strokes it several times and a bead of pre-cum oozes from the tiny opening. Pulling the slave by her tangled hair, he brings the head of his member to her mouth and she opens for him readily—as if she’s been waiting for this all along. Lapping and slurping the thing with avid attention, she seems to have forgotten the invasion of her ass, which for the time being is just her guardian’s two middle fingers. She even manages to move on the rubber erection in her cunt, as if the oral sex feeds what’s happening in her groin.

Anxious for his own reward, Tommy pulls his cock from his pants and strokes his ready organ to its full tumescent length. The veins bulge as he works it hard and as the rod continues to grow not just in length, but girth. Watching with eyes fixed, Sydney awaits his first thrust, feeling sure that the pain will be swift and unbearable for gilda’s virgin ass. *Oh! How it will hurt!* The counselor cringes, wanting simultaneously to flee the room in disgust, and stay to eagerly cheer on this anal rape. Of course, she’ll stay put. Her desire finds her squirming on the bench, hardly able to suppress her own physical arousal.

When Tommy is ready, Larry removes his fingers from gilda’s behind. “Easy now,” he coaches her, although she probably doesn’t hear him. The slut’s in heat, with two cocks already feeding her hungry body. She’s hardly aware that the third is about to strike.

Tommy briefly toys with the girl, carefully inserting the head of his erection into the opening, waiting for her to balk. When she doesn’t, he lunges forward without fanfare, burying his entire member inside her behind.

gilda instantly cringes and the cock drops from her mouth as her voice rasps, “Yeeeeeeeeesh, gawd, eeeeeeeeeiiiiiii!” Her face screws up in pain. She’s surprisingly restrained, considering what’s been done to her, considering how far her rectum needed to be stretched to take the hefty prick. For a moment, the world around her hangs on, gripped by the possibilities pregnant in those anxious seconds. Does she revolt, or does she accept?

But Tommy isn’t waiting for her consent. He begins to fuck. And equally anxious for his own satisfaction, the second man forces the girl’s face back where it was and stuffs her mouth with his cock. Gilda seems lost, in pain, perhaps, worried, but resigned to being used. She seems to have little choice, and yet, it appears that the brazen slut relishes being the center of attention.

She struggles with each thrust forced upon her and with the difficult task of satisfying two men who hunger for their own selfish needs. But she does hang on. She even seems to remember the physical desire inside herself. Although it isn't long before a sudden demand from one of her rapists takes her attention elsewhere, there is a part of her that loves every second of this abusive training. She repeatedly looks toward Larry Standish, making it clear that she wants to please him. She hopes for his approval, but he's not about to give it anytime soon.

Trusting that she'll survive the triple penetration with little damage, he nods to the two men, saying, "Ice her cunt and ass when you're done with her. I don't want her getting off."

Then he strides toward Sydney's, taking her hand, and the two quickly exit the room.

"Ice her?" Sydney questions him. She's puzzled, breathless and feeling exhausted by what she's just seen and heard.

"Cool her down so she can't come," he says as they move down the hallway.

"And why is that?" she replies dumbfounded. "You've certainly asked a lot of her, and she's responded well. I can't believe—"

"She hasn't earned it yet. You saw her performance. She has a long way to go learning the behaviors of a submission woman."

"I'd suggest that she might not be submissive at all."

"Oh, she is. Enough to suit me, anyway. If they all act like robots, there's nothing to punish, and that's no fun. She's eternally grateful for the break I've given her. And just look at her fuck. I figure my intervention in her life will keep her alive."

He's probably right, although Sydney doesn't want to tell him so.

They reach the foyer, and the exhausted counselor assumes that her stay in Larry Standish's house is coming to its end. She's not sure she could take more input for one night. In fact, she looks forward to a quiet ride back to the city, time to think, to sort things out and allow the physical roar of her body to calm.

To her surprise, however, instead of heading toward his car, Larry leads her up the stairs with her arm firmly fixed in his.

"Where are we going?"

"A nightcap," he says. "It's getting late."

"You forget, I'm not staying the night."

"Oh, I think you'll change your mind."

She stops abruptly, half up the grand staircase.

“Hey, stop, Sydney,” he laughs. “I’m not going to rape you, if that’s what you’re worried about.”

She purses her lips, takes a deep breath, staring at him warily. “All right,” she finally consents.

They start back up the stairs, with Larry Standish adding casually, “If we have sex, it will be consensual.”

She hesitates for just a second this time. *Damn! Why does he do these things! Her mind screams.* But she continues on.

The charming rogue makes her insides tumble recklessly. She’s feeling as raw with sexual energy as she did in the bar, as she did with Jacob in the Underground Market, as she’s been every minute in Larry Standish’s presence. It just won’t stop with him. She wants to fuck, and she wants this man to fuck her...

... but no, not on his terms, which will surely will compromise any professional distance that she’s hoped to maintain. *It’s wrong! Terribly, horribly wrong!*

And yet next to him now, feeling the sexual hunger on her lips and the pain inside her gnawing, anxious belly, she realizes that she’s about to forget what’s right and wrong... what’s professional... what’s sane... temptation has never loomed so ominously before her.

He must feel the way her body pulses, how the energy about her swells with desire. He knows. He has to. She feels him passionately pressing in on her. Yes, he knows exactly what she feels.

As they reach the top of the stairs, they take a second flight, six more stairs to a room perched high in the old house. It’s no more than a loft, with windows that look out on the far end of the property—the only side of the house that she’s not seen from the outside. What a perfect place for a rape, she instantly concludes.

The sparsely furnished room contains a lounging settee, the kind commonly seen in lady’s dressing rooms, although this one is almost the size of a double bed. On the table beside it, there are two drinks waiting. He takes one and hands her the other.

“So, are you planning to seduce me?”

He smiles. “I already have.” His eyes twinkle gaily.

*Of course, he’s right. He knows.*

“But why would you want me?” she strolls toward the windows and turns back, finding the distance between them much more comfortable. “You have a houseful of sluts who’d be more than happy to give you anything you want. I’ll only fight you.”

“Oh, I don’t think you’ll be fighting me as much as you say.”

“I’m not having sex with you,” she says with the last ounce of firmness she can muster. But feels her will draining away and he must feel that, too. “Besides, I have a boyfriend I care about.”

“Boyfriends come and go.”

“Why are you doing this?” She cries, aghast and frustrated, and very scared. She doesn’t want to push him away, but she has to.

He just stares at her.

“This is sadistic fun for you.”

“I just wanted to prove my point.”

“And that is?”

“Your Melinda, my 21, will be treated with as much respect as she wants to have. She’ll be given what she needs to enjoy herself. I’m not a demon; I’m a dream maker, who makes fantasies real. I’ve made it real for me and I’ll make it real for her. And for you... well, Ms. Sydney, I think if we don’t give into what’s happening between us right now, we’ll both incinerate and regret it for the rest of our lives. When it’s over, you can go back to your boyfriend, and I go to my girls, but why let the opportunity pass us by?”

*Oh, what a simple case he makes! But not good enough, not yet.*

She sips her drink, almost instantly feeling it go to her head. It doesn’t take long before she’s swimming in that delirious state of unthinking bliss, where she *doesn’t* want to be. A fine drink... the promise of good sex...

He moves her way and she turns her back on him, which only allows him to sidle up behind her with a presence so hot, so conquering that she knows she will succumb.

But how to succumb and not lose her self-respect, her professional edge. She sighs. Oh, it all seems destroyed now anyway.

He runs his hand over her back, down to her ass, which he grips firmly.

“You shouldn’t,” she says.

“I should do whatever I want in my own home,” he replies. “You know that. You should expect that. You thought I wouldn’t at least try?”

“I believed you, that this was strictly professional.”

“But you didn’t want it to be strictly professional. I can tell how you feel.”

“Damn! I can’t argue with you,” she says letting out an enormous sigh.

His hand moves to the side of her face, where a finger delicately traces the edge of her ear and then runs slowly down her throat. She shudders from his breath on the back of her neck. It tickles the tiny hair. He leans in and runs his tongue about her earlobe, softly biting it with his teeth, while she senses a trickle of juice escape her pussy, dampening her panties. “I saw you at the Underground Market,” he says. He draws away, leaving her gasping for air.

Her mind can barely compute what he’s just told her, and when it does, she whips around. “What do you mean, you saw me?”

"I saw you. Was that the boyfriend you love?"

*Oh, dear God!* It had never crossed her mind that he might have been there, not even when it was a real possibility.

"What did you see?"

He smiles. "I saw you enter, all nervous and wary. I saw you pushed to the floor and collared, led on a leash to the bar, stepped on, reprimanded and then taken to the showing where your pretty tits were put on display. I saw you cringe in terror, your wide-eyed looks of wonder, disgust and desire. You know, your eyes are very expressive; they dance with your excitement. I saw you caged, getting about as low as a female can be in humiliation. . . I saw you resigned to it, Sydney. You're a slut, as much a slave to sensation as my girls are."

She trembles where she stands, feeling as if every word he speaks binds her more certainly to him.

"Oh, you'd make a terrible slave," he laughs. "I'll bet you're glad I see that, too." His face dances with amusement before it darkens again and fixes on her earnestly. "But you're going to give me a lot of pleasure tonight. You're going to perform for me. Because despite everything you say, you want it more than you can imagine."

"No. Really. No. I have to go." Her eyes dart toward the door, but she realizes that she'll have to move around him to escape.

"Take off your dress, or would you rather I take it off you?" His voice mutates to the tone of command as effortlessly as his body takes on a more dictatorial stance.

She's immediately intimidated by the electric charge that pulses through her in response.

"I. . ." she starts to speak then stops, thinking of the girl below who was repeatedly chided for her objections. She's not obliged to obey him. But why is she feeling that she is?

He moves closer, so close he's nearly stepping on her toes. His hands move to her jacket, peeling it slowly away and letting it fall to the floor. She has no will to object as his fingers skillfully undo the buttons on her blouse and the two sides fall open. "You know your refusing to do this yourself is going to cost you," he warns.

"Cost me what?" she whispers, as he pulls her blouse from her skirt.

He smiles in reply and continues disrobing her in a long slow dance of expectation.

She quivers with embarrassment as he eyes her breasts tucked inside her bra. He could undo the front clasp himself, but she uneasily does it herself. Her cheeks turn hot as the two orbs swing free of the encumbrance.

He makes no comment but moves on. . . reaching around to the back of her skirt where he slips the button through the hole and draws the zipper down. She can feel the tiny click of every tine as it descends, and then a sudden cool breeze when her skirt drops to the floor. She's worn her garter belt and stockings, which make her more sexually accessible. He takes this as a sign of her sexual strategy to remain obtainable, easy for men to have. Easy for him. He'll go so far as think that she changed her



underclothes for him that afternoon. He's used to that kind of behavior in his girls. He has that kind of effect on women.

"Move to your hands and knees on the bed," he orders with the requisite firmness of man in his position. As if hypnotized, she responds like one of his dutiful slaves. The resistance in her falls, like she's shedding more than just her clothes. The inhibitions she relies on in sexual situations have surrendered to the powerful aphrodisiac of Larry Standish's voice and Larry Standish's eyes. As she kneels on his lounging divan, her exposed cunt pulses hotly and her ass begins sway.

She looks around, seeing a cane in Larry's hand and almost revolts.

"I said your hesitation would cost you," he explains. "Maybe, if you're lucky, this will only turn you on more."

*If she's lucky.* But she doesn't know; she's never been caned.

She watches in wonder as he rears back. The thrill of his dominion over her bursts through every pore, across her skin and deeper where it engages her cunt. The first cut sears her bottom, and she gasps, feeling the sharp pain move quickly through her. She's determined to hang on to some semblance of dignity. But the next cuts come too fast, and so profoundly hurt her, that for an instant all the erotic sensation disappears.

But then Larry brings it roaring back seconds later. His hand plays with her pubic mound, massaging it from behind inserting fingers into the steamy folds. She shudders with the threat of orgasm instantly upon her. Silently, her body begs him to continue.

"Oh, you're not getting off that easily, slut," he says, having read her feelings perfectly. He steps back and punctuates his comment with another six swiftly rendered cuts of his cane. She collapses forward in pain, only to hear him bark the command, "Get back up, bitch!"

She snaps to attention, feeling ashamed of herself for being so weak.

*Good God! What has he made of me? she worries.*

"Here I thought I was done, and you fuck up the plan," he says. The cane whisks through the air another several times, with these strikes landing across the top of her thighs. Pain rifles through her and the burn makes her shriek. But afraid of displeasing him, she stifles most of her cries. If she weren't already being punished for a break in form, she'd crumple into a heap and weep. But she's much too proud to fail him and herself again.

Again, he's on her pussy with his hands making her rapturous with so little a tease.

"Oh, God, please!" she gasps.

"Please what, slut? Are you begging?"

"Yes, I'm begging, dammit!"

He slaps her pussy hard with his hand. "You bark at me again, I'll bind you and cane your pussy with your legs spread wide." He thinks again. "Or maybe, better yet, I'll walk out and leave you hanging."

“Oh, please no, sir,” she whimpers. “I’m sorry.”

“Oh, if only I had you for a week,” he sighs. Pulling his cock from his pants, he kneels behind her bottom and thrusts to the hilt of her vagina. The dizzying sensation makes her faint, and she nearly loses her balance again. But she saves herself for the rugged pounding to come.

It is not so much his size, which is fairly average. It’s the power behind it that sends the sparks flying and the orgasm to its grinding, spasming ends. She comes three times, hard, demanding, crushing comes, before he finally discharges his seed deep inside her. He explodes with a loud cry, hanging on to her tits, crushing them with his palms.

With this first reckless copulation finished, he falls to the side of the lounge and pulls her with him, cuddling her in his arms. They remain silent for a while, then they kiss, and kiss again. And like good wet kisses will eventually do, these kisses make them burn for more. Their bodies soon devour each other until they are fucking again... this time, more like they are making love. She manages to remove his shirt, but not his pants; his boots prevent that. She starts to think that maybe someday she’ll have him naked next to her...

But she thinks again, shaking off the impossible fantasy.

*No!* There can be no ‘someday’ for them. There’s Jacob, who she loves, and the girls below, and soon Melinda duBois, his 21. It would have to be in another universe far from the one they live in now.

One minute she’s basking in the exhilaration, contently enjoying the only moments she’ll ever have with him; the next minute, Larry Standish announces with some finality, “You’ve had enough.” He rises from the lounge, pulls his shirt on and in seconds has it tucked inside his zipped jeans. Staring down from above, he snickers. “Was that so bad?”

“You know it wasn’t,” she smiles.

“And the caning?”

“That wasn’t bad either.”

“But I suppose it never should have happened?”

“Don’t worry. I won’t demean myself or you by saying that.”

“Good. That’s the honest Sydney that I expected.” He snickers shrewdly. “If you really want to be honest, you’ll go home and tell Jacob what we did tonight. In fact,” he thinks this is a great plan, “that’s exactly what you’ll do, Ms. Wingate.”

She thinks, *‘never in a million years.’* Then she thinks again... yes, she probably will tell Jacob, especially since Larry Standish makes it sound like an order, and for reasons that she can’t fathom, this is an order she needs to obey.

“You’re sleeping in the room below this one,” he says, as he whisks her clothes off the floor. “I’ll put these there for you now, and have you back at your office by nine, as promised.”

She’s not arguing anything he says, and remaining speechless, she watches him leave the room with

her clothes in his hand. By the time she finally decides to find her bedroom, it's dark in the house, except for a few nightlights burning in the hallways. She guesses correctly when she chooses one of the bedroom doors on the floor below. Her clothes are there and she can safely snuggle inside the cozy bed for the night. She can't believe what just happened, or figure out why. And though she dreams of Larry Standish coming to her in the middle of the night, he doesn't.

In the morning, the two are silent for most of the ride back to the city. The pleasantries they share have hardly any meaning, not even a little innuendo appears in their brief conversation.

Does she want him courting her further? No! She has to put her foot down about that. But since he doesn't lead the conversation in that direction, she guesses she won't have to. She can take their night at face value—a spontaneous moment of sexual abandon. It can be no more important to her than screwing the guy in the bar patio, because it's obviously not important to Larry Standish now that it's over.

"I suppose you've made up your mind on the recommendation for Melinda?" he says as they pull up in front of the Detention Building.

"I have. I can see her in your home, fitting in well. Better than I ever would."

He smiles. "Then my scheme worked."

"Yes, you scoundrel, your scheme worked."

"Good. Then I won't have to harass you again."

"No, you won't have to harass me again."

Satisfied, he reaches over her to open the car door.

"But if occasionally I did, you wouldn't mind?" he asks.

"No, I probably wouldn't mind."

## Chapter Thirteen

How the world moves on...

Monday, Sydney receives a message that Melinda wants to see her. She's hardly thought about the girl all weekend. Confessions to Jacob seemed to take most of her attention. It didn't go well at first, but it looks as though she's salvaged the relationship. It takes her shrill alarm clock Monday morning to jog her brain that this was the day of her *big* decision. But the decision has been made. When she gets to the office and sees Melinda's message, she finds it strange, since this is not what she expects of the submissive girl. Of course, they would be meeting one more time before the final papers are drawn up, but for the girl to initiate that meeting, that is a surprise.

She summons the girl; and she arrives promptly, dressed as she usually is in her blue prison denim. She sits immediately in the waiting chair, looking as uncomfortable there as she always does, as if she's yearning for that blasted stool.

"You told me that the decision is yours," Melinda starts before Sydney can, "but I guessed that you'd listen to what I want."

"Of course, I will," the counselor replies, wondering what she could have in mind.

"It does matter to me where I'm placed."

"Good, I'm glad it does."

"So, you'll take my feelings seriously?"

"Of course, I will, Melinda."

She nods, pleased.

Sydney waits as the girl sits up a little straighter and takes a deep breath. She's hardly stalling; it would seem that she knows exactly what she wants to say. It just takes some courage. Finally mustering up enough nerve, she announces boldly:

"I'd like my freedom."

*What!*

Sydney's entire body quakes, from feet to scalp, as if a bolt of lightning has just hit her. "You want your freedom? You *don't* want to be reassigned as an indentured servant?"

"That's right, ma'am."

This takes her breath away. "Excuse me if I'm surprised. I just never expected you to say this. The last time we talked about your future specifically, you said that you wanted to do what your guardian, Mr. Janes, wanted for you."

"But he's dead now, isn't he?" she says without a trace of sorrow.

"He certainly is."

"So, it can't matter to him what I do."

"No, I suppose not."

"Well, then, that's my decision."

"Fine." She's still dazed, and says with all the amazement she feels: "It looks like all of my work has been eclipsed by you." She closes the file in front of her.

"I hope I haven't been a big trouble," the girl says, but she's not apologizing.

"No, not at all," Sydney quickly whizzes through what this case has meant to her, all too much to consider now. "I'm glad you came to this decision. I wanted it to be yours all along, because I really think you know what's best for you."

The girl smiles, pleased again. "So, what would you have recommended?" she asks cautiously.

"Well, after considerable thought and research, I was going to allow your reassignment, with the specific recommendation that you take on a contract with Mr. Standish."

"Then you *would* have made me a slave forever."

"Only because that was what you wanted, at least, that's originally what you said... and because I believe that Mr. Standish would have treated you well."

"He does put on a good show, doesn't he?" She smiles, as if she knows the man's mind and heart just as she apparently knows her own.

"You have reason to doubt my conclusions about him?"

"I have no reason to doubt you, but I would doubt any man's sincerity until I lived under his roof long enough to know him... and then you really don't know him. I'm not sure you ever can."

"You're probably right," Sydney agrees. "So, I answered your question, you can answer mine. What made you decide to give up your service and restore your free rights?"

The girl thinks a bit. "Well, when I was interviewed by the new guardian, by Mr. Standish, he seemed to be everything a woman in service might want. He's very sexy. And he has way about him that's very arousing. But I don't think I could love him. When I realized that, I decided that maybe I needed to choose for myself, rather than let you or anyone else choose for me." She stops immediately, thinking she's said the wrong thing, then rushes on... "I hope I didn't offend you by that."

"You don't offend me at all. But you do continue to amaze me."

Melinda smiles. "So, what do I do to get out of here?"

Sydney is at a loss for words. "You know, I really don't know. But I will find out. I assume that there are some papers to sign, and I know there is some money in an account for you that was provided by Mr. Janes for your transition. I guess that would belong to you."

"That might be good to have. You know, I have a degree in art history from the University?" As she speaks, she becomes more animated, exuding a degree of pride her counselor has rarely seen in the self-deprecating young woman. It's a good sign.

"Really? That wasn't in your records."

"No. I used the name Melinda Janes when I graduated."

"Ah."

"Maybe I could teach, or work in the bookstore. I'd get a small apartment in the University district, then wait it out until my next lover finds me."

"It sounds as if you've thought this out pretty well."

"I've had plenty of time."

"Indeed." They exchange pleasant smiles. "So, you'd make another contract with another man like your one with Mr. Janes?"

"If I were in love."

"Well then, you'll have to follow your heart." The flustered Sydney moves to her file, crossing out the recommendation page... boldly scribbling across it, "Voluntary Release Approved. No Transfer."

"And you'd prefer to be known as Melinda Janes? I see your real last name was duBois."

"Yes, I like sound of Melinda Janes. That way I can keep a little of my lover with me, even when I move on."

"True." Sydney crosses out Lot 21 on the front of the file and writes over the top, Melinda Janes, feeling a degree of satisfaction in the act.

"I guess I can go then, can't I?" the girl asks. "Back to my cell?"

"Yes, I suppose that will have to do until I can get your release through the proper channels, and right now, I don't even know what the proper channels are."

"But you will."

"Of course. It shouldn't take more than an hour? You could just wait here."

"No. I'd like to return to my cell for my personal things."

"Then you'll hear from me shortly."

The girl is happily euphoric, a smile on her face, and a lilt in her step that dazzles her counselor's heart. Maybe Melinda's unexpected decision had nothing to do with what she's done for the girl, but then, maybe it did. Maybe she untied the knot that held Melinda's mind in bondage just enough to let the liberating thought of her independence get inside her. Sydney will never know for sure.

She doubts the girl will be on her own for long. Sydney can sense the longing in Melinda's heart that drives the decision she made. There will be a host of men clamoring after a woman so open, so guileless, so surrendering. Maybe she won't be better off with a man of her choosing, but who can say? At least it will be an adventure of her own making.

Sydney sweeps the file on Melinda Janes into her arm and leaves her office for the administration center. She's euphoric too over this unexpected change in plans. She smiles to herself, aware of her body's erotic response. So many doors have opened for them both.

And if nothing else, this should make for good banter in the employee lounge this afternoon. Tuck

and Astrid will have a fit. And even more interesting will be the conversation with Larry Standish when he comes for Lot 21 this afternoon. She can't wait to see the expression on his face when she tells him about Melinda Janes. Just thinking of that sadist rogue, her tummy flutters in anticipation of seeing him again.

Endd